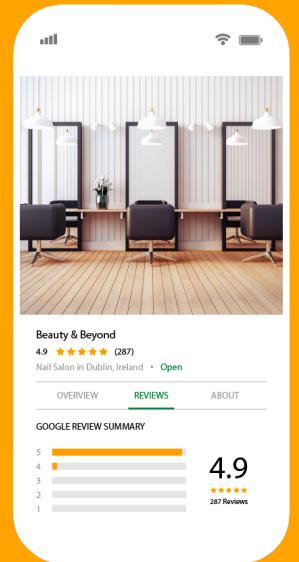




Shoot For The Stars:

The Salon Owners Guide to Online Reputation
in the Era of Google Reviews



With Strategies from **Bobbi Springer**
Owner of the Multi-Award-Winning **Allure Beauty Bar**



Online Reviews have become so fundamental to internet habits that it is hard to remember a time before they existed. Pause for a moment and consider how many times you've consulted an online review in the last month for a new restaurant, a pair of shoes, or a hotel in a new city.

Touché? That's the ubiquity of online reviews.

However, long before anyone even knew what a search engine was, word-of-mouth could make or break a business. When it comes to bringing in new clients, referrals are gold dust for the hair and beauty industry. Find yourself in a new city in need of a manicure? Has your facialist retired? Surely you aren't going to trust a total stranger with your balayage, right? But what if there is no colleague, or relative or friend to ask for a recommendation?

Well, what's an online review if not someone's colleague, relative or friend with a megaphone pointed towards the internet?

Many business owners might be tempted to think of online reviews as a Pandora's box they'd desperately like to close. But in truth, the era of online reviews has handed you the gold mine. Unlike the fleeting, uncontrollable nature of offline referrals, online reviews are within your reach—you have tools to manage, respond, and shape the conversation.

At **Phorest**, we've seen the positive impact online reviews can have on a growing business. With a few pointers, you'll be well on your way to managing your online reputation confidently: getting more of your glowing feedback online, handling the occasional negative review like a pro and projecting a polished brand image out into the world.

So, let's shoot for the **stars**.



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Chapter **1**

Bobbi's Story



The Journey of Allure Beauty Bar

When Bobbi took the reins of Allure Beauty Bar in Grand Junction, Colorado, six years ago, she was no stranger to life behind the chair. With 20 years of experience in the industry, Bobbi had already spent many years working at Allure before deciding to purchase the salon. Back then, the salon operated on a smaller scale, a hybrid of booth rentals and commission-based stylists. But Bobbi had bigger dreams for Allure. Under her leadership, Allure Beauty Bar has experienced a remarkable transformation. The salon moved to a new location, doubling its square footage, stations, and team of stylists. This growth hasn't gone unnoticed; for the past two years, Allure has been recognised in the Salon Today Top 200 in the growth category, with an impressive average of 40% growth year-over-year. Remarkably, the period following COVID-19 marked the salon's most significant growth surge, with numbers that continue to exceed expectations.

“We’re the largest salon in our region—the highest-end salon. We’re kinda the go-to place, and that happened by hiring the right people, having the right team, cultivating the right culture

Bobbi's vision was to create a salon culture that stood out—a place where both stylists and guests felt a sense of community and belonging. “Guest experience is our main focus,” she says. “We’ve made it about creating an amazing workspace environment for the stylists and a culture that people really want to be a part of. That filters into creating a guest experience that is different from all the other salons in our area.”

This commitment to a full-circle approach starts from the moment someone looks up Allure Beauty Bar online. “We really try to make sure that every touchpoint—whether it’s online, on the phone, or in person—is an experience in itself,” she explains. This attention to detail extends to how the team operates inside the salon as well. “We’re a very team based salon,” she says. “Our entire staff is involved from the moment a guest walks in, whether it’s greeting them by name, offering them something to drink, or just checking in throughout the service.”

