

How to Make an Unhappy Fan a Happier Customer

Here at Constant Contact, we're lucky to have many people who call themselves fans — both the Facebook kind and the offline kind.

But like any business or organization, we sometimes have, ahem, “opportunities for improvement.” At those times, we're happy to hear feedback, even if it's not the positive kind.

That's because when your customers, clients, members, or supporters are unhappy, for whatever reason, it's one of the best opportunities to show just how committed you are to keeping them happy. And, dealing with an unhappy customer successfully can often turn that detractor into an advocate.

What are the best ways to deal with negative feedback on your Facebook Page? Here are five tips:

1. Know what people are saying. You can't respond if you don't know what's being said. Free tools such as NutshellMail and HootSuite can help you stay on top of what people are posting and saying on your Page.
2. Respond quickly and publicly. If you see a complaint posted on your Facebook Page, don't ignore it — or worse, delete it. Instead, respond as quickly as possible with a polite message that says “Sorry you're having a problem,” or “Sorry the experience/meal/product/service wasn't to your liking,” and a quick offer to help make things better. This shows others you're listening and that you want to improve the situation.
3. Be real and forthcoming with information. We've all heard stories of businesses or organizations who've used lame, inauthentic excuses to explain why something went wrong. Most often, your fans just want the truth. Honesty is always the best policy and transparency goes a long way. That's one reason we at Constant Contact have a Performance Status page on our website that we can share to keep customers informed.
4. Don't fight fire with fire. Whether or not you agree with the feedback received, don't get defensive or start a debate with the person — especially if the feedback is irrational or insulting. One of the worst things you can do is broadcast a “he said, she said” discussion for all to see. Remember: Posts on a Facebook Page last longer than you may realize. Some things are just going to be a personal opinion and you can't change that. Focus on what you can change: the customer experience.
5. Take the conversation offline. If you can, offer to get in touch with your dissatisfied customer offline, either through email, phone, or by asking the customer to come in to your place of business to talk with you in person. Obviously, you don't want to ask the person to broadcast his or her personal info on your Facebook Page, but it's better to deal with these kinds of issues outside of social media.

One final tip: Just because the situation has been dealt with, don't delete the original comment.

No one wants negative feedback on their Facebook Page, but leaving documentation of how you handled it can be very helpful. After all, when one of your Facebook fans is unhappy, showing that you're listening and committed to rectifying the situation can go a long way toward keeping all of your customers happy.