



# Using online reviews to boost customer loyalty

How to ace the world of social media



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# Welcome to the world of online reviews.

Did you know that **\*73%** of consumers say that good reviews online make them trust a company more?

**Good reviews are gold dust for your dealership.** They do more than make your brand shine: they bring customers in the doors. **\*84%** of millennials say that user-generated content has at least some influence on what they buy. One of the very best things you can do for your bottom line is to keep people saying good things about you online. But those good words don't just happen accidentally.

Sometimes marketing is like darts, as you target an audience and try to hit the perfect bullseye. But **social media is more like a game of tennis**, with a lively back-and-forth between players. You've got to be ready to rally with your favourite customers, to return their serve and hit winners. (You can still reward yourself with a pint after the match, of course.)

**In this eBook we'll outline five key ways to keep the rallies going in social media and to keep the good reviews and customers coming through your doors.**

\* Capgemini, Selfie Experience report, 2015

\*\* Bazaarvoice, Millennials whitepaper, 2012



# 1 - Be ready to play every day

Andy Murray and Serena Williams don't win by accident, and your social media wins won't happen by accident either. You have to make the online game a key priority and practice it daily. It's well worth it: **\*38% of consumers say they plan to consult social media** before buying their next car, and **\*\*79% of consumers trust online reviews** as much as personal recommendations.

Today's car buyers expect you to be both present and active online and in social media. If your last Facebook post was two months ago, they're going to go find someone who was online this morning instead. So make sure you're ready to do things like check Twitter and Facebook often to see who's talking about you and send them a friendly reply. (More about that in a moment.)

**Your goal is to build an ongoing conversation with a large group of loyal fans and followers.** Every positive comment made online should be highly prized; it adds to word-of-mouth and tells the world what kind of company you are.