This team-based approach has fostered a close-knit environment, and Bobbi believes that a happy team leads to exceptional results. “Within our leadership team, we’ve been focusing on the well-being and mental health of our staff,” she shares. “This has rolled over into how they show up for their guests, ensuring that every stylist is giving 110% during their shifts to create a consistent and exceptional experience.”

Bobbi Springer
Owner of Allure Beauty Bar





Bobbi attributes much of this success to her focus on innovation and technology. A significant turning point for Allure Beauty Bar was the decision to join Phorest and integrate its Online Reputation Manager.

Before Phorest, the salon had tried using QR codes to encourage reviews, but the results were inconsistent. "It was one of those things that sometimes people did, and sometimes they didn't," Bobbi says. "Stylists almost felt weird asking for it." But when Phorest introduced Bobbi to the Online Reputation Manager, everything changed. "I was hooked," she admits. "It's been the biggest game-changer for us."

Bobbi's story is a testament to the power of vision, innovation, and community. Through her leadership and the support of Phorest's cutting-edge tools, the future looks even brighter for this Grand Junction gem.



In 2023, Bobbi's Allure Beauty Bar won the Phorest Client Experience Award thanks to consistent 5-star online reviews from clients.



Chapter **2**

**What is Online
Reputation
Management?**



You must be an active narrator in your business's story.

Your salon's brand is alive. Constantly in motion, it lives outside your walls— in the minds of your clients, your impression in the local community and your standing with your industry peers. Whether you know it or not, people are already talking about you. Your online reputation gives you a paper trail. A simple online search will reveal your business's star rating, recent reviews, and photos. This is your digital image, and it's crucial to maintain it just as you would your in-salon experience.

Bobbi, owner of Allure Beauty Bar in Colorado, understands this well. When she took over her salon from the previous owners, the first thing she did was take stock of what people were saying online.

“I realised I needed to make sure my salon's reputation matched the quality of service we provided. Some of the reviews were old or inaccurate. So, I dove in, started responding, and took control

As Bobbi illustrates, managing your online reputation is a proactive task. It is about ensuring that all the effort you and your team put into your values and customer service is reinforced online.

Bobbi says, “When somebody looks us up online, that is our first interaction with that guest, whether we speak to them or not. So, I think your online reputation keeps you relevant to people because they want to go where everyone else is loving right now. They're gonna be less likely to take a chance on you if they don't see that you are relevant in the community right now.”





A Multi-Channel Approach

Creating and maintaining an excellent online reputation requires attention to everywhere you are creating impressions online. For example:



Your website



Social Media



Local & community news



Industry publications and awards

However, your online reviews are the beating heart of your business's online reputation.

Keep Learning
With Phorest
Read the

Salon Owners Guide
to Social Media



Chapter **3**

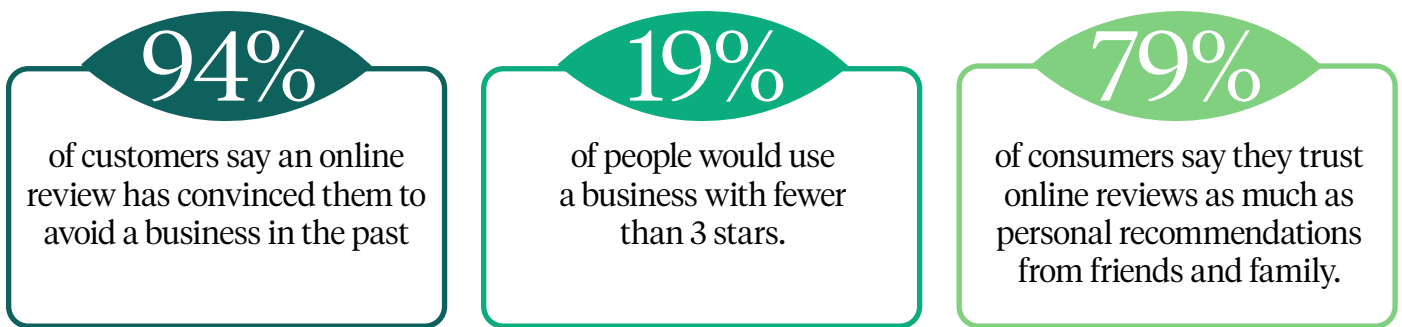
**Why Online
Reviews
Matter**



Positive reviews build trust and credibility, but their influence goes even further. They can drive new clients to your door or cause them to reconsider altogether.*



