



# **Soliciting and Paying for Online Reviews:** A Guide for Marketers



Businesses and consumers both rely on online reviews. Companies may need good ones to attract customers, while consumers often use them to decide what to buy or who to hire. People should be able to trust that reviews reflect the honest opinions of customers or experts who actually used a product or service. Some businesses abuse that trust by writing or procuring fake reviews or by paying supposedly independent websites for good rankings. This kind of deception and manipulation harms both consumers and honest companies.

Even if you have no customer reviews on your own website, the health of your business may depend in part on consumers finding robust customer or expert reviews elsewhere, like on review platforms and comparison websites. How you go about getting these reviews is important because it affects whether consumers get a true and accurate picture of what others think about your business and its products or services. When soliciting reviews or paying others to improve your online reputation, consider the tips below to avoid potentially deceptive conduct that may violate the FTC Act.

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# Soliciting reviews

Before you ask people for reviews, know the rules of the platforms and websites on which those reviews may appear.

Some platforms and websites prohibit reviews from people with personal or financial connections to the seller, or who got an incentive for the reviews – even if the reviews disclose that connection or incentive.

Others may allow incentivized reviews with an appropriate disclosure.



# Soliciting reviews





Improving your company's online reputation and visibility is, of course, an appropriate goal. And getting more honest and unbiased reviews from customers and experts can be crucial. But just like with any other kind of marketing effort, you can't mislead people about your products and services. Businesses that are tempted to use fake reviews or manipulated rankings should also consider the serious damage to their brand image if the public learns of that breach of trust.



