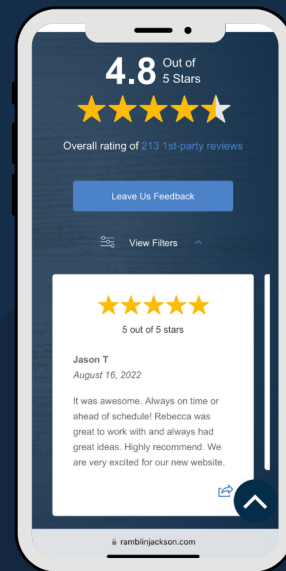


How To Grow Your Sales & Recruiting With **Online Reviews**

HOW TO GROW YOUR SALES & RECRUITING WITH **ONLINE REVIEWS**

Learn how reviews can positively impact your sales and recruiting, as well as how you can get the reviews you need in this **FREE** engaging webinar.



Jack Jostes is the CEO of Ramblin Jackson, a green industry digital marketing and branding agency that helps landscaping companies throughout the country attract more qualified customers with professional branding, digital marketing, sales consulting, website design, and search engine optimization. The author of the *The Tree of Good Fortune*, Jack hosts the weekly YouTube show + podcast, *The Landscaper's Guide to Modern Sales & Marketing*. Jack has been featured in *Lawn and Landscape*, *Colorado Green*, *Turf, Inc.*, and other green industry and business publications. He regularly speaks at regional, national, and international business conferences, including green industry events like the ProGreen EXPO, Farwest Show, National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) events, and the TNLA's Nursery Landscape EXPO. He lives in the foothills of Colorado with his wife and two boys, where he enjoys homeschooling, playing bluegrass mandolin, fly fishing, bowhunting, and spending time in the great outdoors.

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If you want to stand out to potential employees and potential customers, you need to be highly reviewed online. But where should you focus on getting your reviews online? There's a million different places. How should you ask for them? Who on your team should do it? And how do you get your employees to write reviews so that way other great team members know that they want to work with you?

In today's webinar replay, I'll share all of that, plus one of my clients is here live and she shares how collecting feedback and in fact, negative feedback led to a six figure sale. So this is really fun. Watch through to the end because there's a lot of great info, and I'd like to invite you to have a 15-minute marketing brainstorm call with my team. When you book your 15-minute marketing brainstorm call, you'll pick a time on our calendar and we'll call you exactly then and talk about your sales marketing, and we'll help you figure out how to get reviews and how to personalize the results that you're seeing in this webinar. So go ahead and book that at landscapersguide.com/brainstorm, and we look forward to having that call. And now let's get into today's webinar replay.

All right everyone, welcome to How to Grow Your Sales and Recruiting with Online Reviews. In this presentation, you're going to learn how reviews can positively impact or negatively impact your sales and recruiting. And most importantly, you'll learn how to get the reviews you need to get to stay ahead of your competition to recruit A players and attract the best customers possible. My name's Jack Jostes, I'm the CEO at Ramblin Jackson, the host of the Landscaper's Guide podcast and the author of The Tree of Good Fortune, the Landscaper's Guide to Modern Sales and Marketing.

If you're watching this webinar, it's likely that you don't have an online review strategy, and this can cause you to lose on price. People are going to choose a less expensive option if they don't think that you are the best and worth more money. You may be freaked out by negative reviews. It does not feel good when you get a negative review. If you have not gotten one, it's only a matter of time, and I'm going to share with you how to prepare for that.

Or you might feel like your digital marketing isn't working. A lot of times people come to me and they say, "Hey, I'm investing all this money in digital marketing. I have branded vehicles. We're doing all these things and it's not working." And I'm going to share a couple examples of how often reviews are the missing link. I'm going to share a story of how reviews were the missing link for a design-build firm that's been in business for over 25 years. And after getting to this 10 star, this 10 review threshold, they said that they're getting the best lead generation in their entire 25 years of business.

I'm going to share with you how a landscape company finally broke \$3 million in revenue and the role that reviews played in their sales. And that person may or may not be here, and I may or may not ask them to comment on this if they're still here. So stay tuned for that. I'm going to share with you how to respond to negative reviews with grace. I really believe that negative

reviews are a positive PR opportunity if you handle them well. But if you don't handle them well, it can just make it way worse.

And ultimately, I believe that reviews are a way that you can crush your competition. I want to let you know that I've been in business for over 13 years and I run the highest rated company in my industry in the country. We are a digital marketing company that serves the snow and landscape company. There are other agencies that-

Crew:

[inaudible 00:04:02].

Jack Jostes:

Do similar work, but there's-

Crew:

Come.

Jack Jostes:

Nobody with anywhere near. And Robert and Aaron, if you could help me manage the sound, I'd appreciate it. So we just broke 120 Google reviews. If you Google Ramblin Jackson reviews, I'm showing you this shot for a couple reasons. One is potential customers are going to Google your brand name and reviews, even if they're a referral or they see your signage or your vehicles or they get direct mail.

The other thing is potential employees are going to Google your reviews. And when you Google Ramblin Jackson reviews, you'll notice our Google listing on the right, that's called the Knowledge Panel, we have 120 Google reviews. Then you'll see our glass door and you can see that we have 16 votes and a 4.6 star rating. So our review average from employees who work here is strong. Our Yelp is strong, and on Indeed, which is the main place that I use to recruit potential employees, and I'm actually actively hiring right now for a project manager, and I just watched an interview last night. We do our interviews over Zoom, and I listen to them and they said, "Yeah, I applied because when I researched you, I saw all these amazing reviews from your customers and I want to work somewhere that takes great care of their customers. And I saw all of these great reviews from other employees, so I had to apply."

And that's why sales and recruiting are impacted by reviews. We're not going to sell anything today. We are going to offer a lot of valuable information that you can implement yourself. And if you're curious about how we might be able to help you with it, a lot of times people come to this presentation and say, "Jack, how can you and your team help me with it?" We offer a 15-minute marketing brainstorm call. This is where we'll schedule a phone call. You can schedule it online at landscapersguide.co/brainstorm, and we'll just have a conversation about you and your sales, your marketing, your reviews, what's working, what isn't working. And we'll give you some feedback. And if you enjoy that call, we can book another one where we can talk about working together. And that's it.

So that's really the only thing I'm going to offer to you today. And I wanted to let you know that if you do book that today, we'll send you a video. We'll record a screencast video of your digital presence and your reviews ahead of that call. It's really valuable. Robert Felton is here. He's literally talked with hundreds of landscapers in the five years that he's worked with me and he makes these super helpful videos. So go ahead and schedule your call if you know want to do that, at landscapersguide.com/brainstorm. And if you are the first person who does that, I'm going to mail you a copy of The Tree of Good Fortune. If you already have this book, I'll send you something else cool.

All right. So let's get into How to Grow your Sales and Recruiting with Online Reviews. Last October, wow, was it actually today? I think it was a year ago today, I published The Tree... Wow. Hey. All right. A year ago today, I released my second book, The Tree of Good Fortune, the Landscaper's Guide to Modern Sales and Marketing. We had a book launch party at... What the artist formerly known as the GI Expo people were there, it's called Equip now. I'm curious to see how it is, but it was really fun. And I wrote this book because I've worked with so many landscape companies and I wanted to organize everything in one place to help them get the best results from their marketing possible. And in the book, we share the exact strategy that we use at Ramblin Jackson that we implement for our clients. It's called The Tree of Good Fortune.

Yes, The Tree of Good Fortune. So it's a metaphor for your internet presence. And ultimately the goal, the reason why you're here is to produce apples, the new customers finding you online. And you want them in specific neighborhoods and cities, and we can help you build out branches on your website. And there's more, right? The soil is like your Google My Business listing. And I'm going to share... I already showed you my Google listing, I'm going to share with you why this is so important.

Online Reviews Are Like Sunshine

There's so many things, the roots, the links pointing to your website. Today we're going to focus on the sunshine, the online reviews. But none of this works if you don't have rain. If you don't have water, like a great sales process and customer service. We want to avoid the mushrooms, the poisonous lead generation websites or having the Russian olive shrub of despair. So when you have a tree of good fortune, you can attract enough qualified leads that you can cherry pick the projects you want and say no to clients you don't want to work with without paying for online advertising.

The problem is, many people have the Russian olive shrub of despair. If you're not out in the west, this is a noxious weed. It's very common in Utah, Colorado, parts of New Mexico and Wyoming. And it's essentially, it doesn't look necessarily bad, but it's sucking the water from the plants nearby. And this is what a poor website, a poor digital presence will do to your business, and you don't even realize it, leaving you to rely on referrals or pay [inaudible 00:09:47] advisor

sites for low quality leads. You don't want to do that. You could instead grow your own tree of good fortune where you build out a limb for each city and a branch for each service. I invite you to read the book *Tree of Good Fortune*. It's coming out on Audible next month, so stay tuned for that. That was just a quick overview.

