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The Dark Side Of Five-Star Reviews: Why Customers Don't Trust Perfect Ratings

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85% of U.S. customers say ratings and reviews help them decide if they want to make a purchase.
GETTY

How important are online ratings and reviews? Our annual [customer experience research](#) found that 85% of U.S. customers say ratings and reviews help them decide if they want to make a purchase. That's almost nine out of 10 customers!

However, that same number of customers (85%) also believe that some ratings and reviews are fake. While not all ratings and reviews are fake, the number of dishonest reviews has become a problem. [RetailWire's recent article](#) about how Amazon is fighting back against fake reviews with strict policies and technology is an important place to learn how top online brands deal with the problem. The article also cites research from Fakespot estimating that 42% of Amazon reviews are fake.

It's important to note that the fake reviews are not Amazon's attempt to persuade consumers. On the contrary, the company is waging a war against fake reviews with stricter policies and proactive detection.

I recently made a purchase from a retailer selling through the Amazon Marketplace, which allows third-party sellers to list and sell products on Amazon. About two weeks

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Fake reviews come in several different forms:

Friends, company employees or others—not customers—are asked to leave reviews.

Customers are bribed, like I was, to leave a positive review.

Companies take down negative reviews and only leave the good ones.

And, not all fake reviews are positive. Negative reviews left by competitors—not customers—that lie about a company's products or customer service to make them look bad can impact the reputation of a company or brand.

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But having 100% five-star ratings and/or reviews isn't good either. Our annual research found that 76% of customers are skeptical about the authenticity of reviews if they are all positive, and 30% of customers say they won't purchase from a company that doesn't have any negative reviews.

So, what's a company to do?

1. Make It Easy for Customers to Leave Reviews: If you want reviews, it's okay to ask for them. Send an email with a link to leave the review.

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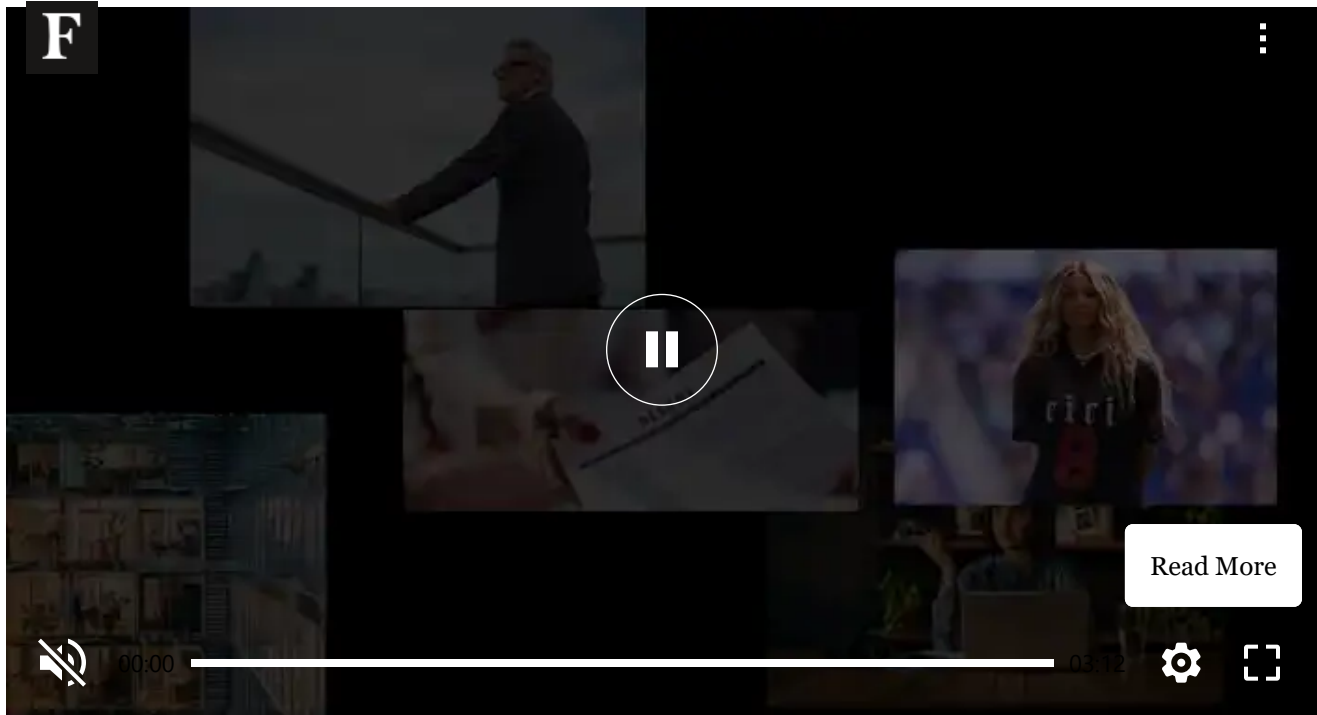
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demonstrate good customer service.



3. Respond to Positive Reviews: We coach our clients to respond to all reviews, not just negative ones. Depending on how many you get, this can seem like a daunting task. But if someone takes the time to leave a lengthy message of positive feedback, give them the respect of a simple response.

4. Identify Verified Customers: If you look at Amazon reviews, you'll see the notation of "Verified Purchase" next to the review. This is credibility.

5. Don't Game the System: Offering bribes and incentives for positive reviews crosses an ethical line. And, taking down negative reviews is, in effect, lying to your customers.

Almost every industry, not just B2C, has the opportunity for customers to leave reviews. Depending on the company (and industry), the review sites may not be public like a retailer's website or a review platform like Google Reviews. Many industries in

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way to get excellent reviews isn't to buy them or game the system. It's to earn them!

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