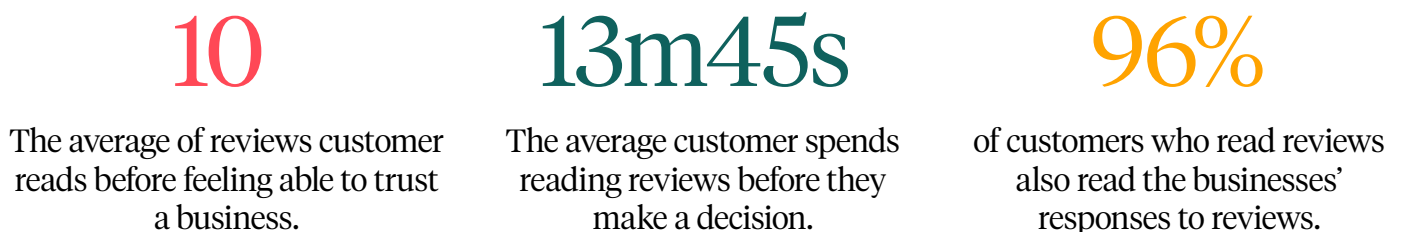
However, on the flip side,



For younger clients, this is even higher.



Before taking a chance on you, prospective customers set aside time to research.**



*Sources: BrightLocal's 2020 Consumer Review Survey, Qualtrics 2020
**Sources: BrightLocal's 2020 Consumer Review Survey

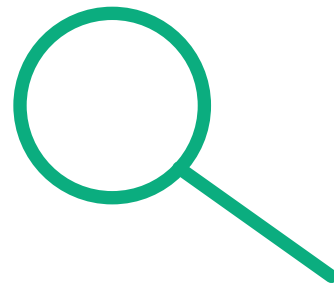


The Power of Google Reviews

Google is typically their first stop when potential clients search for a local business online. However, they won't yet know to search for you by name.

According to Phorest research among salon customers, **57% search for salons in their local area, while 20% search for services or brands** they want.

Therefore, maintaining a top position in local Google search results can be a game-changer, driving traffic and bookings. But when someone searches for "best facial near me" or "top salon for blondes," how does Google decide which business to showcase first?



How Google Determines Local Ranking

Not all of Google's algorithms are a mystery. In its Google My Business help guide, Google outlines that three factors come into play:

Relevance is how well your business matches what someone is searching for.

Distance refers to how close your business is to the searcher or the area they're searching in.

Prominence is how well-known your business is, which is where your online reviews come into play.

Google emphasises that the more reviews you have and the higher your average rating, the more prominent your business appears in local search results. This is what helps your salon outrank your local competitors.



The Indirect Impact on Organic Search Rankings

Although star ratings and reviews are not direct ranking factors for non-local organic searches, they play a critical role in **conversion**. When potential customers see high ratings and numerous positive reviews for your salon, they are more likely to click through to your website or booking page. This increase in click-through rate (CTR) signals to Google that your business is a trusted source, which can **indirectly impact your rankings** in organic search results.

In this way, Google reviews do more than just boost your local search ranking—they also serve as **social proof**, building credibility and encouraging more customers to choose your salon over competitors.

Keep Learning With Phorest

Read the

Salon Owners Guide to SEO



Chapter 4

Handling Negative Reviews Like a Pro



If you could guarantee you'd only ever receive positive online reviews, no business owner would hesitate. We'd all fling open the gates to online reviews. But where would the growth in that be? If you seal yourself off from constructive feedback, you only do yourself a disservice. As Bobbi says, "You've got to rip off the Band-Aid... people are going to have an opinion, and we have to hear it."

