



Maximizing Your Online Reputation

Key findings from
23,000 locations



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Winning at public perception



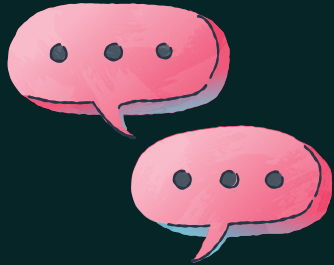
As your business competes online for visibility, foot traffic, and profit, almost everything hinges on the public's perception of you.

What do potential customers see when they find you online? Are they reading mostly positive reviews or negative reviews? Can they find enough reviews to give them confidence in your products and services? Do they see you responding to reviews, or ignoring them? And what about your star ratings?

Taking all these variables into account, the importance of effective online reputation management cannot be overstated.

So, how can your business truly maximize your online reputation?

To answer this question, we did a deep analysis of 23,000+ businesses spanning all of 2023 to surface valuable information that can help you optimize your review generation strategies and win over public perception.



Receiving starts with asking

The more you ask your customers to leave reviews, the more reviews you get.



Curiosity gets NPS scores up

Just by asking your customers how they feel leads to higher ratings.



SMS + email = best responses

When third-party reviews matter most to you, the two work better together.



Receiving starts with asking

Sending review requests significantly increases your total review volume

If getting more reviews and customer feedback is your goal, a review request strategy is key.

For example, let's say you have a newer business and want to improve your ranking in search results. You can aim to get 10 Google reviews — as this is the pivotal number that can help bump up rankings.



How do you get more reviews? Ask your customers. Be sure to request their honest feedback — even if it means having less-than-perfect ratings. Potential customers will gravitate toward your business if it has a good volume of reviews and a more realistic rating.




Average review volume by location

Asking for Reviews

122

Not Asking

53



When you request reviews, 50% of your customers will take you up on it.*

* <https://moz.com/local-business-review-survey-report/habits-of-review-writers>

Impact of asking for reviews by industry - 2023



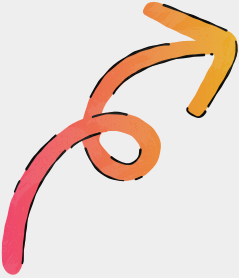
First-party versus third-party reviews

Use both types to boost trust signals, SEO and customer feedback.

First-party reviews are given by your customers directly to your business — for example, on your website — and are generally written content but can also include a rating. Customers who write first-party reviews tend to provide more detail and insight into their experience with your business than you get with generic customer feedback or testimonials. Plus **you own these** for as long as you have your business.

Third-party reviews differ from first-party reviews in that customers leave these reviews — which include both written content and ratings — on sites like Google and TripAdvisor or industry-specific review sites like Healthgrades, Capterra, Avvo, and many others.

Third-party reviews are not owned by your business, but belong instead to the individual review site where they're posted. While you can display third-party reviews on your website — with proper attribution — you can't mark them up with schema, so they won't contribute to your SEO efforts in the way that first-party reviews do.



First-party reviews can be used in your Google SERP results with the right markup. GatherUp offers this out of the box.

First-party and third-party requests by industry

Interestingly, fewer than half (49%) of all businesses actively request reviews by email and SMS.

However, when they do, there is a significant difference in the volume of reviews received. By incorporating review requests as a key part of your strategy, you can observe a notable increase in review volume overall.

These statistics are based on the average per individual locations and by industry in 2023, derived from the analysis of 23,000 locations.

Key:

- Asking 1st - Sending first-party review requests
- Asking 3rd - Sending requests for third-party reviews
- Not Asking - Not actively sending requests but still potentially gathering feedback through their website and third parties.

