

Help from Yelp



How good online reviews can drive your business

By Roy Bardowell

No one knows more about the power of Yelp than my son,

Roy Bardowell III, the owner of Luxor Door Service in Orange County, Calif. About four years ago, Roy started out on his own in a huge market that has many competitors. I was concerned that he might not survive, but thanks to Yelp, he's thriving.

Actually, Roy has come to *rely* on Yelp to bring him business. He spends very little on advertising, and he's letting the power of positive reviews drive his business. And it's working. But it can work for you or against you, so read this article carefully.

Yelp has become quite popular among many homeowners. It allows them to praise good service or to spout off when they feel jilted or cheated. It can become a major reason why customers call you or why they *don't* call you. The same principle holds true for other review sites like HomeAdvisor, Google, Angie's List, and Houzz.

Consumers' new power

Roy's experience with online reviews started a few years ago when he started selling operator parts on eBay. Your goal as an eBay seller is to maintain a 100 percent rating. This tells potential buyers you are a reliable and trustworthy company. Roy soon learned that he had to go the extra mile consistently to ensure that the eBay user had an excellent

experience. One finicky customer can drop your entire score overnight.

Our industry has been focused on weeding out the "Bad Bob" companies, and that's good. But we have forgotten about the "Finicky Fred" customers. A few years ago, someone coined the term "PITA" customer (Pain In The A--).

PITA customers are alive and well, and they are multiplying. These review sites have put significant power in the hands of consumers, and some consumers are taking advantage of this power. As a result, you need to do your best with every customer.

Bonding with the customer

That brings me back to Yelp. Thanks to Roy's eBay experience, he knows the importance of treating every customer with respect. He knows how to provide excellent door service, and he bonds well with every homeowner.

That ability has greatly helped his Yelp score. Roy explains things simply and honestly as he goes through the safety inspection with the homeowner. I like to think that this is where a little of me rubbed off on my son.

Earning your stars

Yelp allows the customer to rank your service with one to five stars and to post a comment. So far, Luxor Door Service has received only five-star ratings, so his average is five stars, which is the best you can get. Roy is very proud of this, and rightly so.

When you're finished repairing the door or operator, ask the homeowner what they thought of your service. If they give you a nice comment, politely ask them to give you a good review on Yelp. Many will do it.

Playing by the rules

These positive reviews are so powerful, you may be tempted to offer incentives in exchange for a good review. But don't do it. That's a violation of Yelp's rules, and it can come back to burn you.

The spring 2018 issue of Door + Access Systems reported that GDS was recently caught doing this, and Yelp has posted a Consumer Alert on at least 26 Yelp listings for GDS. (See "California's attorney general takes action against GDS," page 54.)

Today's "word-of-mouth" advertising

Getting one five-star review will motivate you to get another one. After you get several, your excellent reputation can begin to build your business. It is good for you, good for the homeowner, and good for our industry.

Roy now has more than 25 five-star reviews, and they are generating new jobs constantly. It proves that doing great work and giving good service can actually increase your bottom line. It's today's version of "word-of-mouth" advertising. It's cheap, and, depending on your market, it can be very effective.

Let's summarize.

1. Be on time for appointments.

The only time my son lost a job to a competitor was when the other guy told the homeowner that he could get there first. Quick service sometimes means more than price.

2. Do your best work with every customer, providing quality components and quality service.

“ He spends very little on advertising, and he's letting the power of positive reviews drive his business. And it's working.”

3. Teach as you go.

Since most people are unfamiliar with the garage door system, they appreciate when you explain your work and your recommendations. Don't try to show off your knowledge by mesmerizing them with technical jargon. Speak plainly and honestly. One of my son's Yelp reviews said that Roy has "the heart of a teacher, not a salesman." I love that one best!

4. Politely ask for a good review, and thank the customer for their help.

Some Bad Bobs will spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on advertising. If you're going out on your own, you might think you need to do the same. But thanks to social media sites like Yelp, you can build a successful business simply by *doing excellent work*.

Isn't that the way it's supposed to be? ■

Actual Yelp reviews for Luxor Garage Door Service

- "Roy was extremely professional and explained every part of the process."
- "Gave me fair prices over the phone (\$100 less than the other company I had scheduled) and was very straightforward with information and pricing."
- "Their response was quick and the quote was very reasonable. The technician was friendly, clean, and did a stellar job."
- "Excellent service! Great attitude! Reasonable prices!"
- "Roy showed up on time and was very courteous and professional. I was impressed that he did not press me to buy a new garage door and opener."
- "Called Roy at noon on a Monday; my garage door was fixed by 5 p.m."

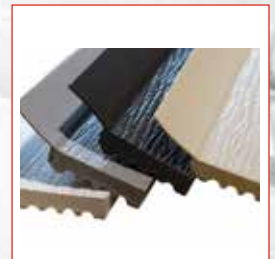
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