Today we're going to focus on the key part, which is sunshine. I really believe that online reviews are like sunshine, because without it, why would a customer choose you over a competitor? Let's pretend that they're searching on Google, or maybe they are a referral and they find negative reviews about you and they find so many negative reviews that your overall brand is negative. Why would they choose you when there are other options?

Just think about the way you buy things on Amazon. Do you ever sort on Amazon by three stars and below? You know what Amazon? I'm not worthy of a four-star product. Please give me a three-star or a two-star product. I didn't work hard enough for my money, I should just throw it away with a two-star product. Of course not, right? We all search and sort and we look for the negative reviews and we read them. And then when it's positive, we're like, "Cool, I'm going to go with these people."

I created something called the Landscaper's Foundation of Digital Marketing. So *The Tree of Good Fortune* is this fun metaphor. It makes a lot of sense, and it's still kind of confusing when you're doing your digital marketing to figure out what order do you want to go in? Do you start with social media? Do you pay for Google Ads? A lot of times people do, they'll start up at the top, and I call those things bonus steps. But when you invest in building your brand, differentiate yourself, why are you different? And you communicate that on your website and you have your local SEO so people, when they're Googling, they find you and you have your online reviews together that's when, frankly, life changing results can happen.

I want to share a story with you about a client that I worked with. They came to me in 2018. They'd been in business for 25 years, and a lot changes over 25 years. I know from my own experience when I started out, a friend of mine made my logo. He said, "Jack, here you go." He was my roommate in college. I'm like, "Cool. A horseshoe, western font. Right on. I'm in business." And I didn't imagine growing a multi-million dollar company with clients around the country and a team and all of these things. So I was chugging along and in about 12 years into business, we ended up rebranding Ramblin Jackson. We redid our logo, we updated our timeline because we had changed, we had grown.

And that was the same case for this design-build firm. So they had photos that were literally dated. These were like when you would get those disposable cameras and you'd go to Walgreens and they'd give you the prints of your photos and then a CD, and then it had the little copper date in the bottom? Those were the photos on their website. They were from the '90s, for real. So we're looking at their website and they're like, "Hey, we're not getting enough high-end design-build clients. And it's like, "Well, yeah, look at these photos from 30 years ago."

So we helped them remove those and they've invested in new photos. We helped them create a new logo because their original logo was kind of homemade looking. We designed a new website on WordPress. We did search engine optimization. And all of that was working in the sense that they now ranked highly on Google. They were getting the traffic to their website, but they weren't getting the result of leads coming through and ultimately hiring them. And at that time, they only had three Google reviews.

And I was like, "Look, we've got to get Google reviews because people looking online," and I showed them, I Googled their own keywords, "Your competitors, here's one that has 44 Google reviews." There was another one that had 70. They were as far as their local market and they're in Bethesda, Maryland. It's a highly affluent area, very competitive. Why would we choose you? And they're like, "Well, we're a word of mouth business. We've built the business for 25 years of quality," and all the things that contractors will tell you. I'm like, "Hey, that's wonderful, but if you want leads from the internet who don't know you, to choose you, we've got to get these reviews."

And it took two years of... It felt like arm wrestling with them. They're like, "We don't get reviews because it's impolite to ask for them. And we service an affluent customer." I'm like, "Oh, so this other design-build firm that has higher price ranges than you on their website and clearly has these epic affluent photos from the exact neighborhood you're marketing, why are their customers writing reviews?" And they're like, "Oh, I guess affluent people do write reviews."

And so we worked with them and Mary, the Vice President and co-owner of the company, started asking people finally, and she did it in a very personal way. So I wanted to share this. Mary would bring wine to people as a gift. So at the end of their project, Mary would come and do a walkthrough and she would bring a laptop and be like, "Hey, let's get a review done. Cool?" And she would persistently, but in her very charming way, get people to write a review. And once they finally broke 10 reviews, I was having a conversation with them, it was like something just flipped a switch for them. And they started getting amazing leads and their sales process is a long time, they started closing them. And I want to share with you an interview, just a quick clip from a Zoom meeting. Can you see my main slide, Robert?

Crew:

Yep.

Jack Jostes:

Cool. So here's Mary, just kind of impromptu during a Zoom call.

Speaker 1:

So for 25 years I had said, "Leads, leads, leads, more leads, leads, leads. All we need is leads." So for the first time in 25 years, we are in fact getting a lot of qualified, in every way, qualified

leads. It is just really quite amazing. And they're in the location we want. They're the type of jobs that we want. People have spent time on our website. It's really, actually remarkable. This is what I've been hoping for 25 years.

Jack Jostes:

Having this volume of qualified leads has allowed them to travel more. I remember... I don't know if, for those of you who have started your business, going on vacation is really stressful. You're like, "Am I going to go out of business? Will anybody... What am I going to do?" And for them, I know that they love traveling and that having this online presence of qualified leads gives them that peace of mind to go on vacation and do cool things that you should do. So that's rewarding to me. Some of the things though, again, that they're doing well are they're implementing the full Tree of Good Fortune. So they're implementing the branding and differentiation, the website. Their website has a pricing page. She mentioned the specific neighborhoods. Those are the limbs and branches. And that final piece, online reviews, was what they needed to finally get the results.

Three Key Business Impacts Of Online Reviews

Online Reviews Impact Your Ranking Online

Reviews impact three key areas of your business. The first is your ranking. Your ranking on Google. Your revenue, your sales, and your recruiting. Online reviews impact your ranking online. So part of the process of showing up on Google, especially in a competitive market, is having reviews on your Google My Business listing. And just now, minutes ago, I'm always finalizing my slides because SEO is changing and Google's doing this and that. I just looked on Google's website. They don't tell us a lot about how local ranking works, but they do on their website, recommend that you manage and review and respond to reviews. High quality, positive reviews from your customers can improve your business visibility and increase the likelihood that a shopper will visit your location.

Now, they've edited this. A few years ago it used to more specifically say that it impacted your ranking. I know from my own experience that it does. And one of the reasons why is people often search for best. They'll search for the best landscape company in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina. They'll search for the best landscape company in Lockport, New York. Or the best design-build firm in Ohio. Or whatever it is. People are going to search by best. And another thing that happens is on smartphone searches, a lot of people search with their voice. "Hey Siri, who's the best landscaper in Boulder, Colorado?"

So maybe you can see. But basically, and this is actually pulling in Yelp, it's pulling in Google or Apple Maps. I'm on an iPhone, Apple and Google hate each other. Apple and Yelp at this time are cool. So the reviews actually come in from Yelp. So do I search on Yelp for a landscaper?

Do people search on Yelp for landscapers? Not really. Do they search with their voice and do they use voice assistance? And does the data on Yelp impact my ranking? Absolutely. So we're going to share with you all the places to prioritize them. I wouldn't prioritize Yelp as your number one place to get reviews, but there's a certain threshold that you want to get to.

Just for reference, the best has six Yelp reviews, because getting Yelp reviews is a pain in the butt. People need to, one, they need to have a Yelp account. And then two, Yelp kind of incentivizes people who are snarky and post negative things on Yelp. So their reviews show up. And if they don't post very often and they only post a handful of positive reviews, Yelp hides their reviews. I would give Yelp a low score in general, but I still think that you need to have some Yelp reviews.

Online Reviews Impact Your Revenue

Reviews impact your revenue. A few years ago, my wife and I were under contract on a historic house. This is not the house. I just Googled historic house. This would be a cool house. I would enjoy having a front porch like that and that porch upstairs and the two fireplaces and this lawn and a hill and all these trees. This would be pretty cool. So we were under contract on a house like this in Longmont, Colorado, and we needed to get an inspection and we could just tell that, I mean, the house was huge. It had an outbuilding that was an apartment. It had a garage. It was really cool. I was thinking that I would work out of the house and rent out this apartment and also rent out the parking space. I was like, "Wow, this is a dream property."

And unfortunately, I didn't go through on a house like 10 years ago because it was historic and had problems, and the value of that house has nearly tripled. I should have just bought it and not fixed it and then sold it. But you know, you live and learn. So my real estate agent referred two people to me. I said, "Hey, who does really great home inspections?" And he said, "Oh, you can work with Scott Home Inspections." So I googled them. "Wow, look at this. They've got 452 Google reviews with a 4.9 star average. They have 38 votes, a five-star rating on Facebook. They've got 76 reviews on Yelp and on Redfin, they're listed there too with another 334 reviews. Huh? Okay, thanks. I think I'll also Google the next guy."

