



The power of online reviews: Helping house buyers and sellers make the right choice.

A JudgeService Industry Paper

JudgeService®

Introduction

- As the younger generations look to enter the property market, online reviews will become even more important for Estate Agents.
- Estate Agents are true survivors. But choosing the right one - whether on the High Street, Online or Hybrid - can be a tricky task.

These are the facts that emphasise the importance of online reviews. Successful businesses care about reviews.

Online reviews help us decide where/what to eat, what to watch, what to buy and what to sell and are now an integral part of who we are as consumers and business owners. They have become the go-to way to make decisions about places we have never been and with the seemingly endless amount of options we have as consumers nowadays, they are one of the only ways to narrow down our choices as consumers.

Following the trend of online research, where 88% of consumers say that they trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations, house buyers, and sellers, are increasingly looking online to find out more about the Estate Agent they are considering. User reviews are proven sales drivers, and something the majority of customers will want to see before deciding where to turn. Most consumers will read between 4-6 online reviews before they fully trust a business.

Did you know?

88%

of people trust online reviews written by other consumers as much as they trust recommendations from personal contacts

Source: *Bright Local*

62 percent of online home buyers said if a real estate agent has excellent reviews, they are most likely to contact that agent, according to a *True Focus Media* study, which is based on responses from 2,500 online home buyers.

The power of reviews

As people do more online research and engage with other customers before making a decision, online reviews can be gold. Many Estate Agents use digital channels such as email marketing, digital advertising and social marketing, but when it comes to the final decision of which one to actually use, positive online reviews can be the deciding factor in tipping the balance.

Reviews provide insight into the experiences of other buyers and sellers, so if they're not sure who to use they can easily see what others have said about a particular company or agent. Consumers now know how important it is to find out what kind of reputation a specific Estate Agent has before considering and, in this digital age, the reviews that are created can help consumers make great choices.

When making a purchase, 91% of consumers consider an online review more important than input from a salesperson.

Influence Central

For example, if consumers are searching for a home for themselves or their loved ones, it's reasonable to assume that they will consult online review sites for other consumers' feedback and experiences. Reviews, after all, are one of today's leading sources of information on the quality of local businesses.

And let's not forget, reviews are free and give companies the opportunity to build their reputation regardless of budget. Reviews that are accessible and displayed across reputable websites help establish and grow a reputation at no cost, while also increasing confidence in a business. Reviews give consumers insight into the experiences of other house buyers or sellers, so if they're not sure who to use they can easily see what others have said.

The power of online reviews

- 88% of consumers say that they trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations.
- On average, a consumer will look at over 10 information sources before making a purchase.
- 72% of buyers will take action only after reading a positive review.
- 40% of buyers form an opinion of a business after reading just 1-3 reviews.
- More people are reading reviews on a regular basis (50% vs. 33% in 2015).
- 91% of consumers regularly, or occasionally, reading online reviews.
- Only 9% of consumers don't read online reviews.

**figures sourced from BrightLocal*

The importance of trust

We are in an era where trust is at a premium.

Evaporation of Trust in the Past Year in the UK

Trust in institutions, 2012-2017, shown in percent

Source: 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer



Because they can share something a brand can't — real experience. That's why shoppers trust a personal recommendation above anything else. Nielsen

Research from Vendesta reveals that 30% of consumers assume online reviews are fake if there are no negative reviews! Reviews should be independent and genuine to help customers make more informed purchasing decisions. Authenticated and validated reviews help ensure that customers know to trust the feedback available.

When buying or selling a property, this is no different. The reduced trust in businesses means that transparency and accuracy are imperative. And this is where online reviews can help.

The availability of unbiased reviews, to help people make the right choice, has never been more important. Verified ratings and reviews can drive conversion and quicken the purchase / selling journey. Customer interactions can actually convince prospects at that critical point of purchase.

A person like yourself now tied for the credible spokesperson



Peers Now as Credible as Experts

This image shows the importance of Peer Reviews. It highlights the percentage who rate each spokesperson as extremely / very credible, and change from 2016 to 2017. Peers are the most important spokesperson for your company.

Trust the Reviews

- a best practise checklist.

