



### ***On a positive note: How to flip a negative review***

Even if you disagree with everything the reviewer said, even if you think it's "fake," you have to respond

BY [JAY THOMPSON](#)

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Back in the day, I spent hundreds of hours talking to thousands of agents about reviews. How to get them, what to do with them and what not to do with them. In virtually every single conversation, this question came up: what happens if I get a negative review?

Understandably, people fear getting a negative review. Let's face it, you have a tough job managing a complicated process. There are dozens of things that can send a transaction spinning out of control over which you have absolutely no influence. You are the client's key contact and an easy target for finger-pointing when things go wrong, making it a virtual certainty that at some point you'll be the recipient of a negative review.

Fear not, however. A negative review isn't the end of the world. There are [studies](#) that have shown consumers put more trust in a service's reviews if they aren't all five stars. After all, no one is perfect, and a suboptimal review can actually add legitimacy to all those amazing reviews you have.

That's not to say you should go out there seeking a subpar review. Just don't freak out if you get one.

But what should you do if you get a negative review?

Simply put, deal with it. The best way to flip a negative review requires two steps: Make personal contact with the reviewer and publicly respond to the review. Let's take a deeper look at each step.

#### **The basics**

Whether you are making personal contact or replying publicly to a review, there are some basic principles to observe.

- Don't be defensive. Your goal is to understand the problem and what it will take to fix it, not point blame somewhere else.

- Own it. If you made a mistake, own it. If the reviewer made a mistake, help them understand without belittling them.
- Be empathetic. We've all had a bad experience as a consumer. You understand better than anyone how emotional the home buying or selling process can be. Showing understanding and empathy will go a long way in resolving any issues.
- Don't take it personally. This is hard because you take pride in your work. It may feel quite personal, but the reviewer has a problem (or a perceived problem) with the transaction, not you personally.
- Be professional. Now is not the time to let your own emotions get the best of you. Don't shout, don't name-call. Be the professional you are, no matter what the reviewer may be flinging your way.

### **Make personal contact**

The best way to deal with an upset client is to reach out to them personally. Ideally you should pick up the phone and call them. Now is not the time to depersonalize with a text or email.

Those, however, are better than ignoring the reviewer or initiating contact with a public response to their review. Your aim in this outreach is understanding their concerns and what might be done to address them.

### **Public response**

Most review platforms provide a way for you to publicly respond to a review. Since complete strangers will be reading these, and, yes, judging your services, you need to respond to every negative review. (Ideally you should respond to all reviews. It's an additional opportunity to present you, your message and your brand to the public.)

Observe the basic tenets listed above. Remember, [the internet never forgets](#), and this is not where you want to memorialize going off on someone or acting unprofessionally.

### **What if ...**

#### **You don't know the reviewer?**

Most sites allow anonymous reviews or utilize a user-created screen name that you may know to be able to connect with a person. If that's the case, say so. Obviously you can't reach out personally to an anonymous review, but you should reply publicly. A simple, "We cannot connect this review with any individual. Please reach out to us at (phone) or (email) as we would like to address your concerns directly.

This shows readers that you're willing to take ownership and correct issues — both very positive aspects.

#### **You're being blamed for something out of your control?**

As previously mentioned, real estate agents can be blamed for things completely out of their control. Inspections gone awry, lenders backing off a loan, clouded titles — it's almost endless. If you find yourself in this situation, do not take the "you're an idiot for getting a new credit card during your mortgage processing" route. Instead, use it as an opportunity to educate both the reviewer and the public.

#### **You think the review is fake?**

Yes, fake reviews exist. However, most major review systems have processes, procedures and checks built in to greatly reduce them. "This is fake!" could be true, but many (most?) who read a response like that think, "Yeah, of course that's what you think." Or, "they're just taking the easy way out."

You can probably report a review that you feel is fake, but be prepared to hear "the review stands." Treat a "fake" review like any other and reply "we cannot associate this review with any client. Please contact us directly." The high road is the right road; take it. The view is better and it's less crowded.

### Real-life examples

Seeing real life examples, good and bad, in action are worth a thousand words. Here are some published examples of good and bad responses to reviews.

#### The bad:

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**Will never recommend** | **1.0** ★ [Report a problem](#)

██████████

Listed, but didn't sell my Single Family home in ██████████

★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆ Local knowledge  
★ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ Process expertise  
★ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ Responsiveness  
★ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ Negotiation skills

Our experience in listing our home with ██████████ was miserable. Except for listing on the MLS, any marketing was non-existent (we had to create our own brochures for buyers), no print, social media or other marketing campaigns and never showed up for any showings (it doesn't appear he even followed-up with any of the buyer's agents for feedback). There are far too many other realtors to waste time with ██████████ and hoping that his brokerage mill of basic services lands a buyer. Highly suggest avoiding.

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You know what's wrong, really wrong, with this response? There is no response! How anyone would just let this be published to the world without responding is beyond me. Even if you disagree with everything the reviewer said, even if you think it's "fake," you have to respond.

To many consumers, no response makes it either appear like this happens regularly or that you just don't care what people say about your business. Neither of those are thoughts you want people walking away with.

Here are actual responses left to reviews:

Looks like my profile has been hacked. This story is obviously fake and have never heard or met this person.