So I Googled the next company, Yellow Cabin Inspections, and I didn't see that. They don't even have a Google listing. They had no online reviews. Which home inspection company do you think I chose? This one or this one? Right? So here's a word of mouth business, a home inspection company. "Oh, we get a hundred percent of our business from real estate agents." Well, cool. Well, in 2021, 2022 people are going to Google you and why would I choose this company? They don't really exist on the internet.

The other thing that happened was once I did hire the... We ended up bringing in an engineer. And I was really disappointed when I saw that person, the engineer, and I learned that he had never actually met my real estate agent. They were like, "Oh, nice to finally meet you." So I had

put all of this value in the referral from my real estate agent, assuming that this was a vetted relationship because my real estate agent has been in business for 20 years and knows the market and was the president of this and that. But come to find out, they'd never met. They'd never met. They just kind of had been introduced to each other through networking. And it didn't really go well. It didn't really go well.

So from then on, personally, I don't hire anybody if I haven't Googled them, even if they're a referral. And I think a lot of people are buying that way because think about it, even if you're getting a referral or if somebody sees your vehicles. I just did the 2022 landscaper sales survey. It was really interesting. A lot of people said that their vehicle wraps generate a lot of business. Well that's great. If you're out doing work for people, you're in your ideal neighborhood and you do a good job, people are going to see it. They're going to Google you, right? They're going to Google you. They're not going to write down your phone number, they're going to take a picture of your car and then Google you, and then click on your phone number, right? So even the vehicle wraps thing, like you can't avoid reviews anymore.

Jack Jostes:

... deployed reviews anymore. I have a really wonderful client, really smart business person. Her name's Kelly Slater and she's here. Hi, Kelly. So, we're putting Kelly on the spot a little bit, but so Kelly and I had started working together, it may be four or five years ago at this point. It's been a long time. And Kelly had a really frustrating experience of, she worked with somebody who did what's called black hat SEO. So black hat SEO is knowingly breaking the rules. And Google listing was removed from Google and Kelly didn't know that, right? I just wanted... Kelly didn't know that. And then I'm like, "Hey, here's what I think is happening." And so we were able to do that and we were able to fix the website. We designed a new website that's really cool. Robert or Aaron, if you could put that link in the chat for their site.

And we worked together, we were ranking and then we were having these follow up calls six, eight months later. And Kelly's like, "Hey, Jack, that's cool that that CEO report is going up, but I'm not getting the leads, I'm not getting the things." And I'm like, "Well, Kelly, you're like a three and a half star company. I really like you. I know that you do a good job, but the reviews online are not the best." So, I'm just curious, Kelly, can you comment on that? What was that like for you and reviews, what did you do and what happened once we finally got north of a four star average on Google?

Kelly:

Yeah, so getting kicked off of Google was horrible. Two landscaping season as a landscaping company to not have a Google listing is terrible, it's also terrible to have bad ratings. So, once we got the Google thing fixed, we had our new website and everything else, we started internally trying to work on getting reviews from our clients. I mean, we at the time had 400

regular maintenance customers that we serviced. We're not short in clients to reach out to. It's just how do you ask them? How do you approach that? We got some really good insight on what to do. So we tried internally to manage that and it helped a little bit. We started getting a few more reviews here and there just by saying the personal side, "Hey, can you do me a favor? Can you post about your experience with me, the irrigation technician, the maintenance team, the sales staff, whatever."

And that helped a little bit. And then we picked up a software rambling reviews that you guys offered us. And that has made it so much easier. We're able to get feedback and deal with impartial or negative feedback before it actually hits the web to turn those so-so, or not happy people into happy people before we say, "Hey, can you do me a favor?" And the quantity of leads has improved significantly as well as the quality. I mean, the quality is night and day. We check our closing ratios and our sales team and we've gone from a 30, mid 30% average posting ratio... closing ratio each month to right now we teeter around 70%.

Jack Jostes:

Wow. Kelly, thank you for sharing that.

Kelly:

Yeah.

Jack Jostes:

Like I said, Kelly's a really smart business person. Do you see how she just knows those numbers? I think, a couple things. One, the reviews, thank you for sharing that story, but Kelly's just on it. And the reviews though have impacted the close rate, the quality of the leads, but also it wasn't just the reviews, right. That's why the whole tree of good fortune idea makes sense to me because we couldn't have just done the reviews and had this result. We needed to do the website and the SEO and the reviews. But now that it's working, hey, it's working. So Kelly, thanks for sharing that. And one of the things that I liked that you said was that first party data, I don't think you said first party, but we're collecting feedback. We're not just asking people for a review.

We're collecting feedback from our customer and listening. And I'm going to share later in the presentation how that, like Kelly said, prevents the negative review from happening. And in a landscape company, the key is to retain your customers, to retain your maintenance clients and increase their rates next year and then upsell them on whatever enhancement and be their person when they're ready to redo their backyard. Right? So, retaining a customer and taking care of them is the key to profit and retention and collecting feedback.

I'm going to share some personal stories later of, hey, I'm not perfect, my company isn't perfect. We have a great review average. And part of the reason is we listen to our customers and when we get an okay score, they're getting a phone call and we're going to do what we can to take

care of them before we're learning, hey, we're working with the new agency because you don't listen to us. And the same thing I think is the case with landscaping. So, thank you Kelly for sharing that. So, that was really fun. And our mission at Ramblin Jackson is helping small businesses ring the bell. And I have a short video clip of Kelly ringing the bell at a really fun milestone.

Kelly:

Since signing up with Ramblin Jackson, I had one major goal to get to and that was three million in gross sales. And in just a few short years, we were able to achieve that goal and ring the bell with the Ramblin Jackson team.

Online Reviews Impact Recruiting

Jack Jostes:

Awesome. Well, thank you. Thank you Kelly for being here and in video. Awesome work. So the third thing, so the first two things that reviews impact are your ranking on Google. They impact your revenue, people's choice and decision to hire you. And the third thing they impact is your recruiting. Recruiting is a lot like marketing to clients. We need to pick a hell yes customer and a hell yes employee. Who do we really want to work with us? And you all know this, the best landscape employees are going to pick and choose where they're going to work. They are going to pick the best companies. And reviews are a key part of how they're going to decide, hey, is this company worthwhile? So, the third part is impacting recruiting. I want to share with you a story of an account manager.

An account manager is a difficult position to fill at my company. Right? And it's absolutely a difficult position to fill at a landscape company, especially if you do commercial landscape maintenance, finding someone who understands landscaping, who can do sales, who can manage clients, bring that information back to the team and keep that client retained. That's a tall order, right?

These are hard to find people in my industry and in the landscape industry, and I was doing a webinar like this about recruiting and there was an employee of a landscape company there, his name is Kevin. And he shared a surprising thing about what he was really looking for when it came to selecting his next job, his next company. And he shares, yeah. Money was important, right? But it was not actually the most important thing. I think there's a certain salary range that you need to get to where you're either in the salary range of what the industry is going to pay somebody like this or you're not. And once you're there, that's where these other things really are going to be the deciding factor for people. So let's hear what Kevin had to say.

Kevin:

Money isn't everything, but it's pretty dang important to potential employees. So once you have your financial compensation competitive and on track, what's the real reason that someone would choose to work at your landscaping company? Find out the answer from a real employee of a multimillion dollar landscape company about why he left his previous job For this new one.

Speaker 2:

You've got to check out the full episode of this week-

Jack Jostes:

I'll admit I shared the wrong video clip just now. That video was basically what I just said in the webinar. So, sorry for that wrong video. Kevin, I'll send a follow up. Actually Aaron, if you could help find that episode, it was number 92. It should be tagged in landscaper's guide podcast under the recruiting tag. But what Kevin goes on to say is that he did a lot of research in that he felt like the current company he was working with wasn't ethical and that where he wanted to work next was a ethical company that really took care of their employees. And he read everything he could find about Turk, the owner of the company. And he found this magazine article where Turk was talking about his values and how he leads the company.

So, a lot of times I share these things like reviews or personal branding and landscapers are like, "No, no, no. Personal branding is BS. I need landscapers. I need people to do construction and landscaping. And these people don't think about employer branding." Yeah, they do. Kevin cares a lot about it. Kevin wants to know that he's working for a brand, for a company that's going to stand behind him and especially somebody who's doing sales, they're going to want to sell a product for a company that's ethical, that takes care of their companies. Because I don't know if you've ever sold something that didn't work out. Feels awful. It's like one of the worst feelings, especially if you're not the one doing the work.