Healthcare

Asking - 1st	vs	Not Asking - 1st
443		3
Asking - 3rd	vs	Not Asking - 3rd
66		37

Insurance

Asking - 1st	vs	Not Asking - 1st
49		1
Asking - 3rd	vs	Not Asking - 3rd
11		8

Legal & Law

Asking - 1st	vs	Not Asking - 1st
21		2
Asking - 3rd	vs	Not Asking - 3rd
29		22

Storage & Transportation

Asking - 1st	vs	Not Asking - 1st
140		29
Asking - 3rd	vs	Not Asking - 3rd
94		53

The outliers: restaurants & construction

The restaurant and construction industries have more third-party reviews when they DON'T send requests. Why?



GatherUp's reputation management platform provides QR codes, feedback URLs, and text back features for collecting reviews and feedback without needing customer contact information.

Restaurants

In-person businesses like restaurants tend to ask the customer on the spot for a review, rather than send a request. That's because restaurants won't have customer contact info — like a phone number or email — unless they've integrated a loyalty program or POS (point of sale) system.

Construction

We presume construction receives more third-party reviews when they don't send requests because it's likely that only unhappy customers are leaving a review. But the flip side is that when construction businesses send review requests, they average a 0.2 point higher Google rating as they're able to capture the sentiments of satisfied customers. When you ask all customers for reviews, your average rating will be higher.

The best way to get feedback

In our previous research, we found that 74% of businesses recognize reputation management is important to business success, but 50% say getting new reviews is the biggest hurdle for them.

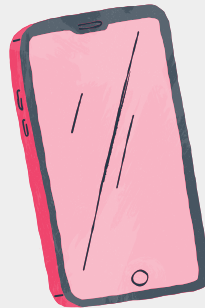
To overcome the challenge of getting reviews and increase review volume, here are some best practices to help you send review requests and maximize response rates.



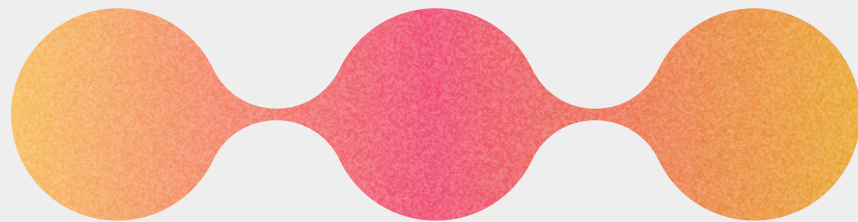
Choose the right timing: Ask for reviews when the experience is still fresh for your customers. For quick interactions, like in retail or restaurants, right after the purchase works best. For services that take time to show results, like lawn care, wait until the customer sees the benefit.

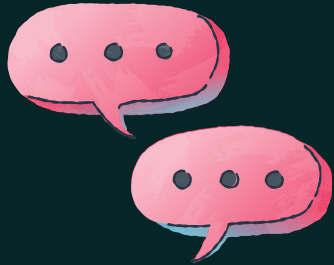


Keep it simple: Make leaving a review as easy as possible with a quick one- or two-step process. A short, straightforward URL can help customers leave a Google review in just one step, ensuring they don't lose interest.



Leverage SMS and email: Since customers always have their phones handy, texting or emailing review requests is a smart way to reach them quickly and conveniently, increasing the chances they'll follow through.





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Curiosity gets NPS scores up

Net Promoter Score (NPS) and star ratings are the key metrics for overall customer sentiment and perception

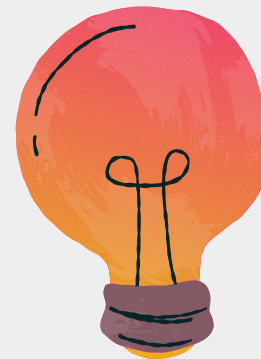
An NPS survey measures the likelihood of customers to recommend your business to others, using a scale of 0 (not likely) to 10 (very likely) to calculate the score. Star ratings — such as the ratings you see in Google search results — show how your business is rated, on average, based on customer reviews.