The truth is negative reviews happen to everyone on occasion. Sometimes, it's because of a misunderstanding or even something beyond your control. A negative review is always better than silent resentment. It's a chance to learn, improve, and sometimes turn an unhappy client into a loyal one. Remember, the alternative is the client never returns, leaving you wondering.

Of course, it is human and completely normal to feel the defensive urge rising in you when you first encounter a negative review. However, handling the confrontation professionally does get easier with practice.

The moment a negative review comes in, Bobbi makes it a point to walk away before responding.

“I always try to look at it really objectively because sometimes people just have a bad day. Sometimes, the guest was having a bad day and came in, and unfortunately, we weren't able to give them what they needed, and we were just who they took it out on. Sometimes, a stylist did have a bad day. We are not perfect, and we are not gonna do it right all the time.

So when we do get a negative review or when I have to go back and read that, really just sitting with it and owning it and going, okay, this happened, and how can we prevent this from happening next time? How can we be clearer in our communication? I will say that I've gotten more from our negative reviews than I have from our positive reviews. Because it can be something as simple as how we approached our consultations changed after reading some negative reviews.

Keep Learning With Phorest

Read Navigating Feedback
With Jay Williams





Replying to Bad Reviews Constructively

The person who left the review won't be the only one reading your reply. A well-crafted response is a chance to demonstrate professionalism to potential clients observing the interaction.

- 1.** **Step away from the keyboard for a minute**
You may not be your most rational and objective on the first read. Recognise your feelings. Take a breath, walk, or vent to a trusted friend before launching into your response.
- 2.** **Clarify the context**
Do your best to reconstruct the scenario from which the review arose. Check the appointment details in your booking software and inquire with your team.
- 3.** **Communicate empathy**
Acknowledge the client's feelings and experience, even if you disagree with their feedback. Thank them for writing, and make it clear you are taking their concerns seriously and absorbing what they have to say with an open mind.
- 4.** **Reinforce your brand values**
Bobbi shows potential clients that Allure Beauty Bar values its community by addressing each critique with care. While acknowledging they have missed the mark on this occasion, she illustrates the ideal experience her team strives for. She also strategically incorporates key words like "5-star guest experience" into her replies to strengthen the association with her brand.
- 5.** **Segway offline**
It is not in anyone's best interest to continue hashing out any conflict over the internet. Encourage the reviewer to call you to discuss the issue further and reach a resolution. If they refuse to take you up on the offer, at least prospective clients will have a record of your attempted diplomacy.



Discussing Negative Feedback With Your Team

As a salon owner or team leader, negative feedback can feel like a double hit. You feel like you've let the client down and that nagging sense that you've let your team down, too. And if you're like most in this industry, you take it personally. It's not just about the service; it's about your pride in your work. But here's the thing: this vulnerability and personal investment make us great at what we do, and they're also the key to helping our teams grow.

Every time a negative review comes in, document it and bring it to the team member who was involved.

A negative review is a tool to help your team communicate better and build resilience together. It's easy to fall into the trap of finger pointing, but that's not how you build a culture of growth and trust. Bobbi always tells her team:

“Yes, this is going to be hard. Yes, there's feedback here that will be difficult to swallow, but we need to talk about it and we're going to learn from it.”

As leaders, it's our responsibility to create a safe space where team members can reflect without fear of judgment.

1. **Don't spring it on them.**
Carve out time to discuss the matter intentionally. Give your team member the courtesy of some personal space to work through their rawest emotions first so you can have a productive chat.
2. **Guide the conversations towards solutions.**
Ask questions like, "What do you think could have been done differently in this situation?" or "How can we approach a similar challenge next time to ensure the client feels more supported?" These kinds of questions encourage personal accountability without triggering defensiveness.
3. **Lastly, remind your team that no review—glowing or critical—defines them.**
As Bobbi points out, as hair and beauty professionals, "We're natural-born people-pleasers, and nobody wants to let somebody down. I think that's the worst—that feeling. We take it so personally that I let this client down." Don't let your team spiral. Feedback is just one perspective, and while it is critical to hear it with an open mind, it doesn't sum up the entirety of their skills or worth.