Consumers rely on online reviews to make decisions. They also expect reviews to be independent and genuine to help them make more informed purchasing decisions. Our knowledge and expertise mean we are perfectly placed to introduce our best practice checklist for reviews:

- 1 Review sites should operate rigid testimonial publishing criteria to ensure that consumer reviews are totally unbiased and provide an accurate picture of the consumer experience.
- 2 All endorsements should reflect the endorser's actual experience and opinion. Companies should not use testimonials that make claims about a service that can't be backed up with clear evidence.
- 3 Appropriate procedures should be in place to detect and remove fake reviews, and act promptly in response to reports of suspected fake reviews.
- 4 Every testimonial should be checked, prior to publishing, and there is no safer check than a pair of eyes reading content!
- 5 Review sites should not 'pretend' to be a consumer and write reviews about customers – or pay others to do so.
- 6 Money or gifts should never be offered to customers to write positive reviews as inducements. This would dilute the accuracy and honesty of any review.
- 7 Every review should be published, including negative ones, provided they are genuine and lawful. Customers are becoming increasingly wary and suspicious of only positive reviews.
- 8 Reviews should never be published if they include swearing, abusive language or defamatory remarks.
- 9 Reviews that contain personal details such as a mobile phone number should also never be published.
- 10 Sometimes a customer may request that a review is not made public. These requests must be honoured.
- 11 There should be no unreasonable delay before reviews are published, so consumers get the current picture straight away.

See organic growth in SEO through online reviews

With the advent of the digital age, search engines are placing more and more emphasis on user-generated content. They want to know what consumers are saying about a product or service and online reviews of your business are one way you can tap in to this, without having to lift a finger.

Reviews can provide your website with new, relevant content. Over a nine-month period businesses that started showing reviews generated over 7.5k organic page views per month – an increase of approximately 2.5k.

These reviews can then feed into social media optimisation, as user-generated content is more likely to come through social media channels.



Why JudgeService?

- Our surveys are developed from market demand, because lets face it, it's a consumers' world! We have been chosen by over 1,000 clients because of our specialist knowledge and experience.
- Our knowledge will support your business in enhancing customer satisfaction, gaining competitive advantage, increasing sales and retaining existing customers. Our surveys and online tools are constantly re-evaluated and we strive to keep up-to-date with customer demand and market changes.
- We have established successful partnerships with leading web, CRM and media providers to allow us to integrate with existing systems.
- We identify areas for improvement across your whole business, focusing on relevant training, sales process improvement and business process improvement.
- We can work alongside system providers to assist in the transition of data, making it easier for you.
- We provide you with extensive, comprehensive reports, giving you an understanding about the level of service provided from a buyer and a seller point of view.

For Sales

Our survey and reporting system will help to identify the needs of your buyers and sellers. You can use this insight to develop a stronger sales story to aid conversion.

You can access granular data with our reporting system, and really dig down, even to where you can assess how each salesperson is performing and identify where they could improve.

For Marketing

Overall, we can help to improve your brand and branch image through in-depth surveys, leading to increased satisfaction levels and using the verbatim as reviews on your website (via our widget). This drives traffic and time spent on site, increasing trust from clients. Our Right-to-Reply feature can also negate any negative feedback.

You can use star ratings and testimonials in your campaigns, on your collateral and on your Google AdWord campaigns.

You can improve your SEO and improve organic search by sharing your content across digital channels, we can seamlessly integrate with social media platforms.

About JudgeService.

JudgeService is one of the UK's most effective online review providers and understands how powerful reviews are in influencing consumer behaviour and aiding a conversion.

Our business was launched in 2011 and has received more than 750,000 reviews and is currently used by more than 1,000 companies. We provide end-to-end customer contact and monitoring tools, which not only enable groups to assess sales and satisfaction across different branches, but also encourage and promote positive customer testimonials online and via social media.

As an independent review provider we are dedicated to bringing unbiased customer reviews to the marketplace. And whilst they are compelling, these reviews are just the tip of the iceberg compared to the rich vein of customer data that JudgeService clients are able to use to manage and improve their businesses.

Contact Us

As you can see, JudgeService can provide lots of benefits to your business, for your Sales, Marketing, Operations, Google Rankings and Search Engine Optimisation.

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