I don't know about you, but I wouldn't be super motivated to sell that again. Right? So, the reviews impact people's decision to work for you and I'm going to share with you where to get those reviews next. So-

Speaker 2:

Money is-

Jack Jostes:

I want to share with you another story about a landscaper who couldn't get a response to his Indeed ads. So I actually see this all the time. So people are spending money on Indeed advertising and often they're send... their Indeed listing has a two star average. So, it's kind of like you're literally paying potential employees to learn that you're a two star company. You're paying for that result, right? So, before you... That's why again, it's a foundational thing. So, I love paid advertising, especially for recruiting. I'm doing it now. Lauren. Hi, Lauren. Lauren. Lauren. Lauren came through a paid advertisement. Pretty cool, really enjoying working with

Lauren, it helped, right? Advertising is great. And if... I don't know, Lauren, would you have applied here if we had a two star review average on Indeed, would you be here?

Lauren:

I'll be honest, no. And ironically, as a project manager said when I saw your Indeed in Glassdoor reviews, I was like, "Oh, this is a no brainer. Why wouldn't I want to apply?" It's a big selling point when you are looking at a new job, especially if you've been there looking for something new or just looking for a new opportunity, you really want someone who has good reviews. So you're going to be taken care of.

The 4-Star Review Average Test

Jack Jostes:

Yeah. Well, thank you. Yeah, I agree. I mean, there's a lot of reasons why it just makes sense, right? So, there's all these places to get reviews. Where should we start? I'm going to show you where to start and then as you advance, where to go next. So, I have something called the four star review average test, and this is pretty simple. Do you have a four star review average on Google? If you want me to take a look at your business presence, I'm going to do live reviews of reviews. It's a review reviews later today. So type your business name in the chat and the city that you're in. And I'm going to Google you later and show you. But basically you've got to get to a four star review average. You don't have to get to a five. In fact, there's a lot of studies that show that having a perfect five star average is less trustworthy than a 4.2 to a 4.7. Getting to four stars and then having at least 10 quality descriptive Google reviews.

The reason why I say 10, if you're just starting out, some of you may have hundreds of reviews, some of my clients have hundreds of reviews, or we've taken them from single digits to double digits to now triple digits. The reason I say 10 is because you're going to get a negative review at some time and if you have four Google reviews and then you get a negative one and then another negative one, now you're going to be a three star company. Or worse if you have zero reviews. I'll be honest here, the reason why I know that Indeed reviews are important is because at one time I had one Indeed review and guess what it was? It was one star. So, I couldn't hire, I was that guy who was paying for Indeed and finally realized, oh wow, I'm paying people to see this negative.

I have one review and I had to really work with my team to write a review. And eventually I had a pizza party. I think Robert, were you there? And I let people know and I had to really sell to people of, "Robert, you want to make sales at Ramblin Jackson. And in order to do that, we need a project manager to manage the projects that you're going to sell. And if we don't hire a project manager, we can't sell." And so I don't know that that was the thing, but I had to frame it to like, hey, here's going to help you with your job. Here's how writing a review for my company

is going to help you. And once people were like, "Oh, I'm overworked right now and hiring this next person is going to make my life easier." That's what's in it for me.

And then I made it easy. I sent out the links, we started getting reviews and now people write reviews. It's kind of like once you have them, it keeps going. But getting to those four star reviews, those 10 reviews on Google, it should be your first goal, after you do that... Oh, here's one fun little tip is to resist the temptation to have your spouse or family member review you, especially if they share your last name. So, I have audited honestly, hundreds of clients at this time and I know your last name and I've seen the photo of your spouse on your website. Oh, how wonderful that your wife or your husband or your sister or whoever wrote a review for you and your clients aren't dumb. If you have four reviews and two of them are, you run Johnson landscapes and three of your reviews are from people named Johnson, good luck.

Where Should Landscaping Companies Get Online Reviews?

Google My Business

So, don't do it. Don't get phony reviews from your family. Where else should landscape companies get online reviews? The first place again is Google my Business. I recommend Google my Business because Google is the most used search engine. Fun fact, the most searched thing on the search engine, Bing, is Google. I don't know if you're aware of that. So I mean Google is by far, it's a monopoly. Whatever. It is what it is. It's the most used search engine. Google Maps is awesome. Even referrals are going to Google you. So, having your reviews there, Google already told us that having the reviews is important.

Facebook

The next place is Facebook. The reason is Facebook can be amazing for referrals. Neighborhood groups, there are a lot of Facebook groups for... I'm in one and you see people ask all the time, "Hey, who do you know who's a handyman or who do you know who's a plumber or who's a great landscape company?" And this is where your actual customers, if you're serving them and they're thrilled with you, they're going to refer you and they might mention your page and it'll link to your page. And you want to have, again, at least a four star average on Facebook. Social media was actually the top driver of new business in the landscaper sales survey. I was really surprised to see people say that. But people see your posts, they see your photos, having those reviews are helpful.

Yelp

Yelp is number three. Not because people are, again, searching directly on Yelp, but Yelp I showed you earlier, when you Google Ramblin Jackson, it shows up on the first page of Google. Right? It shows up. And if your customers use Apple, if they use iPhone, it's going to show up there if they ask, or think about this, "Hey Siri, call Eco Scape Gardens." So if people ask like, "Hey Siri, call my landscape company." It's going to pull that up from Yelp or from Apple Maps rather, and your Yelp reviews will show there.

Houzz

Number four is Houzz. I have an asterisk here. If you do design build, if you're a maintenance only or a lawn care only client or a commercial only client, I don't think house is that relevant. But if you do design build, and especially if you're paying for house ads, you'll want to get reviews there.

First Party Reviews

The fifth place is first party reviews. So, we're going to talk about first party reviews a bit in a bit. But essentially if first party reviews, this is a screenshot of my website and maybe you could put a link to Ramblin Jackson.com/reviews in the chat you can see this, I use this myself and Kelly is using Ramblin reviews also. This allows us to collect feedback. Right?

One of the reasons I really like this is one, it instantly publishes it onto my website. And I personally think you should even leave the negative reviews up there. Yes, you can choose not to display them, but what I know is that, and my whole philosophy we're going to talk about negative reviews, is it's a good opportunity to show people how do you handle mistakes. And having an imperfect review average is better than a perfect one. So, first party means that you own the data with your software. Third party is Google or Yelp or Facebook or House. That's a third party. You don't actually own it, which is a risk because if you put all of your eggs into the Google my Business basket and you get hacked or you lose your Google listing or whatever, it's not so great. The other thing is not everyone has a Google account. Not everyone has a Yelp account. Not everyone has a house account.

My dad is coming out later today. I think he's still using Hotmail, right? So, he's not going to... If we sent my dad a request to write a Google review, he'd have to create a Gmail account. He's not going to do that. But if I gave him a little thing where he could click eight out of 10, he could do that.

Any website where you are paying for advertising

The last thing is, any advertisement, any website where you are paying for advertising, this is so obvious once you hear it, but don't pay people to see that you're a two star company. I can't tell you how often in my audits with people I see that they're spending sometimes thousands of dollars a month driving people to a... they're on some sort of website or directory or house or Indeed or whatever it is. Until you have a positive review average, I wouldn't pay for advertising in that area.

Three reasons Why Landscaping Companies Should Collect First-Party Reviews:

You'll Get 10x More Reviews Than if You Just Asked for Third-Party Reviews

Cool. We've got a lot of people to review later today. Eternal Eden, San Antonio, Texas types, nervously. Right on. Chill. We'll be kind, but we'll be honest. So, both of those things are good together. All right, first party reviews. Here are three key reasons why landscaping companies should collect first party reviews. The first one is that you'll get 10 times more reviews than if you just ask for third party reviews. So, I want to say that one again and explain it. So, one of the people that I follow is Mike Blumenthal, if you're a local. Yes. All right. Jay. Jay knows who Mike... Jay. Love Jay. Jay Worth is here. Jay, say hi. Can you say hi?

Jay:

Hello everyone.

Jack Jostes:

So, Jay is... Are you the marketing manager or the content manager?

Jay:

Yeah, you can call me content marketing manager. We have a couple marketing managers, but yeah, I'm one of the marketing managers at single apps.

Jack Jostes:

So, Jay has worked in the industry quite a bit. We've been on his podcast, he's been on my podcast and he's celebrating Mike Blumenthal. No one else cares.

Jay:

Mike is a genius.

Security: You OWN These Reviews—Not Google, Facebook, or Some Big Tech Giant

Jack Jostes:

Mike is like the godfather of local SEO in what we do. Anyways, his company has literally sent out millions of review requests over the last decade and through their software. And what they found is in home services, you get 10 times the number of reviews when you're asking for first party feedback, than if you just send out the Google link. A lot of people resist this. They say, "Well Jack, all I want is the Google review." That's cool. Yeah, you will get more Google reviews by doing that, but you're not going to get the account management benefit of actually getting feedback from your customer. So that's the next reason, which is... Well, it's not. It's one of the reasons, it's in a different order here. The second reason is that you own these reviews, not Google or Facebook or some big tech giant. You own your first party reviews.