Threats of Bad Reviews: Don't Give In to Intimidation

Sometimes, you need to acknowledge a mistake and make it right. However, that is different to giving in to demands purely out of fear. Although rare, unfortunately, some people have been known to use the threat of a negative review to manipulate businesses into providing free services or refunds. Bobbi explains, "There are people out there who, if they complain enough or say 'I'm going to leave a bad review,' expect to get their services for free, even if nothing was wrong." This can be particularly challenging in a service-based industry because opinions on results—whether it's a haircut, colour, or skincare treatment—can be highly subjective.

If a client is unhappy and tries to use a negative review as a bargaining chip, don't panic. The key is to stay calm, stick to your policies, and maintain consistency in handling complaints.

Steps to Handle Threats of Bad Reviews:

- 1. Be Fair, But Firm:**
Acknowledge their feelings, but stick to your salon's policies on refunds, re-dos, or complaints. If your salon offers policies for guest complaints or re-dos, outline these clearly and explain how the situation can be remedied within those guidelines.
- 2. Document Everything:**
If a situation escalates, ensure you've documented all interactions with the client—both in person and through any written communication. This will protect you in case the review goes public. Your thoughtful and detailed response, complete with dates, times, and steps taken to resolve the issue, will demonstrate professionalism to anyone reading the review.
- 3. Respond Thoughtfully:**
If the client follows through with the threat and leaves a bad review, respond carefully. Bobbi suggests something like: "Here's the situation, here's how we tried to remedy it..." Clients who read these reviews are more likely to trust a business that handles complaints with grace and transparency. As Bobbi says, "Ultimately, the right people are going to find us."



Fake Reviews: Spot The Signs Early

Bobbi describes a scenario in which, after letting go of a staff member, she started receiving negative reviews from people who had never even visited her salon. "I looked up their names in our system and couldn't find them." It's frustrating and uncommon, but fake reviews happen. Often, these reviews don't include detailed complaints or feedback—just a generic one-star rating with no explanation. Or, as Bobbi did, you may realise the reviewer has never set foot in your business.

Here's how Bobbi responded to one such review:



Response from the owner
5 months ago

Thank you for your review. We take all feedback seriously, but we are unable to match your experience with any records of your visit. We strive to ensure every client leaves our salon satisfied and would love the opportunity to address any concerns you might have. Please contact us directly at 970-241-5385 so we can better understand and resolve any issues. We look forward to hearing from you and hope to have the chance to provide you with a positive experience.

This type of response does two things:

- It tactfully calls out the reviewer, making it clear to other readers that the review lacks credibility.
- It showcases your professionalism, leaving a positive impression on potential customers.

In Bobbi's case, the majority of fake reviewers actually took down their comments after being called out. However, this isn't a guarantee. In that case, you should report the review to the platform if you believe it violates their policies.

While they may not remove every flagged review, it's worth pursuing if you have strong evidence of inauthentic feedback.

Check out these guides for more details on reporting fake reviews on:

[Google](#)

[Facebook](#)



Chapter **5**

**Making The
Most of
Positive
Reviews**



While negative reviews require swift attention, making a habit of responding to both negative and positive reviews is the gold standard.

Engaging With Your Community: Appreciating Clients

If a client has left you a review, a simple “thank you” goes a long way. Coupled with a personalised note about their visit and you can turn a one-time client into a loyal advocate for your salon. It’s about reinforcing that positive experience and ensuring the client feels valued.

Turning Praise into Promotion: Marketing

The authentic voice of your satisfied clients will resonate with potential customers far more than anything you could say about yourself. In this way, a positive online review is some of the most cost-effective advertising you can get. So, be sure you are getting plenty of mileage out of them.

