

The New World of Prosumers

Customers now have a far wider choice in suppliers because of websites and e-commerce, and can also look at reviews of products, compare prices, and find out from other prosumers all about the company; for instance, whether the after sales experience is good, bad or indifferent when something goes wrong.

One bad customer can start an avalanche of complaints online which, if not monitored and responded to, can lead to the biggest PR headache of all time. Prosumers do not necessarily complain directly to you, they quite often go to their favourite forum, blog or social network and type their moans there.

It is important to monitor as often as you can what is being said about your company or products. This can be done without a substantial increase in resources, using tools such as Google Alerts, which will email you when your keywords crop up in the search engines.

However, it is also important to ensure that the information on the Internet about your product is as accurate and fair as possible so that prosumers make an informed choice when making the purchase decision. Assuming that all the information about your product is on YOUR website is a bad move.

There may well be reviews, (good and bad) on the many consumer sites out there for just that purpose; there may be critical as well as positive comments on forums and social networks, in blogs; or a thumbs down on stumbleupon, and part of the marketing mix these days is to find and deal with these.

Just posting a few positive testimonials from satisfied customers on your own site will not cater for the prosumer who looks everywhere but on your site to make an informed choice. After all, the prosumer assumes that your site will only have positive comments about the product or brand, and will seek the other side of the story elsewhere on the Internet.

Eliminating unfair or negative comments may be time-consuming, but it will make all the difference to your sales ledger. Contacting those who have posted about your product is always a good idea, offer public explanations as to why a particular complaint or problem has occurred, and always apologise. You can offer a particular customer a refund, or a replacement. Make sure that the customer is dealt with in such a way that they will feel obliged to retract any negative postings, and start singing your praises instead. Be friendly, and develop a relationship with the disgruntled party.

It may be that the person you are dealing with is a serial complainer, and that you are facing an uphill struggle. You will never remove every negative comment from the Internet, so don't worry about the odd few difficult customers. Just as a few negative reviews on Amazon have never been shown to directly affect sales of books, so the prosumer will feel that a smattering of less than complimentary remarks gives a more credible picture of how other prosumers feel.

Focus on those who are posting on high traffic sites or blogs, and engage with them. And once you have dealt with the problems online, don't forget to work out why the problem occurred in the first place and put the systems in place in your business to ensure it cannot happen again.

About the Author

Phil Robinson is an experienced online marketing consultant and Founder of ClickThrough Marketing – an international [Search Engine Marketing](#) & Internet Marketing agency.

ClickThrough specialise in Search Engine Optimisation, Pay Per Click Marketing, Online PR, Social Marketing & Website Conversion Strategies.

We have a huge range of free internet marketing resources including ebooks, industry news and research reports - available here <http://www.clickthrough-marketing.com/resources.php>

Source: <http://www.resellgoodies.com>