Marketing: You Can Easily Display First-Party Reviews on Your Website + Other Marketing

The third thing is you can easily display first party reviews on your website and other marketing. If you could put outdoor craftsman.com in the chat, please. Here's an example, a screenshot of it. And you can see that they've got first party reviews. It also pulls in their Google reviews. So, when people are evaluating them, reviews give them that sense of security of what it looks like. So, we use Ramblin reviews. I'm going to share my screen here and take a look at Ramblin reviews. So Kelly's here, and she mentioned this. So, Ramblin reviews is on her site and we can help people get reviews really easily. So boom, they come here, they can write a review, they can just click here to write it and it automatically populates these things in here. Really solid. So, I use this myself on my own website. So if you go to [Ramblin Jackson.com](https://www.ramblin.com), we are getting reviews here.

You can get feedback, you can click through here. This is so... And check this out, so I have 225 first party reviews. I have 120 Google reviews. So, if I was only collecting the Google reviews, I'd be missing out on a hundred reviews. But now when people are evaluating me, because not all of my clients have a Gmail account or want to go post it on Google for whatever reason. So this is one of the reasons that we really like collecting first party reviews. And if you're not doing it, it has amazing impact. Kelly already basically said what I'm going to say, but I'm going to reiterate it, which is there's actually-

Measuring Customer Feedback With Net Promoter Score (NPS)

Jack Jostes:

They said what I'm going to say, but I'm going to reiterate it, which is there's actually really tremendous value in receiving negative feedback from your customers because it gives you the opportunity to call your customer and retain them before they quit working with you. I have a client who worked with me for five years, and when I started asking my own clients for feedback, he gave me a six out of 10. I looked at my notes from my account manager in our CRM and well, we're meeting with them every month. We're sending our reports on time, they're ranking on Google, we're doing all the things. I have a happy client, right? No, no, I don't. I have a six out of 10. So I called him and I said, hey, I really appreciate you giving me a six out of 10. Can you tell me a little more? Why did you give us that score? That's the most important question is why did you give me that score?

Or Can you tell me more about what six out of 10 means to you? And he went on to explain, he forgot what he hired us for. We had been working with him for so long that he just simply forgot. He met with his accountant and they said, "Who the hell's Ramblin Jackson?" He said, "Oh, I can't really remember." He's this multimillion dollar landscape company. And we kind of just became this vendor for them.

And I said, "Well, hey, are you getting any leads from the internet? Are people finding like..." "Oh yeah, we just closed this \$250,000 design build. They found us on Google and they said they were reading our reviews." I'm like, "Okay, I helped that result happen for you." He's like, "Oh, right, we worked on the website and you guys are doing this." Anyway, so the next time I sent it, he gave me a nine and then COVID happened. Then everyone freaked out and met with their accountant and was like, what do we do? And the accountant said, Who the hell's Ramblin Jackson? And he called me and he said, "Jack, I can't totally remember what you told me last time, but I remember that I felt better and I decided to keep working with you. What all are you doing? My accountant is suggesting that we cut this."

And I'm like, "All right. Hey, here's what we're doing." This guy does these... I could never do what he does. These enormous design construction projects. He's focused on that. I'm just a small piece on the wheel here, but do you think that if six months prior to that, if I didn't know that he was a six out of 10, I would've been on the chopping block. My account would've been cut by the CPA. The same thing happens during projects. So many of you, if you're doing landscape construction projects, you can send a request for feedback at the midway point. I do that at our company. We got a six out of 10. We called them, we said, "Hey, we noticed that you're feeling a six out of 10, what's going on?" And again, it was really a lack of understanding. They said, "We don't really get it. We don't really know what you're doing for us."

And so we sent them my book, we gave them an audiobook. We had a meeting with them that was like, "Hey, here's how it all works. Here's what we're doing." And they were like, "Wow, I feel like I understand what's going on now." And they ended up giving us a 10 later. So I'm curious, Kelly, do you have a story to share like that. Has there been an account that you mentioned that Ramblin reviews having this.... Is there a story? You don't need to mention their name, but can you share an example of has this worked for you in landscaping?

Kelly:

It has. Yeah. So we're a residential only landscape maintenance and design build. And we had a maintenance client who was very unhappy. I don't remember exactly, but we were like a five out of 10 type of thing. And I personally called him, he was one of my accounts. Went out and met with him and he hated his backyard and it was terrible. And he was just unhappy. And he's got three dogs. We know what they do to landscaping. By the end of that meeting, 30 minutes later, we were installing a pool in his backyard. And I mean, it ended up being a six figure install. He was an unhappy maintenance client when I got there, just because of a mid contract, "Hey, how's it going?" And by the end of it was a six figure design build job. So it worked out great.

Jack Jostes:

Wow. I love that story. That's so cool. So yeah, there's a lot of positive things that can happen, but I think the key is following up, "Hey, I noticed you gave me this score. Can you tell me more?" And I'm going to share that, that's basically how I'd handle a negative review. Also, "Hey, I'd noticed that you gave us the two star review on Google. Can you tell me more? How are you feeling?" And a lot of times you just need to let people vent and feel heard, and then you do need to take care of it. There's probably a reason why they did it. And then there's also people who are just crazy or like they trashing people on the internet and that's cool. We can't really do anything about them. But if we have a bunch of other positive reviews, their review doesn't really matter.

Gold Standard

That is an awesome bonus of collecting first party feedback is it could lead to a six figure sale. That's awesome. Okay, so measuring customer feedback with net promoter score, that's what we're talking about here is how likely are you to recommend us to a friend on a scale of zero to 10? This is part of the gold standard at Ramblin Jackson. Our gold standard is that our projects are going to be delivered on time, they're going to be delivered in budget, they're going to meet our quality standards, which are objective, and we have a happy customer, which we measure as an 8, 9, or a 10. And I pay my account and project managers a bonus. We just calculated the third quarter and we're sending out bonuses. It's worth it because these are the things that actually, they matter to me and they've helped me get out of the day to day operations.

They absolutely matter to our customer. And look at our quality rate. So once we started tracking this, we're tracking at 96% and our retention rate is 98%. So that means that 98% of the

people are continuing to work with us because we obsess about this. And when we get that negative feedback, we listen to it and we take it. So this is kind of insane. And it wasn't always this way. It wasn't always, I remember there were years where we were in the fifties and quality was all over the place. And once I started tracking it, I also needed to help some people leave my company. I had some people who were sending the report on time? I'm going to send it when I feel like it. I literally had people who had that attitude. I'm like, "Great, go start your own company." And they did. And maybe that works for some people, but we're going to send our stuff on time.

Where To Get Employee Reviews

So this is one of the ways. I'm just sharing this as an example of how could you incorporate your reviews and your customer feedback into an incentive for your team? It'll produce the business result for you. And maybe you could create an incentive. Where to get employee reviews? Does anybody want to share that they have a recruiting challenge? Does anybody here not have a recruiting challenge? We could ask that question. What I'm hoping to do is Google some landscaping jobs.

So I'm going to take our friend Rachel, from San Antonio, Texas. Okay, is that cool, Rachel? Can we look? So I'm going to pretend that I'm a landscaping employee and let's see what happens. So when we look for landscaping jobs, San Antonio, Texas, right? Okay. Home Advisor pros.com. This is just a giant corporation wasting money. This is a terrible Google advertisement. Why are they showing me this? This is not it. Next, I see Indeed. So Indeed is actually paying to show up at the top of Google. And then we're seeing these are Google jobs. So we're seeing these things. And then Google is the number one organic listing. Here's a site link here. Simply hired Monster Glass Door. So I'm seeing a lot of different things here. Let's just pretend that I click on this..

And I'm looking around. Okay, I like that they include a salary range. Jay, I haven't replied on LinkedIn yet, but I absolutely recommend including the salary in your job ads. How about this? What do you think? Anybody want to work at a 3.6 star company? Oh geez, it's 167. It's not like they have a couple bad reviews. Yes, I would like to have a 3.7 work life balance and be paid a 3.1 and feel like I have a three star chance of advancing my career and an okay culture. Great. Sign me up. Once you see this, you can't unsee this, right? So Indeed, yeah. Does Indeed work? Yeah, Indeed can work. If you stand out as the place to work, and you have this all dialed in. So we didn't even find Rachel's company yet, because I'm kind of clicking around here. So there's all these other companies, ABC, Home and Commercial Services.