Bobbi has found a simple yet effective way to utilise these reviews: “I have them on our actual website; there’s a section that says ‘What people are saying.’ I can copy and paste directly from Phorest and put those in quotes in case somebody didn’t find us on Google or they’re looking through our website.” Beyond your website, consider incorporating positive reviews into your broader marketing strategy. Share them on social media, feature them in newsletters, highlight them in your promotional materials, or even use them in your applications for industry awards.

The Phorest Client Experience Award recognises salons who have held a consistent $\frac{4}{5}$ star rating over 12 consecutive months from at least 60 reviews.





Celebrating Success: Boosting Team Morale

Sharing positive reviews with your staff can inspire and motivate them, reminding them why they do what they do and reinforcing their commitment to delivering exceptional service.

Bobbi has created a system for this, saying, "We have a channel that is called 'wins,' so we want to celebrate when people are doing things really well. I'll share those positive reviews to that channel so that the team, in real-time, can see the amazing reviews we're getting. I think that's a constant reminder of 'this is why I do what I do. This is why I show up.'"

Celebrating these wins publicly within your team can have a profound impact, especially for younger or less experienced staff members. For instance, when a newer stylist receives their first 5-star review, it's a confidence booster that can't be replicated. As Bobbi puts it, "You can't replace that. If they weren't getting that feedback from our booking software, where would they be getting that feedback?"

With more visibility on their positive online reviews than ever before, Bobbi has implemented a "5-Star Customer Service Award" to give out to the top review recipient on the team each year at their end-of-year party. "That's now a coveted thing that everybody wants. We are actually going to start doing it quarterly instead of waiting for the whole year to pass."

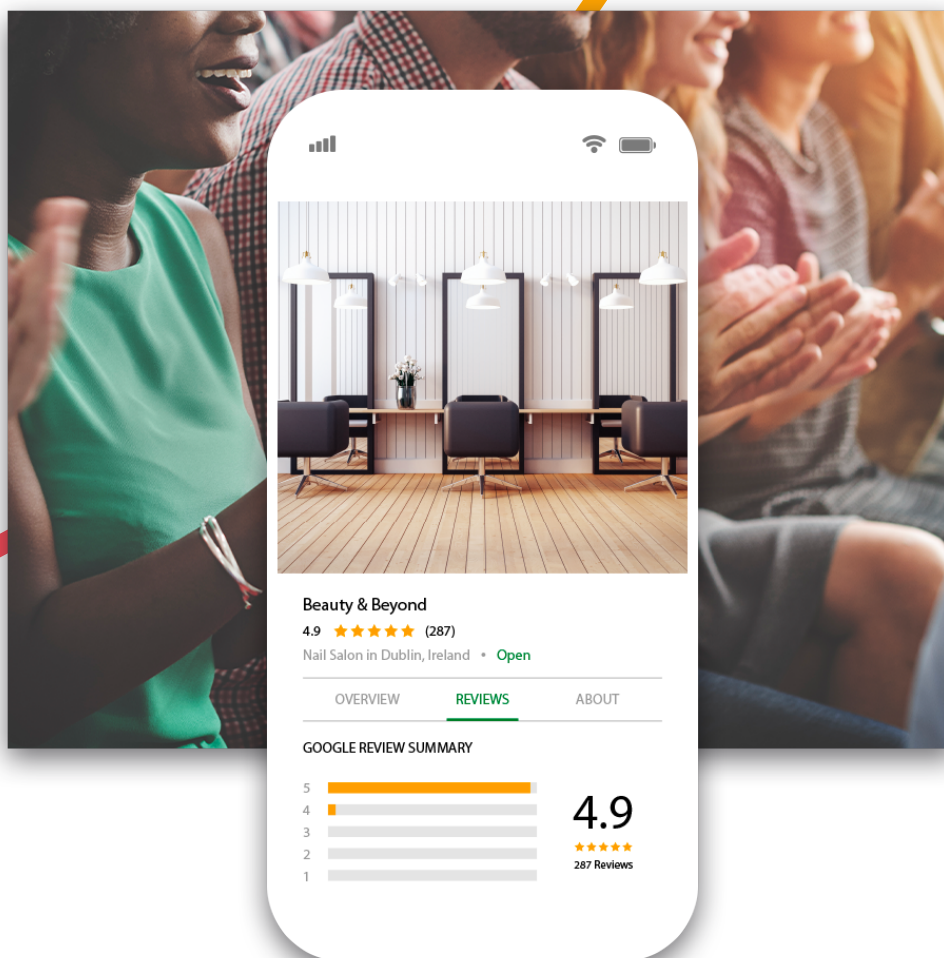
Consider creating a system similar to Bobbi's, where positive reviews are regularly shared with your team. This could be through a group chat, a dedicated bulletin board, or during team meetings. Recognising your staff's hard work and celebrating their successes not only boosts morale but also fosters a positive work culture where everyone feels appreciated and motivated to maintain high standards.