Requesting reviews can influence how customers think about you. **Just by asking, you could see a jump in both your NPS score and rating.**

That's because when you ask customers for their opinion, you're creating an emotional connection with them. They feel valued and develop a sense of ownership and participation in your success — moving the relationship from a transactional one to one that's much more engaging, influential, and loyal.

Review volume also matters to star ratings since the more positive reviews you have, the higher your average rating will be.

Boosting your rating is especially helpful when it comes to local marketing, since business profiles with high star ratings and a large number of reviews are more likely to attract and convert local customers than profiles with low star ratings and fewer reviews.

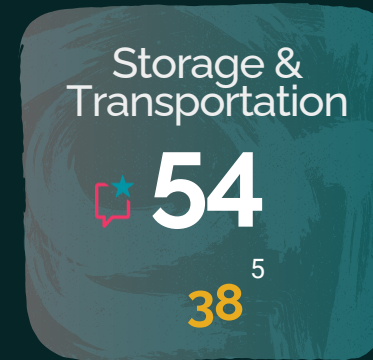


Just by asking for feedback, most see a positive jump in NPS scores and star-ratings.

NPS data insights

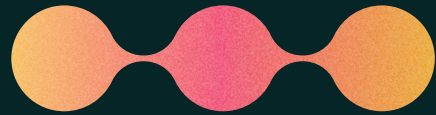
Our data shows higher NPS in nearly every sector when they rely on GatherUp to receive feedback compared to their industry peers. We hypothesize these companies do better because they are proactively managing their reputation.

GatherUp customers have, on average, a 50% higher NPS than their industry peers.



Ratings

Requesting reviews also results in an increase in star ratings for four out of the six industries represented with the two others staying flat.



Takeaway: The big picture here is that when you care about asking for customer feedback, you're also likely to act on that feedback, creating a continuous improvement cycle that provides a better overall experience.

Customers notice this and will reward you for it — by recommending your business to others and giving you positive reviews that result in higher ratings.



How can you increase your NPS and ratings?

Since review volume matters to ratings, all the same best practices we outlined earlier applies here as well. But here are a few more that are specific to improving ratings and overall customer satisfaction (which affects NPS).

Improve the customer experience

If you get negative feedback, take it seriously and see what you can learn from it. Are there real problems in your business that need to be resolved? If so, take immediate steps to fix them so you can offer a better customer experience. This will turn detractors into promoters, help attract new customers, and earn more positive reviews — all which impact NPS and ratings.



Respond to all reviews

Good, bad, or indifferent, you should respond promptly and publicly to any review you get (with the exception of those in the healthcare industry that must ensure HIPAA-compliant review responses and therefore have a different set of rules to adhere to).

In general, for most industries, personalized review responses nurture emotional connections, which increases customer engagement and loyalty. Review responses also show potential customers who might be watching that you're professional, courteous, and willing and able to solve problems. **In fact, 1 out of 4 customers filter by negative reviews first just to see how you respond.**



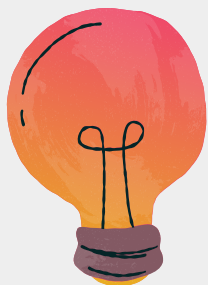
Ensure authenticity

Don't be tempted to manipulate your reviews by buying fake reviews or writing fake reviews yourself. Not only does this violate Federal Trade Commission (FTC) rules, it also severely hurts your credibility with your audience. Consumers are savvy, and they know fake reviews when they see them. It makes your business look untrustworthy and misleading — which means your NPS and ratings could take a hit too.



Be democratic

Ask all verified customers — not just the happy ones — for reviews, since everyone should be offered the same opportunity to leave a review, whether first- or third-party. Also make sure to display all reviews on your website, not just the positive ones.



Review response examples

Example of a response to a positive review of an overall great experience:

“Thank you for taking the time to leave this review, [customer name]! We love that you had a great experience at our store and with our team. Thank you again.”