Your profile wasn't hacked. If it was, then what makes your other 43 positive reviews genuine? Obviously fake? Which part? All of it (there were some positive points in the review)? Don't blame either the reviewer or the "hackers."

Instead, go with “As you can see from all our positive reviews, we take pride in doing our job well. We’ve researched what was presented in this review and cannot find any connection to an actual client. Would love for the reviewer to reach out to us directly, or respond to the review, so we can address any issues they may have had.”

[...] Stay professional and on that high road.

### The good:


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**Will never recommend** | **1.0** ★ [Report a problem](#)

03/11/2016 - luci brandner  
We connected, but it did not work out. Looking in WA 98155  
Review for Member: [Doug Holman](#)

★☆☆☆☆ Local knowledge  
★☆☆☆☆ Process expertise  
★☆☆☆☆ Responsiveness  
★☆☆☆☆ Negotiation skills

I tried to enlist Doug's help today for our impending move to the Seattle, WA area and before I could even get my first sentence out, he said "no thanks, not interested" and hung up. Incredibly rude and very disappointing, especially since he was our first experience with anyone in the area.

 **Response from Doug Holman on 3/14/2016**

Luci I'm so sorry for this misunderstanding. Everything you've said is accurate. It happened. Unfortunately I was caught off guard and mistook you for a solicitor who had called me repetitively from the same area code. The fault is all mine and it's a hard lesson learned. Seattle is a very welcoming community and I'm sorry to have made a terrible first impression on behalf of all of us in the northwest.

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Doug does an outstanding job here of “owning it.” When I read this, my first thought was, “this guy has a lot of integrity, and he’ll admit when he’s wrong.” You know what I, and many others, want in an agent? Integrity.

## Will never recommend

1.0 ★

[Report a problem](#)

03/27/2015 - waydetardif

Showed home in 2015 in WA 98102.

Primary point of contact [REDACTED]

★☆☆☆☆ Local knowledge

★☆☆☆☆ Process expertise

★☆☆☆☆ Responsiveness

★☆☆☆☆ Negotiation skills

Worked with one of their associates [REDACTED] in searching for a house and was treated poorly from the start. Our wishes weren't respected on a number of fronts, from the types and cost of properties we were interested in to the fact that we didn't want her to photograph our young daughter for her "collection." They were unresponsive, uncooperative and ultimately unfriendly. We found a wonderful realty partner elsewhere and now have a terrific house we are closing on next week.

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### Response from Doron Weisbarth on 3/27/2015

Thank you for your feedback. Our team has a long history of success and a very high bar for excellence as evident by the 85+ glowing reviews that we've received and the numerous deals that we've successfully completed with our many happy clients. I would not and could not be in the top 1% of all real estate brokers in the state of Washington otherwise. I'm very sorry that your experience was less than our normal standard and I want you to know that we'll use your feedback as a teaching opportunity for our entire team. I'm glad to hear that you've found such a great home and wish you and your family many years of joy and happiness in it.

Another great job of owning it. Telling the reviewer (and the world) that you'll take feedback and do something with it is a very powerful message. Ending with sincere wishes for the reviewer is a class act on Doron's part.

## The excellent:

Likely to recommend | 4.0 ★

[Report a problem](#)

04/13/2015 - bettyjoe2000

Sold a Single Family home in 2014 in Rockville, MD.

★★★★☆ Local knowledge

★★★★☆ Process expertise

★★★★☆ Responsiveness

★★★★☆ Negotiation skills

Selling a house that had been rented out for the past 4 years was not easy, so having someone handle the business aspect while we worked to get it in shape was critical. Peggy Lyn was very nice to work with. When we needed help with a major issue in the master bathroom and with the hot water heater, Peggy Lyn was able to recommend good, licensed contractors.

For me, personally, I would have preferred less email exchanges and more phone conversations, but overall, Peggy Lyn did a very good job for us.

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**Response from Peggy Lyn Speicher on 2/14/2018**

Thank you so much for the review, Betty and Joe. We pride ourselves in the network of professionals we've chosen to partner with (after years of vetting). I'm so glad you found their services, and ours, so wonderful. And, thank you for the feedback regarding our communication. Unlike most agents, we perform a lot of proactive communication with our clients and, sometimes, phone calls can become a bit overwhelming; especially with the amount of / detailed information we like to share. That said, I understand your comment and we'll strive to ensure the preferred method of communication is used for each of our client's. Thank you for trusting us with the sale of your home.

This isn't a bad review at all. Peggy Lyn does a masterful job of highlighting what her team provides, as well as showing she's willing to take constructive feedback and improve her process for all her future clients. A perfect example of how to reply to a review, and that you should reply to all reviews, not just the negative ones.

It's perfectly normal to have concern over negative reviews. However, you shouldn't fear them. Have a system in place to receive reviews, respond to all of them, and rather than fear reviews, enjoy the increased business they can bring.

*Jay Thompson is a real estate veteran and co-founder of AgentLoop living in the Texas Coastal Bend. Follow him on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#). He holds an active Arizona broker's license with eXp Realty. Called "the hardest working retiree ever," as the founder of [Jay.Life](#) he writes, speaks and consults on all things real estate.*