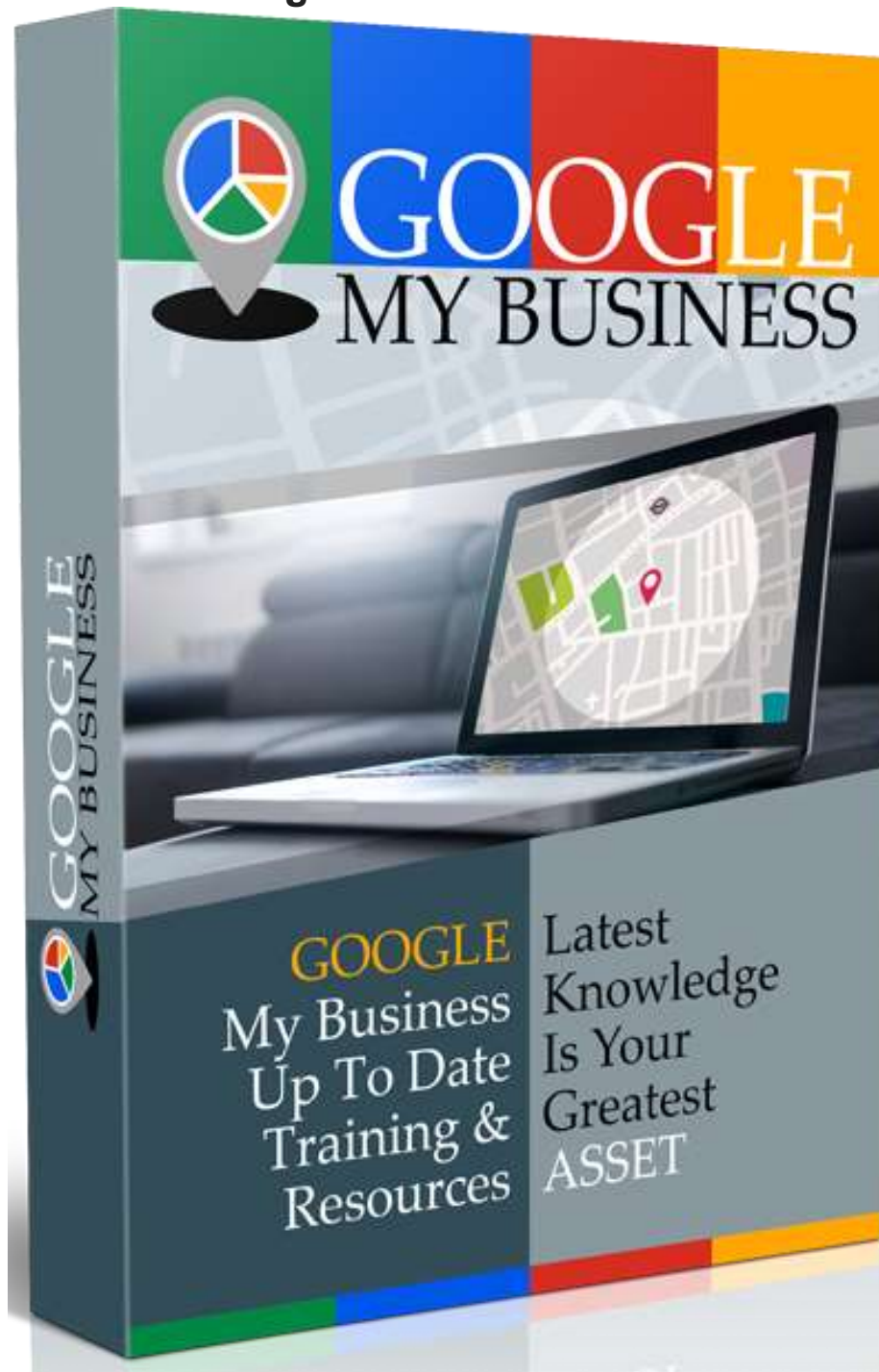


# GOOGLE MY BUSINESS

**Fake reviews in Google Business won't Ever be Removed**



## Fake Reviews in Google My Business Will Hardly Ever be Removed

Business owners are becoming discouraged with GMB because of the rise in the numbers of phony reviews. There seems to be an incompatibility between the stated review policy in Google My Business, and the reality of what happens in the real world.

These fake reviews are being reported, but they are usually not removed. The almost complete impossibility of removing these counterfeit reviews makes the Reviews feature almost worthless.



## Actual Google Review Policy vs The Reality of Reviews

Most of the fake review reports in the forums are posted there by a person who was never actually a customer.