The background features several stylized green leaf shapes of varying sizes and shades of green, scattered across a white background. A large, light green curved shape is on the left side, partially overlapping the text.

Chapter 6

**Leveraging
Technology
for Reputation
Management**



As a salon owner, you may not always be on the floor, but online reviews can keep you closely connected to your business. Bobbi emphasises the importance of staying involved through reviews:

“I don’t work behind the chair anymore as the owner, and so it keeps me very in the know of what’s happening on the floor because I get to read it every single day. I’m still interacting with the guests and the customers, so I think it just gives you a really good beat on your business.

Managing your online reputation requires you to be consistent and hands-on, but many owners and managers simply don’t have the time to spare. But what if you could streamline the process, getting more reviews and managing them all from one place with minimal effort?

With Phorest’s Online Reputation Manager, you can do just that.



Here is how Phorest's Online Reputation Manager works

1. Get More Reviews With Automated Review Requests

After every appointment, Phorest will send your client a text asking them to rate their experience out of 5 stars and write a review.

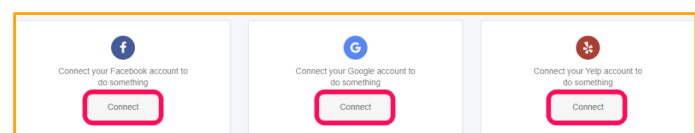
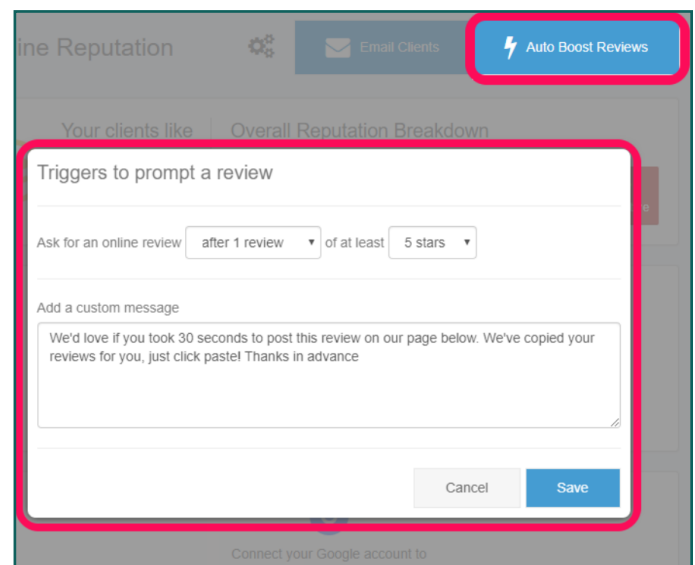
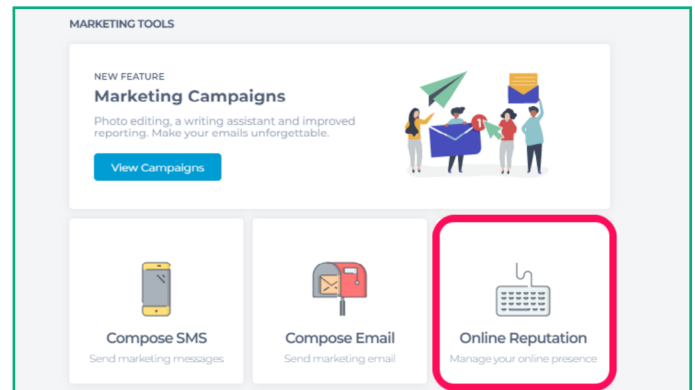
2. Get More 5-Star Reviews With Auto-Boost

