

# A Blueprint For Handling Negative Comments

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One of the biggest fears and concerns that companies face concerning blogging is negative comments left by customers on the company blog. This is also one of the biggest misconceptions that companies have about blogging; the negative comment isn't what's important, how the company **HANDLES that negative comment** is what resonates with others.

But if that negative comment isn't handled properly, then it can reflect very badly on the company, and quickly escalate into a much bigger problem. This article will walk you through some examples of the types of comments you might encounter, and how to handle them.

Before tackling negative comments, let's make sure you have a few guidelines in place for replying to ANY comment left on your blog. Make sure you always keep these points in mind:

**1 – Listen.** Actually pay attention to what the commenter is saying. Don't gloss over, actually take the time to read and attempt to understand the comment.

**2 – Be thankful that the person left the comment.** We'll talk about this a bit later, but often the people that leave the most negative comments, can become your most vocal allies IF you handle the situation properly. This is why you need to be thankful for EVERY comment.

**3 – Be respectful of the person that left the comment.** You might think they are dead wrong, but you need to understand that they might also think that YOU are dead wrong. But if you'll lower your guard and actually respect their opinion and listen, you might find that they will do the same.

Remember that other readers will usually take their tone from how you respond to commenters. If you respond to negative commenters with a defensive and attacking tone, readers will probably view this as you attacking THEM, and it could easily prompt them to leave negative comments as well, and 'pile on'.

But if I leave a negative comment slamming a company on its blog, and the company immediately responds in a polite, respectful and gracious tone, then I kind of look like a jerk, don't I? The tone of the company's reply will have greatly diffused the chance of an argument.

## **Examples of negative comments and how to respond**

Now let's look at some hypothetical negative comments, and how you should handle them. The key to turning a negative comment into a meaningful exchange (other than replying in a thankful, polite and respectful tone) is to understand what motivated the comment. And you can often make a good guess on this based on the comment itself.

Here are some examples of negative comments, and how to handle them:

## The 'It sounds negative but he really just wants help' comment

Here's an example:

1 – “Yeah great that you are selling a new laptop, but why aren't you telling everyone that the battery is crap? I've had mine for two weeks now and it won't hold a charge for longer than 30 mins! That can't be right, but of course the manual that came with it is no help, and I can't stay on the customer service phone line for 30 mins waiting for help!”

Comments such as this complaining about a problem with product are very common. When you see a comment like this, you have to understand that what the commenter is really saying is 'Will you please help me with my problem?' So the key is to get the customer some help with their problem, and to let everyone else on the blog see that they are getting that help.

But you don't want to handle the customer's problem in the comments section, you want to put the customer in touch with someone that can handle the problem directly.

Here's an example of how you could handle this comment:

“Hi Bob! I'm sorry you're having problems with the GH-1500's battery charging. What I'm going to do is have Tim, who is one of our tech-specialists for the GH-1500, email you and see if he can help you get your laptop's battery charging properly. He'll probably email you within the next 4 hours, and if for some reason you don't hear from him by the end of the day, please email me at [joe@friendlycomputers.com](mailto:joe@friendlycomputers.com), and I'll make sure that we get you taken care of!”

That response makes it clear to everyone reading the blog that your company wants to help Bob solve his problem. And it also greatly increases the chance that Bob will comment again on your blog, and this time in a much more positive tone! This is a key point to remember, many negative comments are coming from people that simply have a problem that they need your help with. If you can help them solve their problem, they will often become evangelists for your company!

## Handling the negative comment based on incorrect information

Here's an example of this type of comment:

2 – “I’m sorry, I can never buy your products again after learning that you’ve sent all of your production overseas! I want to support my country, and that’s why I’ll be buying from your competitors, they are keeping jobs at home!”

You may encounter comments both on your blog, and others, which are critical of your company, based on inaccurate information. Let’s assume that the above comment is wrong, that your company actually does a sizable portion of its production domestically.



Here's how you might want to handle this comment:

“Hi Laura! My name is Jake and I'm a Product Manager at Odessa. I'm sorry to hear that we might be losing your business, but I hope I can give you some more information about our production that might change your mind! It's true, due to economic difficulties in the early 1990s, Odessa moved much of its production to other countries. But thanks to a turnaround that began in 2001, we began moving our production back to this country in early 2003, and currently 26% of our production is domestic! You can learn more about what we are doing to encourage growing jobs in this country by visiting our website (put link here). Also, if you or anyone else would like to discuss this further, I'll be happy to answer any questions you have, you can email me at [JakeP@odessa.com](mailto:JakeP@odessa.com). Take care!”

This response not only politely corrects Laura's misinformation, but it also encourages her and others to interact with Jake. It sends the strong message to customers that the company has nothing to hide, and is inviting interaction. That reflects very well on the company.

## Handling a comment that's vulgar and clearly harassing

Here's an example of this type of comment:

3 - "Your company sucks and your CEO is a complete \*&^!"

First of all, if your company has a blog, realize that you have the right to delete ANY comment that's abusive toward your company, your company's employees, or even your readers. And any comment that contains profanity should probably be deleted. This person obviously isn't interested in a dialogue, they simply want to attack and harass. Never feel obligated to leave such a comment up.

On the other hand, you might encounter such a comment on another blog or site. In most cases, it's a good idea to ignore the comment if it appears on another site. But you should keep a close eye on how other people react to the comment, or if they do. Most people will see this comment for what it is, and probably ignore it. Still, you should keep an eye on what happens next.

These are three examples to get you started. The main points to remember are that you should always be thankful, polite and respectful when you reply to comments, whether they are positive or negative. And always remember that if you can have a positive outcome to a negative comment, not only does it reflect incredibly well on your company to the other readers, but it will likely turn that negative commenter into an evangelist for your company and your blogging efforts!

So don't view negative comments as something to dread, now that you know how to handle them, view them as the opportunity that they are!

And let me know if this article was helpful to you, please email me at [mack.collier@gmail.com](mailto:mack.collier@gmail.com) if you have any questions or comments!

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