

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

We've got your back

7 Reasons Why Your Brand Needs Consumer Affairs



SEO



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In today's world of Consumer Generated Media (CGM), your customers hold a larger megaphone which has increased the need for proactive online brand management. In fact, customers look to peers for advice in purchase decisions. 75% of shoppers say it's important to consult online reviews before buying, and 50% of consumers use third-party review sites for research.

This power shift intimidates many brands who tend to view online ratings and reviews as an uncontrollable presence that must be "dealt with." At ConsumerAffairs, we believe companies should seize the opportunity to connect with customers and jointly shape the conversation happening online.

We've got your back. Here are 7 reasons to partner with ConsumerAffairs.



Your customers are here

Each month, 3.2 million unique visitors (the combined populations of Rhode Island, Vermont and Delaware) come to ConsumerAffairs.com to research and review more than 5,000 brands that are represented on our site.

Now, imagine for a moment your brand is a candidate in the next presidential election. What would happen if you completely ignored certain voters and their collective voice? How would they consider the issues that are important if you didn't respond to them? Citizens would feel frustrated, betrayed and insignificant, and you would alienate part of your constituent base.

Brands are no different than presidential candidates—they need to be attentive and engaged to beat competitors and win each customers' vote. This begins with being present where your customers exist. Twitter and Facebook have helped brands realize the need for online reputation management. However, many of these conversations are happening off the pages of these popular social media sites and are instead appearing in Google Search Results, on blogs and third-party reviews sites like ConsumerAffairs. Ignoring these sites means ignoring current and prospective customers and surrendering the conversation about your brand.

The more than 3.2 million consumers visiting ConsumerAffairs each month are active and vying for your attention. They spend an average of eight minutes on the site and more than 50,000 of them come back to read reviews on a monthly basis. Choose to be present and take the lead with ConsumerAffairs.

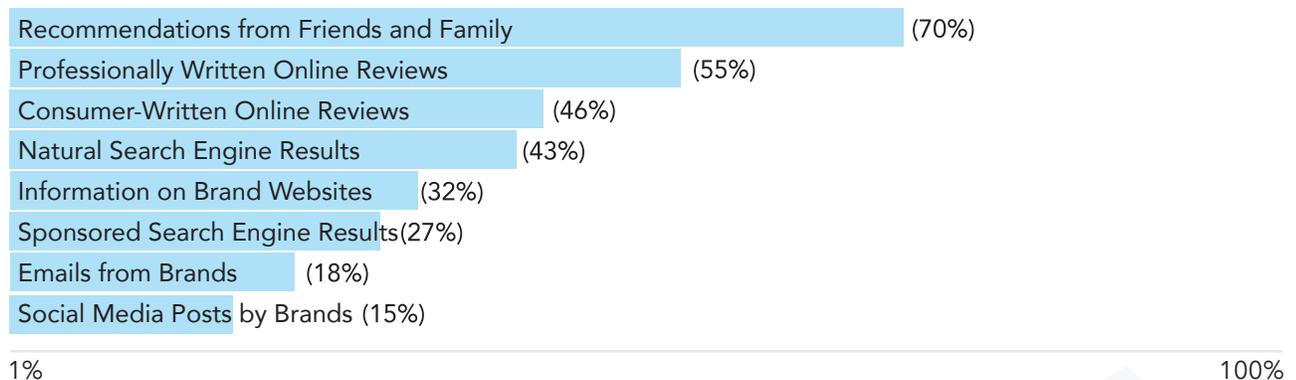


The Trust Mark

The popularity of ConsumerAffairs hinges on one truth: Consumers trust each other *much more* than they will ever trust brands. Forrester ranked the public's trust in different promotional activities and found that third-party sources hold the most credibility with consumers. Direct communications from brands hold much less credibility, falling to the bottom of the list (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Percent of US Consumers Who Say They Trust Different Advertising/Promotional Methods

Taken from, *How to Build Your Brand with Branded Content*. March 2013



ConsumerAffairs was founded in 1998 by veteran journalist James R. Hood with the mission to form a third party, neutral information source for consumers.

Over 16 years, the ConsumerAffairs shield has come to symbolize the trust that both consumers and brands have in our brand. To consumers, the shield represents a reliable source of information, helping them make informed purchase decisions and enabling them to share their experiences with others. For brands, the shield is a badge of honor and an acknowledgement of the care that goes into their customer experience.

When brands partner with ConsumerAffairs, they gain access to the trust we've built with consumers—a trust that lends credibility to the information we provide. As one brand put it, "It doesn't make sense for us to grade our own homework." We agree. ConsumerAffairs, and its 3.2 million monthly visitors, would be happy to grade it for you.



Enhanced Customer Feedback Channels and Support

Do you remember that cute girl (or guy) that you really wanted to take to prom but were too afraid to ask? Then later you found out they had a crush on you and would've said yes? Well, many brands fall into the same trap with online customer feedback. Satisfied customers are more than willing to say 'yes' to sharing positive feedback if only brands would work up the courage to ask.

