

---

## The Good, The Bad and The Ugly: Online Criticism

Tess Payne

### DoveLewis Annual Conference Speaker Notes

*With just the click of a button, a client can hurt your feelings, your business, and your team's wellbeing. Online reputations are more important than ever, so what do you do with 1-star reviews and criticism from clients when it's out there for anyone to read?*

**Online criticism is good for you and bad for you at the same time, and we can't avoid it. We're tasked with finding balance to leverage the good and mitigate the bad.**

- Why do we react the way we do when we get a negative review and what is it about our brain that doesn't let it go? We're conditioned to learn from negative stimuli quickly, and so we linger on it more than we do positive stimuli. "Evolution would favour humans who dwell on the negatives." (1)
- Self-care for yourself and for your team can be practical. Be transparent with your team about your plans for responding to negative criticism and the thinking behind it. The more they understand, the better they'll be able to cope with the chatter.
- Clients care about your responses.
  - "Consumers read an average of 10 online reviewed before feeling able to trust a local business" (2)
  - "57% of consumers will only use a business if it has 4 or more stars" (2)
  - "88% of online customers are less likely to buy from companies that leave their social media complaints unanswered." (3)

**Client Experience is your brand in action. Strong brands weather storms.**

- "80% of customers say the experience a company provides is as important as its products and services. Expectations for the customer experience have never been higher." (3)
- Brand Examples: Tylenol versus BP

**Responding to criticism is essential for the health of your business, and there are three key steps to follow.**

1. **Show empathy.** *"The reviewer's experience is their own. You may argue with the facts of the situation...but you can't argue with how they feel. It's how they feel."* (4)
2. **Be brief.** *"Briefly speak to the reviewer's primary concern. Doing so shows that you're paying attention to their review — that you hear them and care enough to tailor your response to their unique situation."*(4)

- 
3. **Move the conversation to a private place offline.** Human-to-human communication can dissipate emotions and help clarify confusing or stressful experiences in a way that online commenting oftentimes cannot.

#### References

- (1) <https://www.theguardian.com/science/brain-flapping/2014/may/09/you-suck-why-criticism-is-more-powerful-than-praise>
- (2) <https://www.brightlocal.com/research/local-consumer-review-survey/>
- (3) <https://www.business2community.com/consumer-marketing/25-stats-on-consumer-shopping-trends-for-2019-02175812>
- (4) <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ryanerskine/2018/12/31/how-to-respond-to-negative-reviews-including-examples/#248c772c7534>