How To Respond To Negative Online Reviews

So let's just pretend that we're an employee and we're unhappy in our job currently because we are selling a product we don't like or there's not a career advancement. All these things. We're going to notice these things and... Oh geez. What do you think? Should we apply here? Oh. Maybe we should can help them with this. Maybe we sell online review management. I'm noticing that a lot of these companies are in the three stars. So again, if you got to what I'm saying here, if you got to a four star average, you don't have to have a perfect one. You're going to have employees who are unhappy and they write a review and there's their side of the story and there's yours and there's probably people that have worked for you for years that you enjoy working with that are maybe even in the position of trying to fill these positions. And how could we get their help to write reviews?

So the first thing you need to do is claim your Indeed listing. So you can create a company profile kind of like you would on Google, where you're going to upload photos, things like that. And then after you do that, you can send your review link to your employees. So if this was Affordable Landscaping, you could click on this. So now we have this wonderful little URL and you start emailing this to people. But first I would ask them in person. "Erin, I really appreciate you being our senior executive assistant and we would love it if you would share some of your feedback on Indeed. Could you help me do that?" Sure. Then I just send her an email, right? Boom. Asking in person, I would do this. So Ramblin reviews is gravy. For customers, we've got hundreds of customers. Employees, I would absolutely go slow one by one, send it to people and ask regularly. You're going to need to ask regularly. And again, let's work to getting to that four star review average. The next place I would work on is Glassdoor. Glassdoor is a site similarly where you can have a listing and have reviews. Let's see, what was Rachel's company called? Lots of great comments here in the chat. Thank you everyone.

Speaker 3:

Eternal Eden is Rachel's business in San Antonio, Texas.

Jack Jostes:

So what was it?

Speaker 3:

Eternal Eden. Eternal. Like E, I don't know if I'm saying it...

Jack Jostes:

Oh yeah, Eternal Eden. Right on.

Speaker 3:

It's a good name.

Jack Jostes:

So if I just Google Eternal Eden reviews, Hey, I like what I'm seeing so far. 4.7 on Google, you've got one review on Yelp, so it's a little risky. If you get one review on Yelp that's negative, now you have a two star average. So getting to four or five on there. Nice on Yelp, on How's we have one so I think that's an opportunity I'm not seeing... So I don't see an Indeed listing coming up for you. I see this other company, who's this?

Speaker 3:

The Blair Foundation.

Jack Jostes:

For some reason this is coming up here so if you don't have... Well, there we go. So this could be an opportunity for you. I'm not seeing an Indeed listing for you. Or let's see, is there a Glassdoor? So I don't see Glassdoor or Indeed. And I'll share with you that most landscapers I work with have never even heard of Glassdoor or Indeed. And they are sites that... Are there other sites? Is Facebook, is word of mouth. Kelly does radio advertising. It's not going to be just Indeed or just Glassdoor, but it is a key piece of it. And employees do look for feedback there. That would be a key area to get those reviews. So those are the two places. And again, though, the Google reviews are another key area. Let's talk about how to respond to negative reviews. First I like to verify if it's a real customer, right? Because you might get a bogus review and in any case, I would post a response right away that you received the message and you're going to contact them directly.

So this could be something like, "Jay, thanks so much for your feedback. We're going to give you a call right away to see how we can help with this." Then I would call and email the customer. One of our core values at Ramblin Jackson is, "Be human and pick up the phone." I would just call them, I would have somebody call them on the telephone and be human. You can't be an angry human or a defensive human. You need to be an empathetic human, A kind human. This is more listening than talking. "Hey, I saw your review, can you tell me more?" And then shut up and listen.

Probably the most important slide in this series. And then try to solve the problem. If there was a billing issue, billing issues, drive customers crazy in every industry. Was there a delivery issue? Was there a timeline misunderstanding, whatever it is. And then post a follow up response with the outcome of your conversation. So it could be, "Jay, we searched our database and we don't have anybody named Jay Worth in our database. We think you might be confusing us with Johnson landscapes of Toledo because we noticed you're in Toledo." I can't tell you how often this happens that the wrong... Somebody writes the review for the wrong business. I have a huge database of landscapers. Many of them have names like All American landscapes, A1 landscapes, quality landscapes, something about a blade, a cut above landscapes, all these things, whatever.

So you've been in business for a while. If your name is similar, it could be posting a reply, "Hey, we think this may be a mistake because we don't have anyone in our database with your name. And we invite you to call the office." So this lets potential customers know, oh, this might be a bogus review. And they were at least responsive and they have all these other good ones. A negative review can turn into gold. So here, here's a client of mine in the Boulder area. I've actually hired them for some tree care on my property. They're amazing. They got a negative Google review and check this out. They followed the steps, they posted reply, they called them and took care of them. And checked this out, the customer wrote, "Update, one of the owners called me and we discussed what happened and why I left the above review. They still left it. It showed great care that they followed up and explained why I was not contacted. I appreciate the efforts in communication follow up, and I'm sure this family owned business takes pride in their work and they are not afraid to talk about where they might fall short. Cheers to Blue River Forestry and Tree Care. Thank you for the follow-up. I changed my review stars because of the follow-up and transparency, although we will not be working on this project."

So if I'm looking for negative reviews, because I'm worried about hiring them. And then I read this and it's like, "Oh, the owner called them when there was a problem. Cool. I feel really good about moving forward." That's awesome. Thank you guy. Guy Brew let and check it out. Guy Brew Let is a local guide on Google. He has that little star next to his thing. That means he's a very active reviewer. So having this is, it's truly gold. Now imagine if they had left that and there was no reply, right? Would've been awful. Here. Here's another one where somebody updated their review update. "Jill and Ed personally reached out and apologized for the longest summer of our lives. We were refunded the fees on our two year old system." So this is for a client of mine in HVAC. Same things.

Ed. Ed posted a reply. Ed Minnick, "I own the company. Hell yeah, Ed owns the company. Ed the owner is picking up the phone and calling people." So if you're getting negative reviews and you're having these challenges, do it. Pick up the phone, call your customer. Here's another one, "Russ. Thanks for the opportunity." Ed is just falling on the sword here. Ed is not being defensive. Ed bought this company. I worked with him and there were some challenges. I think it would be really hard to run an HVAC company.

"Hey, there was a scheduling error on our part. We made a mistake basically. Awesome. All right, you're hired." Right, now I'm not going to show you some negative ones, but I'm guessing that you have seen snarky defensive replies to things and man, it just blows the deal. So don't do that. And it doesn't feel good when you get a negative review. I have Google Maps on my phone, it feels great when I get a little notification that "Kelly Slater wrote a five star review." I'm like, "Yeah, we're killing it for Kelly." It feels awful. And it always happens, you're right about to eat dinner with your family and you're like, so and so wrote a two star review and you're like, whoa. Right? So you got to calm down and you can't reply with rage because then it'll just make it worse. All right, so we're clear.

6 Key Operational Questions Regarding Online Reviews

Here are six key operational questions to answer regarding online reviews.

Who at your company is the online review manager? Who on your team is going to send requests? Who on your team is going to respond? Who's going to call people? Who is going to do this? I'll share it. Blue River Forestry and Tree Care, it's the person who sends out their invoices, who does their scheduling, who manages Arbor Gold? This person knows when it's time to send a review request and she's ready to call people. She knows who it is. How will they respond? Do they have the passwords? These are mainly technical things. Do you use a software? Are they going to use their personal phone? What are they going to say? Do you have a CRM that they can refer to? They've got to be prepared for the call or it'll make it worse.

So you've got to kind of create a little system of like, Okay, step one, check our CRM. Or maybe you need to talk to a crew lead or whatever it is. And then when will you send review requests? My suggestion for design build is to send one at Midway and then also send it at the project completion. For maintenance, I would ask quarterly. I do this with my own clients for ongoing work. You want to ensure that they're happy throughout. So that way when you're three months ahead of their renewal, you learn that they're a six and you call them and you work it out, and now you retain that client. If you're a retail nursery garden center, I'd send it at every purchase. You're going to have to ask way more often likely there. And then where will they be posted? And can your marketing team add them to your website and social media? Why are you collecting reviews or not?

Relax: Having Some Negative Reviews Is Actually Good!

Here's a key thing. A lot of time the leadership team, shareholders, owners, don't get it. Send them the recording of this webinar. Tell them to watch Kelly. Kelly gets it. Be like Kelly. And again, remember that you're soliciting feedback, not just positive reviews. I believe is the true way to grow. Because when you're listening to your customers and you take care of them, they're going to be more likely to truly feel like a four or five star client. Last thing I want to share is to relax.