Filter Which Reviewers Are Prompted to Post Online. You choose the threshold, 4 or 5 stars. Only reviews that meet your threshold will be prompted to post their review on Google & Facebook. That way, you increase your chances of dealing with any negative feedback before it reaches the public arena of the internet.

Phorest Does the Heavy Lifting for Clients. From your client's perspective, posting a review is easy. After filling out their feedback, the Phorest system can automatically paste their entire review onto the review platform you've synced with your system (Google & Facebook). In two clicks, their review will be live. This simple technique removes the friction and boosts the odds glowing feedback actually makes it online.

3. Proactively Monitor & Manage All Your Reviews

Phorest brings together all the feedback you receive from Google & Facebook into one clear dashboard which you can respond to reviews directly from even the ones that didn't come through Phorest.





Bobbi highlights the impact the Online Reputation Manager has had at Allure Beauty Bar.

“Because the Online Reputation Manager is so integrated and you are able to actually be in Phorest and go and see all of them and be able to respond to them in real-time, for me, is huge. It almost takes it off that tedious to-do list. I have them all right there in front of me and that’s been amazing.

Before using Phorest, Allure’s Google rating hovered around 4.6 or 4.7. But within a year of switching to Phorest, they saw a dramatic increase in reviews, outpacing the total number of reviews they had accumulated over the previous five years.

“In a full year, we’ve been able to get more reviews than in the previous five years I had the salon.



Among Phorest salons using the
Online Reputation Manager,
95% of their Google reviews are 5-star.





Chapter **7**

**Your First
Steps to
Stardom**



Feeling ready to take charge of your online reputation? Start by claiming your business profiles on the most relevant review sites.

Google

With over 90% of all search engine traffic coming from Google, and nearly 50% of Google searches with local intent, Google is hands down where you will have your biggest reach and influence.

Here is how to
[Claim Your Business Profile on Google](#)

Facebook

Facebook is slowly phasing out its 5-star review system in favor of recommendations. Recommendations are based on a simple yes or no question: do you recommend the business? Another benefit is that Facebook users can directly see what recommendations their friends are making, making it possible for them to spark up conversation about your salon from inside the platform.

Here is how to
[Create a Facebook Business Page](#)

Here is how to
[Turn on Recommendations for Your Facebook Business Page](#)



Choose Your Technology Partner Wisely

Born on the salon floor in Dublin, Ireland, 20 years ago, now over 11,000 hair and beauty businesses worldwide trust Phorest at the heart of their operations every day

Finally, Salon Software With Everything You Need

Phorest is a true multitasker. Use Phorest to keep your team organised and your calendar on point. Level up your marketing with cutting-edge features and streamline your workflow with integrated payments, retail, and inventory.

More Growth, Less Admin

Phorest's smart features and automated tools means you finally do have time for all your growth projects.

An Elevated Guest Experience

From booking to checkout, Phorest works behind the scenes to make your guests' experience seamless while keeping your brand front and center.



Book a personalised demo with Phorest to discuss your goals with our team.

Already Using Phorest? Hey Pham!

Check out this course on Phorest Academy
**Online Reputation Manager:
Get More 5-Star Reviews**