Example of a response to a positive review of a product or service:

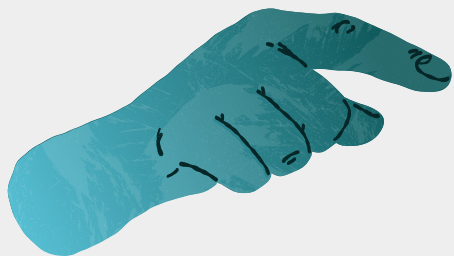
“Thank you for your kind feedback, [customer name]. We’re so glad that [product or service] worked out for you. This makes us happy. We hope to see you again soon!”

Example of a response to a negative review of a service:

“I’m [name], the manager at [store location]. I’m sorry you had a bad experience with [service]. I’m personally ensuring our entire team is up-to-date on training so we can avoid problems like this in the future. Please call me directly at [phone number] and I’d be happy to discuss a solution to make this right for you.”

Example of a response to a negative review of a product:

“I’m sorry to hear your recent purchase of [product] was a disappointment. We appreciate this feedback and take it seriously. We’d like to make up for it by offering you a 15% discount off your next store purchase.”



New FTC Ruling

What it means for your business

In August 2024, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) banned fake reviews and took other steps to address deceptive online marketing practices.

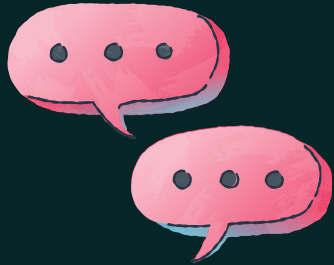
[The new ruling](#) prohibits businesses from:

- **Fake or false reviews:** Creating, buying, selling, disseminating, or encouraging fake or false consumer reviews, celebrity testimonials, and consumer testimonials.
- **Non-disclosure of insider reviews:** Not disclosing reviews by business insiders — such as employees, managers, or agents.
- **Misrepresenting business-controlled review sites:** Misrepresenting that a business-controlled or business-owned review website offers independent reviews or opinions.

- **Review suppression:** Suppressing negative reviews or using threats or intimidation to remove such reviews.
- **Seeking or paying for positive reviews:** Offering incentives or payment for sentiment-specific reviews, such as positive reviews only.
- **Fake social media influence:** Selling or buying fake social media influence, such as bot-generated followers or views.

The takeaway? Ensure review authenticity and transparency to avoid civil penalties and other legal consequences, as well as damage to your business reputation.

Learn more about the [FTC rule banning fake and deceptive reviews](#) and its implications and how to adjust your review generation strategy.



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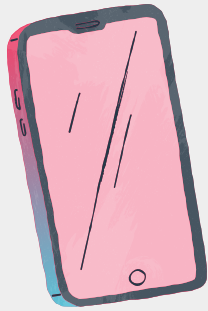
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SMS + emails = better together

Using SMS to send review requests yields more reviews received per send but...

if you're interested in increasing total reviews (first- and third-party), then **using a combination of email and SMS is the ticket**. A combination of email and SMS also work well if you want to acquire more third-party reviews.

SMS and email requests also positively influence ratings. That's because customers see the requests quickly and can click right from the text or email to leave the review, resulting in more reviews faster that can increase your rating.

First-Party Reviews vs. Third-Party Reviews: What's the Difference?

What's a first-party review?

Reviews your customers give directly to your business.

What's an example?

A review that your customer leaves on your website.

Who owns these reviews?

You do.

What's a third-party review?

Reviews your customers give on a third-party site.

What's an example?

A review that your customer leaves on Facebook, TripAdvisor, Google, or similar.

Who owns these reviews?

The individual sites do.

[Read more about the difference here.](#)



SMS + emails the data

While 40% of GatherUp powered businesses use emails to send reviews, only 6% use

both SMS & email to request them - revealing a largely untapped opportunity to branch out and reach customers through both channels.