Lex, having some negative reviews is actually okay if you have an overall positive review average, and if you're responding to those negative reviews. A few key takeaways from this webinar. Online reviews are required to bear fruit from the tree of good fortune. Like Kelly shared, it was a key thing to really breaking that revenue barrier, getting those quality leads. They impact your ranking, your overall revenue, and recruiting. Get at least a four star average on Google with at least 10 reviews and collect first party reviews. When you collect first party reviews, you can use them in your marketing and you can use them to retain clients and ultimately serve them. When you get negative reviews, respond promptly. Be human and pick

up the phone and relax. Again, having some negative reviews isn't the end of the world, as long as your reviews are positive...

Jack Jostes:

Some negative reviews isn't the end of the world as long as your reviews are positive. Always get reviews on recruiting websites in addition to these customer websites, and I'd say celebrate them as a win. One of my clients literally prints out his rambling reviews and puts them on the fridge in the break room and he in front of the team is like, "Hey, congrats, we got a 10 out of 10 from the Smith residents. And good job Barry as their account manager and Steve and Sue and whatever." It's an opportunity to praise your people and acknowledge them, which will encourage employee retention and making people feel good.

So hopefully you got some nuggets here today. My name's Jack Jostes, and thank you for working with us on this. We're going to look at websites and do Q&A. I'm the CEO at Ramblin Jackson. And if you're curious about having me and my team work with you on this, we help clients with their branding. We can help you with your website, your search engine optimization and your reviews. And we're the highest rated green industry marketing company in the world.

Actually. Yeah, I think it's the world. Let's find one... Maybe there's one in Canada that we need to beat. At least in the United States, I know that we're the highest rated. Our mission is helping small businesses ring the bell. And we've created a process that makes this really easy for you to get your marketing done in the right order and get results quickly and lasting results. We help you prioritize things. Where do you need to focus? We'll help you figure out which part of the foundation of digital marketing to focus on first.

So if you'd like to learn more about that, schedule a 15 minute marketing brainstorm. Call at landscapersguide.com/brainstorm. We'll have a call and ahead of that call, we will review your reviews. So we're going to send you a quick video that's like, "Hey, here's what we're seeing." We'll have a really productive phone call. We'd love to talk with you. And if you check out our reviews, you'll see that this is not a high pressure sales call of any kind. It's really more of a how can we help kind of approach. So go ahead and book that online. I'm going to now open it up to Q&A and I did invite a guest today, Jay Worth from SingleOps. I was just curious, Jay has the unique experience of not only working in the landscape industry, but he's also a content creator and marketer. And I was just curious, Jay, if anything today resonated with you?

Q&A

Jay Worth:

Yeah, absolutely. So just real quick... And this is not a pitch for SingleOps, because I actually don't know much about the software. I shouldn't admit that on a recording. But no, I worked for

most of my career in the green industry. I've worked everything from in the field to running a sales team, running the marketing for a \$14 million full service landscaper. And I've also worked as an account executive at a digital marketing agency that specifically worked with home service clients. So a lot of landscapers and tree care companies, pest control companies, HVAC and electricians, those kinds of things.

So I just wanted to kind of ditto everything that Jack said. I think he did a really good job laying this out here. Two things that kind of really stood out to me that I thought just would be worth sharing. One, real quickly, he talked about getting buy-in from people that maybe... or other stakeholders people you need authority or permission from in order to really tackle these reviews. Consider leveraging those negative reviews to help them understand. Like, "Hey, look, we can't ignore this because people are just going to go and write whatever they want to write about us on the internet anyway."

So use that as, yes, it's something frustrating that you have to deal with, but it can also be an opportunity to build internal consensus around the importance of monitoring and responding to these reviews. And the other thing, when you're talking about who. You're building out your plan for who is allowed to authorize to send out these reviews. Certain review platforms give you the opportunity [inaudible 01:22:22] softwares like I think GetFiveStars can do it, or GatherUp, rather can do this. They change their name. GatherUp I think can do this. I know Chekkit can do this where you can limit the user's permission. So certain people are allowed to send review requests, but they're not allowed to respond to reviews. And I've seen this work really, really powerfully when a company empowers their crew leaders or their technicians on the spot. They've got a smartphone with them or they've got a tablet with them, they can send the review request while they're talking to the customer and they know they're happy. That's a really powerful way to gain a lot more reviews.

Jack Jostes:

Well Jay, thanks so much for commenting. And Jay, I don't know if you saw this, but you were in our podcast. I forgot to email you. Jay-

Jay Worth:

I did not. Yah.

Jack Jostes:

Jay was one of the people... Aaron, if you could share the one that we did at Elevate, I think it was Conversations From ELEVATE. Jay, has a bunch of other gold ideas on options based selling, which is when you get called out for, I don't know, a landscape maintenance estimate, but you recognize they have a drainage problem and they need tree trimming and all these other things. How to upsell them without making them feel sold to. So Jay, thank you for commenting. I'm going to share my screen and if you want me to take a look... You can leave at 10:30, we're close to the end. I'm going to stick around for a few more minutes and just review

some sites or rather review your reviews. So this is the review reviews, and again, if you're the first person who books a 15 minute call, I will personally send you a copy of my book with some beef jerky.

Speaker 4:

We already have... Emily, already scheduled a call. Emily from James Martin would be the winner of the beef jerk and the book. So thanks, Emily.

Jack Jostes:

[inaudible 01:24:17], Emily.

Emily:

Yay! I'm so excited. Thanks guys.

Jack Jostes:

Yeah, you're welcome. We're going to send you a book and do you eat beef jerky?

Emily:

Absolutely. Why don't... I'll give you the address to send it to the office in Chicago. The team will love that.

Jack Jostes:

Cool. And it looks like you... Are those wine bottles behind you?

Emily:

Oh, yes. I do a lot of wine marketing too. I live in wine country.

Jack Jostes:

Oh, interesting. Cool. Well, we look forward to connecting with you and if anyone else does that we'll... Why don't we just send you a book as well so go ahead and book that. I'm going to share my screen and-

Emily:

Thanks, Jack.

Jack Jostes:

Hey, you're welcome, Emily. Looking forward to connecting. Okay, so we have Ideal Landscape Group in St. Louis, Missouri. So I Googled them. What do you think? Four star review test, where are we at?

Speaker 4:

Just [inaudible 01:25:11].

Jack Jostes:

Yeah?

Speaker 4:

Yeah. It's a lot harder for commercial I mean when you have all those accounts. But I mean I would just be curious about what your opinion is on that, Jack. When you have maybe a military base or multi-family, when you got 40 houses but you only have one point of contact and they're only paying so much money.

Jack Jostes:

Yes, so the joy of if you're doing any kind of like HOA community is that you don't have one customer, you have potentially hundreds. And that makes it, I think, even more important to proactively ask people for the reviews and to absolutely respond to them. And when you take care of things, following up with people and saying, "Hey..." Yeah, Stacy is plus warning HOAs are hard. You know what's fun about the green industry? Is landscapers either love or hate HOAs. They either do municipalities or they absolutely don't. They either do snow or they absolutely don't. I don't have any clients who do the exact same things, but I have one client who's crushing HOAs and he only does HOAs. His name's Scott, he's down in Florida. And Scott has taken the [inaudible 01:26:24] customer and really gone for it. And now he can tell people we only do HOAs and he is highly rated and he is getting amazing leads from the internet. So yes, this works for commercial. Yes, it's challenging when you are serving an HOA community.

Jeff:

Hey, Jack?

Jack Jostes:

Yeah, go ahead.

Jeff:

This is Jeff. I'm with Ideal.

Jack Jostes:

Hey, Jeff.

Jeff:

I sent it in. Our challenge is if you look at our reviews, all the client reviews are four star, five star. We suffer in the, "They cut us off on the road or cut us off on the highway." It's our driving is the issue.

Jack Jostes:

That you're not alone, Jeff. A lot of landscape companies have that challenge. So a question is, is it true? Is there a driving issue? Is this an opportunity for some increased training? And I wonder how could it be a positive thing. Like, "Hey, we're going to track for the next year how many negative complaints we get about driving and if we don't get any negative reviews for our driving, I'm going to... I'm making... I don't know, do something fun. We're going to ship you pizzas. We're going to do something." So there may be a way that you could track it.

I do know that the... Oh man, I couldn't imagine having a fleet of vehicles out there with people. It's just going to happen, I think. I was at Home Depot the other day and there was this landscape crew vaping in the checkout line and in their uniforms and it was just... People are going to do what they're going to do. They're going to cut people off. I don't know. So one thing though, Jeff, would be to post a reply to these. Oh, geez. After reading this... Man, this sucks. You got to reply to this, you got to reply to... So Jeff-

Jeff:

That one I think came in before we started even paying attention to it.

Jack Jostes:

And that happens, it's common. And so you may need to use some humor here and say, "Dear Jessica, we apologize that we cut you off three years ago." You kind of got to acknowledge that you didn't reply for three years. And I think using humor... "We want to let you know that we're now prioritizing customer feedback." And, Jeff, what are you actually doing to take care of the driving issue?