In his book, *Satisfied Customers Tell Three Friends, Angry Customers Tell 3,000*, Pete Blackshaw explains that most satisfied customers aren't opposed to giving feedback, but brands generally make it too troublesome. Satisfied customers blame a lack of time, access to convenient processes, and trouble making contact as the most common reasons for not providing feedback. At ConsumerAffairs, we call this "feedback friction," and it prevents satisfied customers from publically endorsing the brands that they love. On the other hand, angry customers are motivated to give feedback because they face a problem that needs to be solved and—fairly or unfairly—they will tolerate friction to make their voice heard. Brands can change this dynamic and improve their online reputation by simply asking satisfied customers for feedback and reducing the feedback friction that prevents them from following through.

ConsumerAffairs partners with brands on the review collection process to create simple and auditable feedback mechanisms, increasing channel effectiveness and ultimately, collecting more reviews. Many self-motivated customers visit ConsumerAffairs to talk about your brand, but there are plenty of others who simply need a little encouragement. We collect reviews through Facebook, email, feedback cards, targeted phone calls and, of course, through ConsumerAffairs.com to help satisfied customers easily communicate with your brand. While we can't change customers' star ratings for you, we can help you convince customers to change those ratings themselves, and help you gather more reviews which could improve your overall star rating. In addition, we can verify that your reviews are posted by real customers (and you can dispute those that are not). As a manager, you know about all of the great things your company does, but do you ever wonder why no one is talking about them? We'll help you ask.



Free Market Research

Once your brand decides to actively solicit customer feedback, you've invited customers into your product development circle—and it's amazing what ideas will bubble to the surface as a result. 12% of online reviews include suggestions for product or service improvements. More impressive is the fact that 20% of four-star reviews from very "satisfied customers" include ideas on how to make your product even better. Your customers want to help your brand shine, if you're willing to listen.

Of course, customer suggestions range from simple product improvements, to comparisons against competitors, to blatant executional problems. As a manager you must treat all suggestions with objectivity and curiosity. With hundreds or even thousands of reviews to process, distilling review information into actionable insights is no small task. This is where ConsumerAffairs can help. The ConsumerAffairs analytics platform allows brands to slice customer review data, gauge sentiment, discover geographic or demographic patterns and export this data to Excel; all directly from the ConsumerAffairs for Brands app.

Easy Rest Adjustable Sleep System is a shining example of the success a brand can achieve just by tuning in to its customer reviews. After a few months of using ConsumerAffairs analytics, Easy Rest noticed a disproportionate number of negative reviews from a specific geographic region. Since Easy Rest operates using a regional distribution network, it was able to pinpoint the problem, address it with the local office and prevent the issue from occurring with customers in the future.

Negative reviews never looked so good.



Together, we can turn Brand Assassins into Brand Ambassadors

Negative reviews, if warranted, highlight a brand's potential shortcomings and work to make your brand a better version of itself, but not every customer who writes an online review is fair or rational. Irrational customers—or Brand Assassins—are what keep brand managers up at night. Assassins are akin to the Big Bad Wolf of CGM, set to sway consumer attitudes about your brand and damage the credibility you've worked so hard to build.

A Brand Assassin's goal is no different than any other customer who writes an online review—the customer simply wants recognition and her voice to be heard. The difference is an assassin's post comes from a place of anger, hurt and resentment towards your brand. This can result in a spontaneously composed review filled with emotionally charged—and potentially irrational—sentiments. On any other day, this assassin would be a normal, understanding customer, but a perceived wrong at the hands of your brand has pushed her to cry out for help.

ConsumerAffairs recognizes that the truth about a brand cannot be told without both sides of a story. We believe dialogue with angry customers can develop a mutual understanding and restore respect to a damaged relationship. When a Brand Assassin posts an extremely negative review about your brand, we not only work to verify its validity, we offer a dispute resolution window of 48 hours before the review is posted publically. This gives your brand the chance to identify the customer's concern and take quick and decisive action to resolve the dispute.

Customers are trained to mistrust brands, so when a brand shows genuine concern for its customers and provides personal and extraordinary service, customer perceptions often change. Every negative review is an opportunity for your brand to convert a Brand Assassin into a Brand Ambassador. Brands that partner with ConsumerAffairs have seen up to 35% of Brand Assassins become Brand Ambassadors. We are here to help.

SEO

Search Engine Optimization

Finding Brand Ambassadors and online reviews are only as good as the number of customers they touch. Without page views, even top-rated brands won't see results. Brands that partner with ConsumerAffairs gain access to our SEO expertise, which helps shape brand perception in organic search rankings. Additionally, these rankings serve to consolidate the collection of reviews from Brand Assassins in organic search.

ConsumerAffairs works with partners to optimize each brand's page and represent the true brand that comes with it. This effort allows brands to shape the online conversation.



Revenue Generation

Just in case you aren't convinced, we saved the best for last. By managing your brand's online reputation with ConsumerAffairs, you'll not only have happier customers and a higher brand rating, but you'll witness an increase in leads and prospect conversion. Brands that pursue leads via ConsumerAffairs average a 13.9% conversion on web leads and a 17.7% conversion on phone leads. ConsumerAffairs acts as an extension of your brand's existing lead generation channels, strengthening your customer pool and generating new growth.

Every brand deserves a chance to shine.

To learn more about ConsumerAffairs for Brands, please visit: www.consumeraffairs.com/brands