\* Econsultancy, 2014

\*\* Social Media Examiner, Local Consumer Review survey, 2013

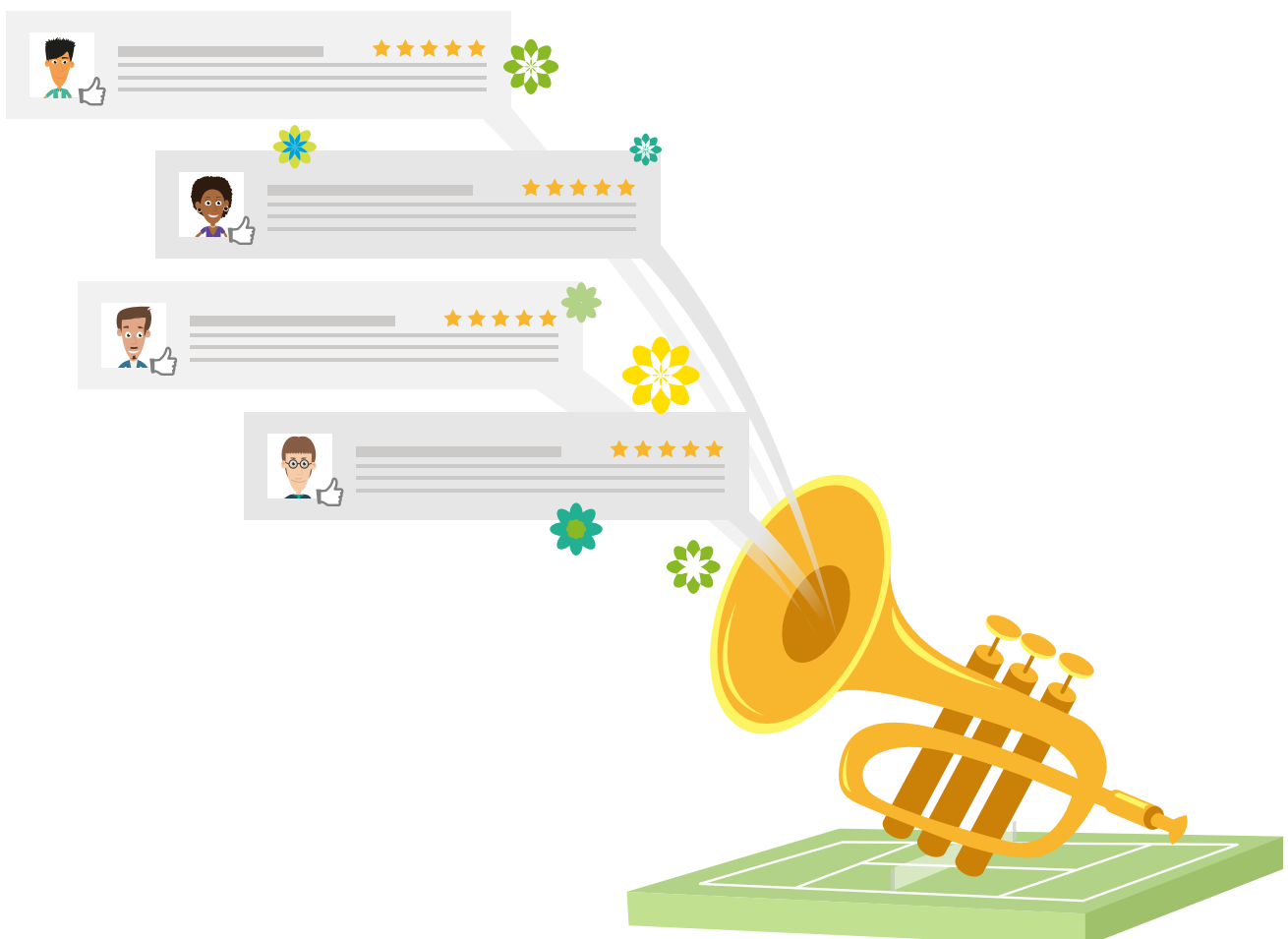
## 2 - Get your whole team on the court

Tennis is played in singles or in pairs, but online your whole squad can take the court. **Social media is all about teamwork** - which is where your staff come in.

Get your sales and aftersales teams involved with your social media efforts. How many of your staff are personally active on social media already, after all? (Maybe even during work hours?) So make it easy for them to be advocates for your brand on social media. Everyone from your receptionist to your VP of sales can take a swing.

If employees love working for your team, let them tell the world! They can share your posts with their friends, write their own messages or blog posts on your page, and build enthusiasm for the dealership. **As more advocates sing your brand's praises, more customers will want to do the same.**

Show your staff good reviews of your dealership online, and make sure they know just how much this helps to **shorten the sales cycle, convert prospects into customers**, and most importantly **improve the bottom line** for everyone. Remind them to encourage existing customers to write reviews about their good experiences. If they need further encouragement, why not consider a little extra motivation in the form of a team dinner or vouchers?



# 3 - Invite your customers to serve

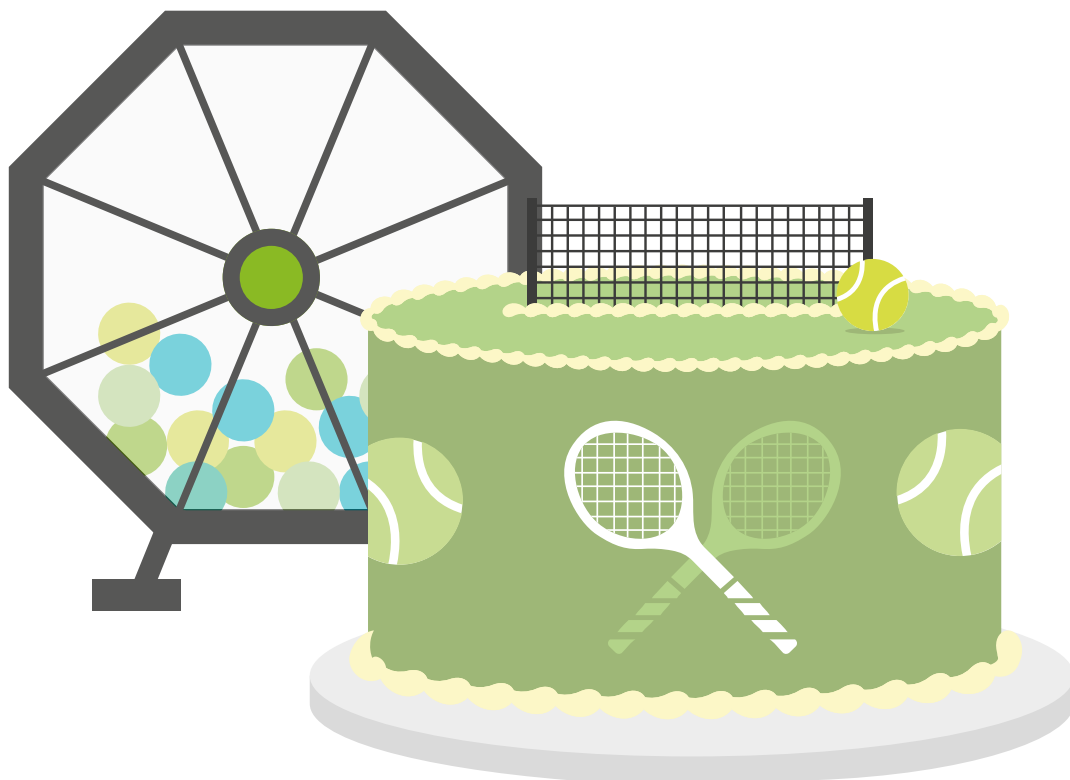
Left to their own devices, **only \*35% of people will take the time to write a review of a good business experience.** You can raise that number by inviting your customers to write a review after they buy a vehicle or a service.