Google's "[review policies](#)" state:

*"Advertising: Don't use reviews for advertising, such as adding links to other websites, or phone numbers. **Reviews should be a***

***genuine reflection of your experience with a place – don't post reviews just to manipulate a place's ratings."***

***"Spam: Don't spam. Write a genuine report of your experience with the place. Don't include promotional/commercial content, don't post the same content several times and don't write reviews for the same place from different accounts."***

GMB policy requirements would lead a business owner to believe that anyone who leaves a review will be a valid/actual customer. Unfortunately, not everyone follows the rules, but Google seems to assume that people abide by the policy.

In most cases, when the business owner attempts to flag and fix inappropriate reviews, Google backs away by stating:

***"Google doesn't get involved when merchants and customers disagree about facts, since there's no reliable way to discern who's right about a particular customer experience."***

So, it appears that you are on your own. Google makes the policies, but does nothing to enforce them.

## **Fake Reviews and You**

If you are a Google Top Contributor (a knowledgeable person who is active in Google's Help Forums), there will be people who do not like what you have to say, and they may attack you with false reviews.

This comes with the territory of being a Google TC. Some people just do not like what you are saying, and it's very easy for them to take aim at you with a fake review.

Business owners can also be plagued with fake reviews. Phony reviews could come from unscrupulous competitors or from anyone else who wants to do harm to your (or your client's) business reputation.

Even positive fake reviews can be a problem. Someone with a good motive to help their friend's business reputation could be writing phony reviews from "customers" that don't exist. Some unethical SEO companies have been known to include false reviews as part of their tactics, maybe without the business owner knowing that the SEO service is using dishonest practices instead of the genuine SEO tactics they have paid for.

Regardless of the reason for phony reviews, the typical reaction from GMB about any fake review is:

*"this review isn't eligible for removal because it isn't violating guidelines."*

## **GMB and Spam Reviews**

Since Google My Business does not get involved with review removal, it has inadvertently created a safe haven for Spam reviews... from Spammers who either leave negative reviews for competitors, or great reviews for themselves or someone they like.

## **Reviews that Do Get Removed**

The types of reviews that DO get removed include:

- racism or hate speech
- personal details
- other review activity that does not add up
- multiple reviews for the same type of businesses

Top Contributors or business owners are sometimes able to have spam reviews removed by proving that they are fake. If the spammers are careless, they will leave clues that can be used to prove that their reviews are false.

This might include making multiple reviews for the same type of business... like... if they are a genuine customer, how many HVAC companies would have serviced their AC unit in the same 6-month period? Or how many oil changes, or tree removals, or windshield installations, etc. did the same “customer” have done inside of 2 months... from more than one company?

This type of proof can make it obvious that this reviewer is in the habit of leaving spam reviews.

## **Fake POSITIVE reviews are also a problem.**

Too many positive reviews also look fake. Every business has problems at times, and it looks fake if they only have positive reviews. It makes people distrust the business when they do not see a variety of positive and negative reviews.

## **You Could Be Breaking the Law**

Don't even consider writing false reviews about any business. You may be breaking the law, which could leave you (or the business owner) open to civil or criminal charges.

You'll most certainly be damaging public perception of the company and the brand, as well as contributing to the overall problem of people not trusting the validity of reviews.

Also, if you provide Reputation or SEO services to clients, but you outsource the work, **be certain that your outsourcer is not using shady tactics like writing fake reviews!** In [one case](#), a business owner hired an SEO agency, and soon discovered that a bunch of poorly written reviews had been added to her business listing.

She asked the SEO agency to remove them, but they had outsourced the work and didn't have the login details for removing the reviews.

She reported the fake reviews to Google and asked for them to be removed, but amazingly, Google stuck by their standard *"because they do not violate guidelines"* response, and didn't remove the listings even though she explained that the reviews were "bought", and therefore were not legitimate customer reviews.

## **To Respond or Not**

If you know that a review is false, others reading it will probably not know. It's important that you reply to the reviews – both positive and negative – in a calm and rational fashion.

Visitors to any business site expect to see a variety of reviews, both positive and negative. They are most interested in seeing how the business owner handles customer issues.

Do not EVER respond to a review in anger. It will hurt you forever. Wait until you are calm, and can respond in a professional manner.

Even if you know the "customer" complaint is phony, respond like you would to a real customer who had a bad experience. When you resolve the imaginary "problem" well, it will help your image.

## **Counteract the Fake Reviews With REAL Reviews**

Another way to improve your Reviews is to encourage actual customers to leave reviews... especially when you know they are happy customers.

Even if you're unable to have fake reviews and/or bad reviews removed, you can "bury" them by getting lots of good REAL reviews to balance out the overall impression of your (or your client's) company.

Remember, it's normal to have some negative reviews because problems do happen in every business, and there are always a few unhappy customers. But when you handle the negative ones well, and also encourage happy customers to leave reviews, the overall business image will soon become positive and balanced.

## **Disclaimer**

Google's algorithm (the rules and guidelines that determine which business listings they display at any given time to any given individual) may have changed since this document was published.

While the steps outlined above were working for us at the time we published this document, Google may have changed its procedures since then.