If you already use SMS to communicate with customers, this is the quickest way to see a return on your review request efforts. **Across industries, businesses that only use SMS to request reviews get 20 reviews for every 100 requests they send, as compared to 15 reviews using email only.**

But the real key to review generation is using a combination of SMS and email. **Across industries, businesses that use both SMS and email generate the most reviews per location — more than SMS only or email only.**

However, keep in mind that you should first use the channel that the customer is already familiar with. If your business communicates primarily via SMS, then you can include review requests in your SMS strategy. If you never text your customers, your first outreach should be through email.



SMS & emails by the numbers - all industries

Using SMS only, businesses can generate around 20 reviews per 100 requests sent — earning a 20% return on their efforts.

Compare that to using email only, which can generate around 15 reviews per 100 requests sent — or a 15% return on their efforts.

However, by using a combo of SMS and email, businesses can generate more reviews than either channels alone.

**20 Reviews
per
100 SMS**

**15 Reviews
per
100 emails**



**26 Reviews
per 100
SMS & emails**

SMS & emails: Healthcare



In the healthcare sector, navigating HIPAA regulations while gathering and responding to reviews is essential. Patient feedback is invaluable for attracting new clients, and the right approach can make all the difference. When healthcare providers combine SMS and email for review requests, they see nearly a 4X increase in reviews per location.

To break it down, using email alone typically results in about 206 reviews per location, and SMS alone brings in around 127. But when both channels are used together, the number of reviews skyrockets to 753. This impressive boost underscores the effectiveness of a multi-channel strategy in building a strong online reputation while staying compliant with healthcare regulations.

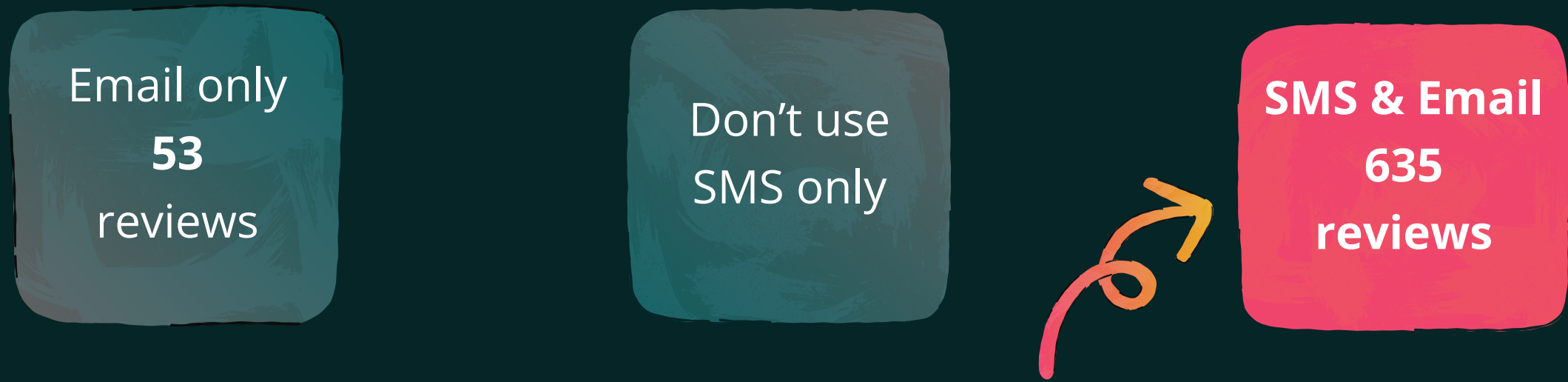


SMS & emails: Insurance



In the insurance industry, companies often use email or a combination of email and SMS to request feedback and gather reviews. The results of using both channels together are remarkable—over 10 times more reviews per location compared to using email alone! To put it in perspective, when relying on email only, companies average about 53 reviews per location.