Jeff:

They're doing more training. I mean it's definitely... We do weekly training. Two days out of the month that is all driving now, but it is definitely tough when you run 57 rigs. We have a 57 rigs on the road every day.

Jack Jostes:

Wow. Yeah, so I-

Jeff:

They're 30, 40 feet long.

Jack Jostes:

Yeah, that sounds really hard. I think what you said though could be edited into a good review. So, "Dear Jessica, thanks so much for letting us know you're concerned. We prioritize safety at Ideal Landscape, which is why we have weekly safety meetings, X, Y, and Z. And since you

wrote your review three years ago, we've also implemented X, so we hope that you're seeing a safer crew on the road or whatever."

So I had a review... I don't know it was Indeed or Glassdoor, and it was a negative review and it was accurate. It was about an actual problem that we had at Ramblin Jackson. And so I acknowledged that. I'm like, "Hey, I agree this was an issue at this time when this review was written, and since then we've implemented this policy." So that way, a potential employee is like, "Okay, Jack kind of owned that this was a problem." So, Jeff, thanks for playing. That would be the priority is getting that Google... I would say step one is reply to all the negative reviews and then hustle to get to a four star average. It's going to take a bit of reviews, but I really think it'll pay off. "One of your guys drives really bad on I-44." Yeah, I mean there's a lot here.

I don't want to shift blame to somebody, but is there a story we can reference of, "There were some team members at this time, who no longer work here, that had a poor driving record at that time," or something like that. So we can follow up. Jeff, I know we're doing an audit with you and we'll be collaborating, but this is my quick feedback. I'm also seeing on Angie's List, in your market, this is showing up so getting a handful of reviews here.

Jeff:

I don't know why we're on Angie's List. We do zero residential work.

Jack Jostes:

Well, we've got some work to do.

Jeff:

Yeah.

Jack Jostes:

Right. So yeah, it can be tedious cleaning this stuff up, but once you get to that four star average and it becomes part of your process, it can really go well.

Jeff:

Thanks.

Jack Jostes:

Okay. I'm going to move on. Thanks for playing, Jeff. Okay. Horizon Landscape Company in, is it Wyckoff or Wyckoff?

Speaker 4:

Yeah. Is, Karishma, still here? I don't know if she is.

Jack Jostes:

I'm not sure.

Speaker 4:

I don't see her here.

Jack Jostes:

But what I'm seeing here, I'm seeing good things. I'm seeing a 4.8 star average, 25 Google reviews. I'm seeing a 3.7 on Facebook, so I'd work on getting this to a four. I'm not seeing Indeed or Glassdoor. Go Green Customized Lawn Care looking good. Again, I'm not seeing Indeed or Glassdoor. Let me see in the chat if anyone else is still here. So if some of you are still here. I'm just going to pause and see before we wrap up. Rachel, thank you. I'm glad that you enjoyed it. Have a great appointment. Does anybody have any questions that I can answer for you or anything like that?

Speaker 4:

Nathan Hafner, are you here? I just know you've had some questions about recruitment in the past. We could take a peek at it if you're available, maybe not. [inaudible 01:33:33].

Jack Jostes:

Sometimes people just have Zoom on and they're not here and that's okay. We stayed a few minutes after to answer questions. Kelly, is there anything we can help you with or Stacy?

Kelly:

I've already started emailing my employees to get my Indeed reviews up. It's not something we do consistently, but it's super important.

Jack Jostes:

And one of the things, rambling reviews will notify you when you get reviews, but it isn't really the best thing for sending out those employee ones. I think the personal approach is the way to go.

Kelly:

Do you see any negatives on the Hispanic workforce doing reviews maybe in Spanish?

Jack Jostes:

I haven't seen a lot of reviews in Spanish. I haven't seen enough to comment on that. I think it's a really smart idea though to get reviews and/or testimonials, video testimonials. We didn't talk about testimonials. To me, the difference is a review is something that somebody posts themselves. They have their own account, they post it. A testimonial is something that's edited.

You post it on your website. And I think both are important. I have testimonials on my recruiting page and I have reviews on Glassdoor.

Speaker 4:

Hey Jack, I'm curious, is there any magic numbers? People ask me a lot about that. I know 10 is kind of a really important number. It's the base one, so if you have... That's been a helpful in ranking for [inaudible 01:35:24] and Google's seeing you as serious. But I was curious, is there a threshold at 150 or 200? I see so many landscapers who have around 180, 190 who are just very successful in their ranking very quickly, even with lower domain authorities. And just curious if there's any data or anything about is there some magic numbers that might be good goals for people to set or things like that? Or I mean a standard I can follow of 10 reviews then 50, then this and how I can kind of spread it out. I'm just curious.

Jack Jostes:

Yeah. To me, 10 is the bare minimum. If I could get all of our clients to get to 10. That was also a few years ago. Now I think most of our clients are there, but I still see people that don't have 10 and that's kind of the first baby step. Then getting to 20 and 50 and 100 and yeah, 200 at some point. I think there's a clear advantage to having the most reviews in your market like when you are the most reviewed in your town and that could be 50. Or in Pittsburgh, our client Local Roots has close to 300.

Speaker 4:

[Inaudible 01:36:42].

Jack Jostes:

Yeah, like 300. And so for them... For those of you who are still here, Robert mentioned domain authority, which was part of the links... It's part of the SEO algorithm. When you have hundreds of reviews, you have this steroid shot of... You just have this clear advantage.

So even with a weaker internet presence, if you have that many reviews, Google's like, "This business is popular." Really, if you think about it from Google's goal, Google wants to... If you Google something, they want you to really enjoy whatever result you click on so that way you keep using Google. And reviews is a direct indication that, "Hey, the marketplace really likes this business for this search result." And yeah, it's a great way to compete with the big guys for sure. Especially in commercial, there are certain... Are they conglomerates? There are certain big landscape companies that are buying the smaller ones. They typically have terrible Google reviews. So if you come in like Scott does, and you have a five star average... Yelp reviews... I recommend my book. I have a whole section in my book about Yelp reviews. Yelp reviews are a pain in the butt because someone needs to have a Yelp account. Not only do they need to have a Yelp account, but they need to be an active Yelper, meaning that they need to be active at writing Yelp reviews.

One tip is to leverage a relationship with a fellow business owner and get more of a character endorsement. Get a four star review. So this is the only time I really... Yeah, so if you want to get the Tree of Good Fortune, it's treeofgoodfortune.com. And if you book a call before the end of this thing, we'll send you one. That'll be fun. So you could ask a friend... nudge, nudge, maybe somebody at this event who is in your mastermind or went to college with you. And I think as long as they're clear in their review. Something like this, "Kelly Slater, is a great business leader. As a member of a landscape mastermind with Kelly, I'm always impressed with her ideas and the way she's leading her team. While I haven't worked with Kelly directly, I know that she runs a great organization." Okay, cool.

So maybe you can take... If you have an endorsement from somebody on LinkedIn, ask them on Yelp. The fact is it's messy. It requires a lot of follow up. It requires way more work than you're going to want to do. I do think that getting... I have four Yelp reviews, I'm fine with that. My review average is good. I'm not prioritizing anymore. Getting four or five on Yelp is like... There's an asterisks here, unless you're in California, Hawaii or Washington or Oregon. The reason is that on the West Coast, Yelp is very popular. People even review dentists and doctors and things. Whereas on the East Coast and in the Midwest, Yelp is less relevant. So there is some regional things at play here, but in general, Google's the priority. All right. Any final questions before we wrap up today's session? All right, everyone-

Speaker 4:

[Inaudible 01:40:34].

Jack Jostes:

Oh, go ahead.

Speaker 4:

I was just curious, you used to have a trick that you could filter people on Facebook for Yelp. I don't think it still works. Does [inaudible 01:40:41] still work?

Jack Jostes:

Okay. Yes. Right. Yeah, that's fun. So years ago, if you logged into your personal Facebook and then in the same browser logged into Yelp, you could click Find Friends and it would search your Facebook network to find friends of yours who were active Yelpers. I hate describing this because it's just so confusing. But basically you'd log into both Facebook and Yelp and then it would find your friends and then you'd message them. And be like, "Hey, can you rate me on Yelp?" Another fun thing to Google or search on YouTube is Yelp Expose. It's just a fun thing for this weekend.

All right everyone, well thank you again. And last reminder, if you'd like to have a one-on-one conversation with our team, we'd love to do that. Go ahead and visit

landscapersguide.com/brainstorm. My name's Jack Jostes, and thanks so much for coming to today's presentation. We look forward to seeing you at future events. Have an awesome day and take care. Bye-bye.