When you hand them their keys, hand them a card inviting them to review you on your website or social channels. Follow up with an email with links to those sites included, so customers can start their review with a single click.

The best way to generate good reviews is to go the extra mile and give good service. But you do that already, right? It can be something as simple as a phone call after their service, or an email on the customer's birthday to offer the sales rep's best wishes. Steps like these will dramatically increase the chances of that customer writing a grand-slam review. **When customers know you care, they return the love in their reviews.**

And you don't need to rely on love alone. Try incentives! Can you offer reviewers a discount on a service, or a free valet or winter VHC? Can you enter them into a draw for a monthly giveaway, such as a free accessory for their car? (It needn't be a Wimbledon silver platter, but should perhaps be sexier than a free tire gauge.)

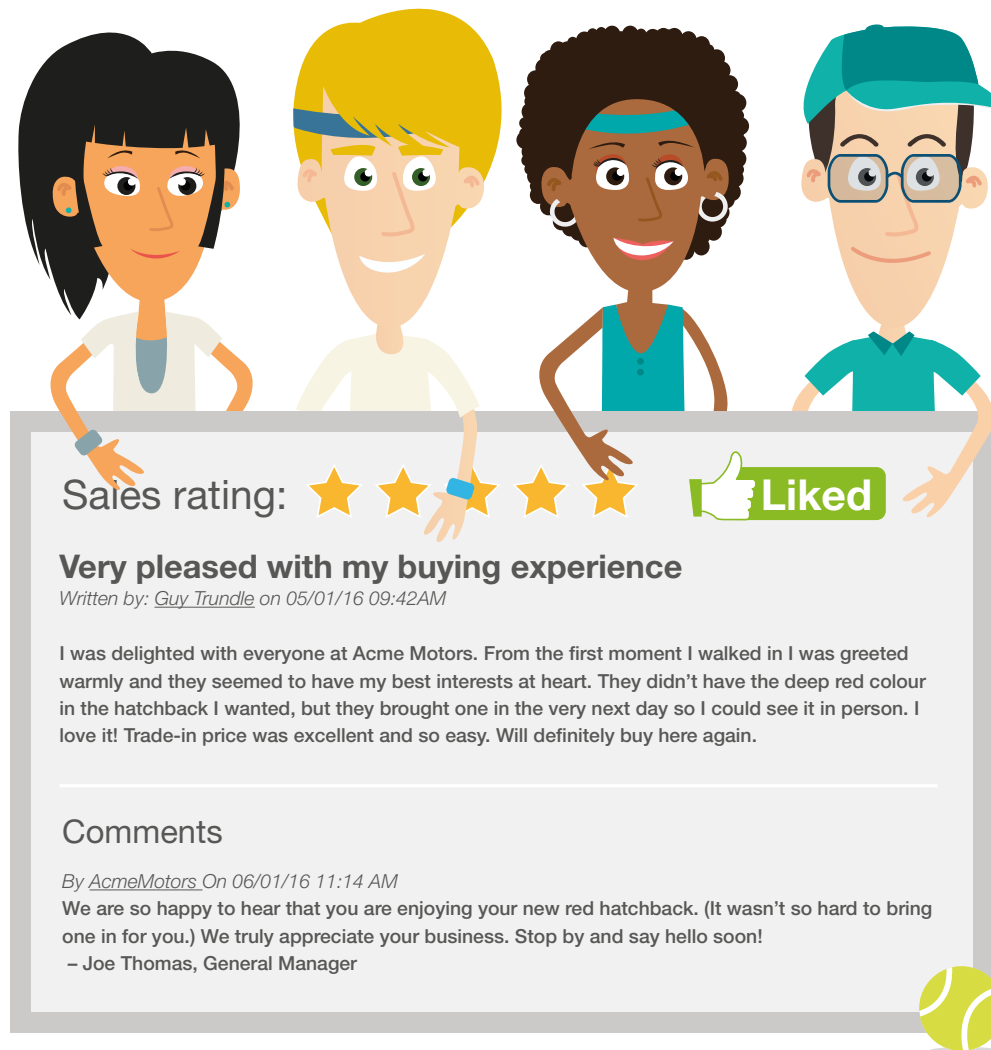
Every good review ripples outward into other comments and can encourage others to interact with future posts and join your team in the next set.



\* Capgemini, Selfie Experience report, 2015

## 4 - Return every shot

Now that you've seen the serve, return it with friendly spin! Once a customer leaves a comment on your social media page, it's your turn to make a return shot. Like this:



**Brands who create new and inspiring ways to interact with their community will be points ahead in the game.** It takes more than simply liking a comment when somebody thanks you for repairing their car or ordering the model they wanted - you need to show that you value their comments and their business.