But when they double up with both email and SMS, that number skyrockets to an impressive 635 reviews. This dramatic increase highlights the power of a combined approach in significantly boosting customer engagement and enhancing a company's online reputation



SMS & emails: Restaurants



Sending review requests via email alone typically yields an average of 381 reviews per restaurant location. However, when restaurants incorporate SMS alongside email in their review request strategy, they see a notable increase, averaging 437 reviews per location—a 14.7% improvement. This demonstrates the value of a multi-channel approach in effectively gathering customer feedback and strengthening a restaurant's online reputation.



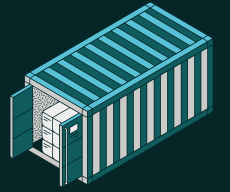
SMS & emails: Legal & Law



In the legal world, gathering client reviews can be a bit of a challenge. Legal firms that rely on email alone for review requests typically gather around 36 reviews per location. If they switch to SMS, that number drops to about 14 reviews on average. But when they combine both email and SMS, things really take off, with an average of 65 reviews per location! This shows that a multi-channel approach can be a game-changer, helping firms collect more valuable client feedback and enhance their online reputation. It's all about using the right mix to get the best results.

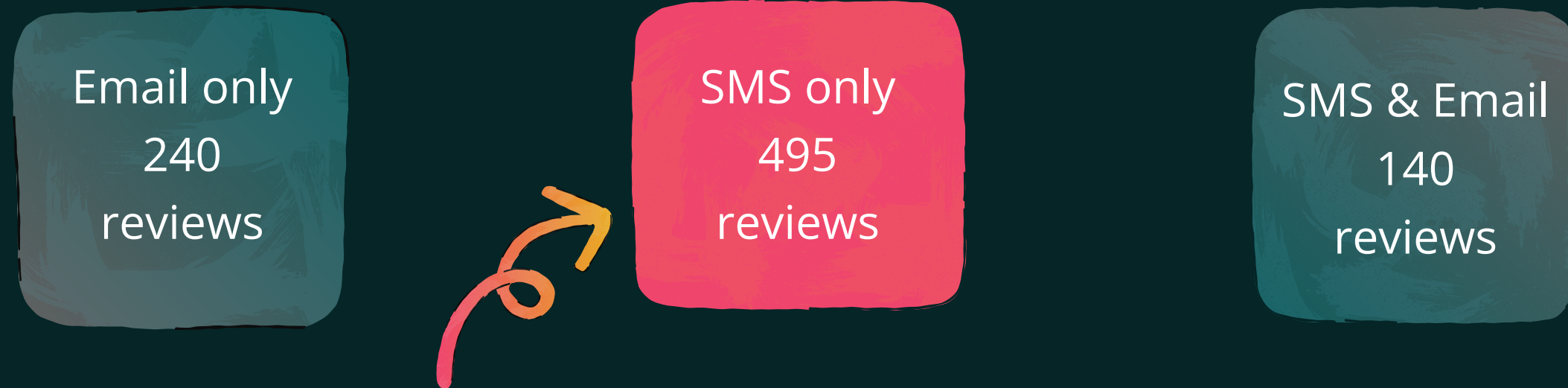


SMS & emails: Storage & Transportation



Transportation and Storage businesses are intriguing outliers in our data. When these companies use email alone to request reviews, they typically gather around 240 reviews per location. However, when they rely solely on SMS, the number jumps to an impressive 495 reviews per location. Interestingly, when they combine both channels, the results are actually lower.

Why? Our hypothesis is two-fold: First, the frequency of review requests matters—timing is everything. Second, the simplicity of responding via SMS plays a big role. With SMS, the request is brief, and answering is quick and easy, which might explain why SMS-only strategies outperform the combined approach. It's a reminder that sometimes, less really is more!



