



People Don't Buy Jewelry from Stores with Bad Reputations

By Matthew A. Perosi

Your entire reputation as a store, and a store owner, is very important for building your word-of-mouth business. Every new customer has the potential to be your greatest herald of endorsement for your store, or they can be your utter downfall.

The Internet harbors some very frightening power that allows a single person to undermine your credibility and seriously hobble your business if you make them mad. Consumers are becoming savvier about the ways of the Internet, and where they can find this power. One accidental gruff comment to a customer and you could find your business practice and personality under public scrutiny.

I recently found two serious consumer complaints against a jeweler in Fairfax, VA. The complaints were listed on the FairfaxCounty.gov website. The first complaint detailed an alleged situation where the jeweler took more than a year to custom design a pendant for an amethyst stone. The second complaint alleges that a platinum ring was put on consignment but the jeweler sold it for scrap without authorization.

When both customers couldn't resolve these situations on their own they took their case to the Fairfax County Dept. of Cable and Consumer Services for mediation, but they didn't stop there. Those two customers posted full details about their experiences to the Reston Patch website (<http://reston.patch.com>), to Google+ Reviews, and to Judy's Book (<http://www.judysbook.com>).



Judy's Book and the Patch websites provide more localized business information than what you will find on other review systems like Yelp, Merchant Circle, or even Google+. These bad online reviews were posted in 2012 without any response from the jeweler even though now it's more than a year later.

All unanswered online reviews are a detriment to your business and your customers won't care to consider "the other side of the story" if you don't bother to show interest.

Every online review website allows you, the business owner, to sign up and claim ownership of your business listing.

Sometimes you have to pay a monthly service fee for that ownership but once you're confirmed, you have the ability to post responses to online reviews and complaints.

What I found interesting about this jeweler is that they took ownership of their Yelp account and Manta account (as if anyone even knows what Manta is!), but seems to be ignoring what's really hurting their business. The store hasn't yet taken ownership of their Google+, Patch, or Judy's Book account in order to write a reply.

Future customers searching online for a jeweler will obviously move on to the next potential jewelry store after reading one of these reviews. You can take steps to protect yourself from a bad online reputation. Start with a Google search for your business name, and make sure to search for your trade name as well as your corporate name. You will probably find dozens of directory type websites with your information.

Take ownership of all of them even if they are paid services. Then update your information as needed and respond to any negative online reviews.

Greater damage to your business will come from customers who post negative reviews to unclaimed directory websites. That's why you need to take ownership of all of them and respond to all negative reviews.

Remember that negative online reviews always start with a negative experience in your store or on the telephone. Always provide service with a smile and don't belittle customers when they are wrong; instead take that opportunity to educate them in a friendly manner. Even the shortest telephone exchanges can result in negative online reviews so if you can't help the person you should say so in a courteous manner.

It doesn't matter how good your website looks, how perfect your SEO is, how beautiful your store looks, or how talented your bench jeweler is, when your business has a bad reputation online you have a serious problem to address.



Matthew A Perosi

Matthew Perosi is the Founder of the Jeweler Website Advisory Group (jWAG), a research team devoted to reporting how jewelers can use websites, mobile technology, and marketing trends to further personal and jewelry store goals. A library of articles, videos, and an archive of jWAG daily email "Nuggets" is freely available at www.jwag.biz. Matthew invites your feedback at matt@jwag.biz.