Reply to the post and thank the person for taking the time to offer their feedback, tagging them by name if possible. If they reply, can you rally with another comment or good-natured quip? If you receive a particularly glowing review, why not also send them a special offer, free valet or a gift to say 'thank you'?

As with your tennis swing, it's all about the follow-through. **These unexpected interactions will be gratefully received and help you form even more of a bond with that customer.** They should feel a sense of pride in what they've posted and a sense of 'belonging to the family' exactly what you want to keep their loyalty.



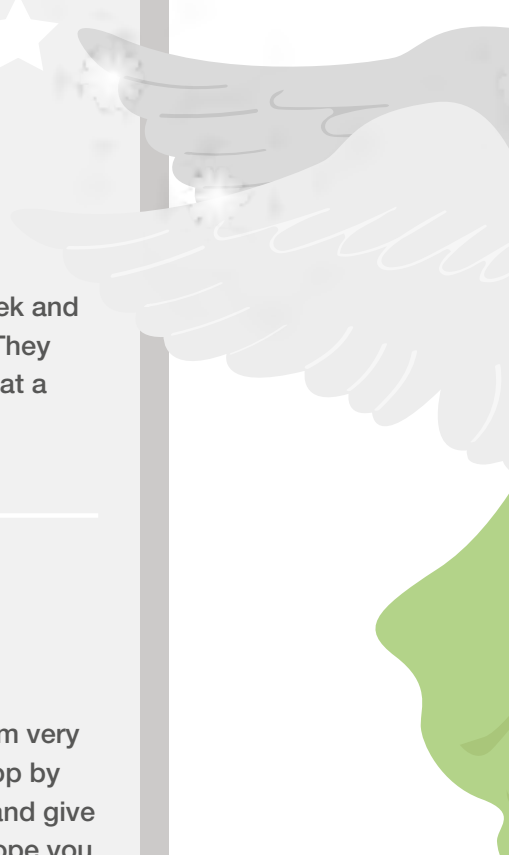
## 5 - Handle the backhands

Most reviews are positive: The social networking company BazaarVoice has reported that for all of its UK clients, 88% of product ratings are 4 or 5 stars out of 5. **The truth is that people talk about the brands they love the most.**

But there will be negative reviews. You can't please everyone every time, and your customers know this. In fact, nobody trusts a page with 100% glowing reviews. **A negative review now and then won't hurt;** it shows that you are human and have nothing to hide.

When you do get a "backhand" review, be ready to volley it with charm and appropriate concern. This calls for a soft return, not a smash; the right kind of empathetic response can turn even a harsh critic into a future advocate.

Make sure you have the right processes in place to spot negative reviews and respond to them quickly, with as little disruption as possible. Set up a process to escalate concerns, one that varies by severity of the problem. Show that you care and so do those in your dealership's upper ranks.



**Sales rating:** ★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆

**Didn't refill my screen wash**  
*Written by: [Judy Flanders](#) on 11/01/16 01:29PM*

I had my Vehicle Heath Check done at Acme Motors last week and today I discovered that they failed to refill my screen wash! They seemed nice but I am very angry about this and had to stop at a petrol station to buy a bottle myself.

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**Comments**  
*By [AcmeMotors](#) On 12/01/16 4:14 PM*

Ms. Flanders, I see that you had your VHC last week and I am very sorry to hear that we missed this important point. Please stop by any time and we'll reimburse you for the bottle you bought and give you two more for the road. I've put a note in your file. I do hope you will come to see us again soon.

- Joe Thomas, General Manager



Once you receive the review from the disgruntled customer, reply to their comment with appropriate concern and tell them that you'll take the matter offline. Nothing more needs to be said online; you don't want to invite the rest of the online world to join in an argument. Make sure you give the customer full visibility of the escalation process too - it shows you take people's feelings very seriously.

Don't take negative reviews personally. People blow off steam online, often more strongly than they would in person. If you did make a mistake, don't turn it into a double-fault: reply with delicacy and integrity no matter who's in the wrong. Be deferential, not defensive. The key theme is that you're going to make it right.

**With the right return shot, who knows? The person who posted that difficult review could come back with a positive "thank you!" for your high level of customer service.**



# Game, set and match

As much as we all talk about social media, its value is still underestimated. **Word of mouth has always been a powerful influencer in the automotive industry**, and today's word of mouth happens in the tennis match of social media.

That's a good thing, because you can't be there when neighbours chat over the back fence, but you can be there online. You can encourage and influence the online reviews of today's technology-minded customers. They really want you and expect you to be their doubles partner.

**And when you get those 5-star reviews, be sure to share them with the world.** Yes, it takes hard work and commitment, but once you've got your strategy in place it will pay off in terms of increasing customer loyalty and new customers coming into your dealership – game, set and match!





For more tips on improving **Customer Loyalty**  
visit [www.cdkinsights.com/loyalty](http://www.cdkinsights.com/loyalty)