SMS & emails: Construction

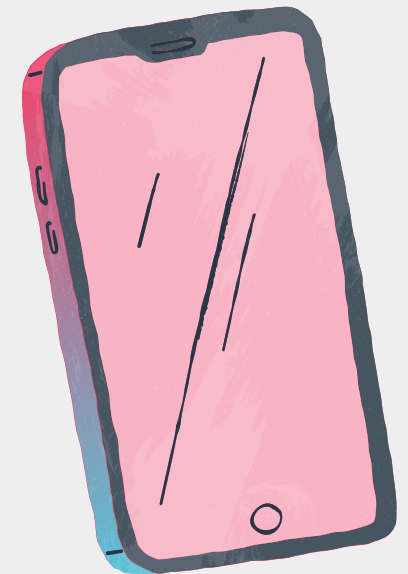
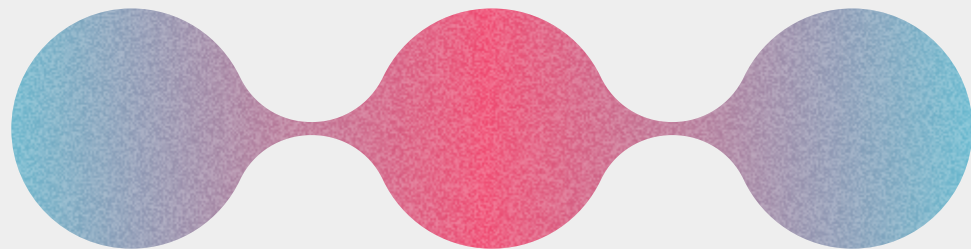
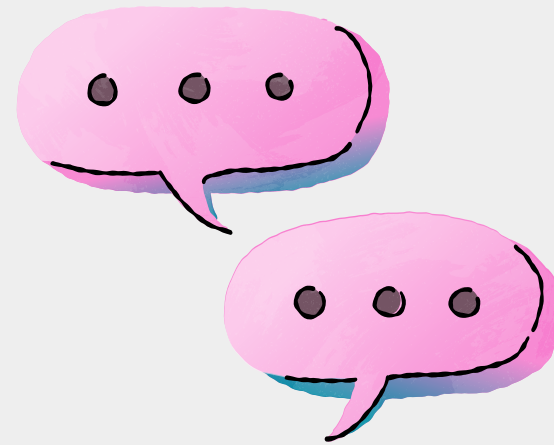


In the construction sector, getting those valuable customer reviews can be a bit of a balancing act. When companies send review requests via email alone, they typically see about 46 reviews per location. If they switch to SMS, that number bumps up to around 59 reviews. But here's where it gets interesting—combine both email and SMS, and the average jumps to 89 reviews per location! This shows that in construction, a multi-channel approach really pays off. By using both methods, companies can tap into the convenience of SMS and the thoroughness of email to gather more customer feedback and boost their online reputation. It's like using the right tools for the job to build something great!



Review generation is dependent on convenience

When you can reach consumers where they are — on their smartphones — you have a higher chance they'll respond to your review request. Investing in SMS alongside email helps maximize customer convenience when it comes to generating reviews.



Best practices for SMS & email requests

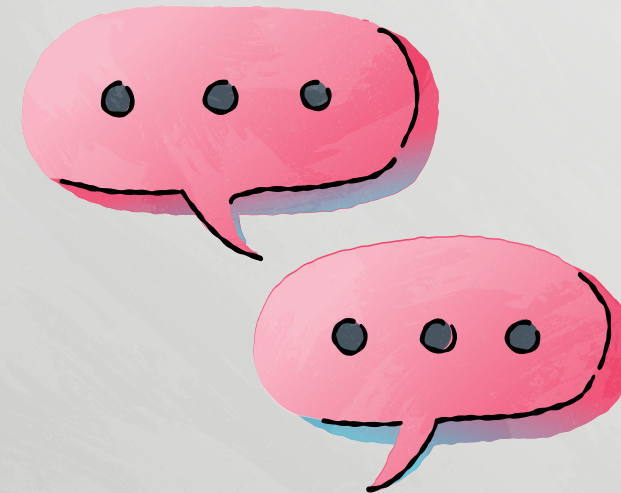
Though email can still be an effective messaging tool, SMS is the preferred channel for nearly half (48%) of customers these days — with text open rates as high as 98%. Whether you've adopted SMS already or rely on email alone to communicate with customers, here are a few tips for when to use SMS vs. email — specifically for sending review requests.

Send an SMS review request:

- When you want to reach customers immediately — such as right after a purchase. Customers are likely to see and respond to texts quicker than email.
- For concise requests you can make in 160 characters or less — including the link for customers to leave the review. Anything longer and the text could get broken into multiple parts, which is frustrating for customers.
- During appropriate business hours — usually considered between 8 a.m. - 9 p.m. in the time zone(s) where your customers live. Texting outside those hours can violate SMS compliance.

Example of an SMS review request

*Hi, [customer name], got a minute to leave us a review? We'd love your feedback.
Thanks in advance! [link with shortened URL] Reply STOP to end.*



Best practices for SMS & email continued

Send an email review request:

- When you want to reach a wide segment of your audience as part of a big review generation campaign.
- For lengthier, more detailed review requests, since space limitations are less of a concern with email.
- When personalization really matters to your customers — since email allows you the room for both creativity and personalization. You can personalize SMS messages too; you just have to do it in fewer words.



Example of an email review request

Hi, [customer name],

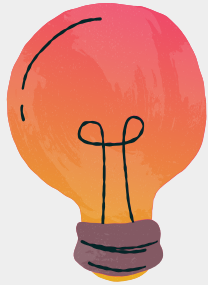
You recently made a purchase at our store in [location]. Thank you for choosing us!

If you have a minute, I'd love it if you could share any feedback about your experience. Just click on this link to leave a review: [link URL] It's quick and easy!

Again, thank you for your purchase. And we hope to see you again soon!

Sincerely,

[Name, title]



Review generation is central to online reputation management

Understanding what your customers really say and think about your business helps you strengthen your brand image and reputation. It helps you make necessary business improvements that can attract more customers, deepen trust in your business, and give you an advantage over the competition.

That's why it's critical to **stay proactive** in requesting, generating, responding to, and managing customer feedback and reviews.

Remember:

- The more review requests you send, the more you can boost your review volume.
- Requesting reviews can positively influence your NPS and star ratings.
- Sending requests via SMS gives you a lot of bang for your buck, but using a combination of SMS and email is the most effective.

Be sure to follow the tips, best practices, and strategies we've discussed here to enhance review generation and start to see a measurable impact in your online reputation. And stay tuned for a deep-dive analysis of each business category by following us on [LinkedIn](#) or [our blog](#).

Footnotes and sources

1 - <https://surveysparrow.com/blog/net-promoter-score-healthcare/>

2 - <https://www.clearlyrated.com/solutions/resources/industry-benchmark/2023-nps-benchmarks-for-the-insurance-industry/>

3 - https://customergauge.com/benchmarks/industry/consumer_brands/restaurants

4- <https://www.clearlyrated.com/solutions/resources/industry-benchmark/2023-nps-benchmarks-for-the-legal-industry/>

5 - <https://customergauge.com/benchmarks/industry/logistics>

6- <https://www.retently.com/blog/good-net-promoter-score/>



About us

GatherUp™ helps businesses of all sizes manage and improve their online reputation. We empower digital marketing agencies and their clients by making it easy to collect, monitor, and respond to customer feedback, turning reviews into actionable insights for growth.

Our software scales to support agencies managing a few locations or thousands, helping them deliver superior customer experience (CX) and reputation management services. Founded by Local SEO and marketing experts, GatherUp powers over 40,000 businesses.

Learn more: <https://gatherup.com>

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