



Shopper Approved Delivers Peace of Mind to FTD in the World of Online Reviews

Now business is blooming ... like a rose.

For decade upon decade, florists have created awe-inspiring bouquets for just about any occasion humans could imagine. The order comes in. Florists perform their artistic magic. Customers are happy.

But as the information age blossomed, florists — and every other business owner — quickly realized that consumers could freely share their thoughts about those businesses, both good and bad.

Today consumers are using — and believing — what others say in those reviews. In fact, a full 88 percent of all consumers read online reviews to determine whether a local business is a good business, according BrightLocal, a local search company.

This is a fact not lost on Timm McIntyre, the product manager in e-commerce for FTD, the membership group for thousands of florists across the U.S. and Canada. McIntyre says FTD's job is simple: help its members sell flowers and gifts online and in their stores.

"To do that, I spend most of my time looking very closely at every single link of the sales chain," McIntyre says.

One link that began to stand out to McIntyre was trust. "The sender is always worried that the receiver is getting a good experience," he says. "The sender needs trust. So how does someone judge a business's reputation that may be operating across the country — and that they've never purchased from before? Online reviews. Today, reviews for merchants are just as common as reviews for products. In our case, consumers can see a photo of flower arrangements on our members' websites and that's fine. But they also want to feel comfortable about the merchant, too."

As McIntyre studied online reviews, he also learned that local sites often collect passive reviews — which means those businesses have zero control over whom, when, or where reviews are posted.

This is when McIntyre learned about Utah-based Shopper Approved, the only review company that collects merchant reviews, product reviews, and local reviews. It also collects up to 70 times more ratings and reviews in Google, Bing, and Yahoo than any other review company.

And even though the company started in 2010, it's already setting the standard for reviews — and it's garnered a huge following. A full 82.7 percent of 17,579 of its clients' customers surveyed said they were more likely to buy from a website that displayed the Shopper Approved seal.

McIntyre quickly became a fan, too. "They worked quickly and without us having to tap a lot of our own manpower — and the actual rollout [in January 2016] only took 15 minutes."

McIntyre admits he was skeptical about seeing immediate conversion. "I was thinking just because you published reviews didn't mean shoppers would look at them," he says. "But just having the reviews helped with conversion. More reviews had more of an effect on converting shoppers into buyers."

The other obvious concern was negative reviews. "We've all heard that customers will tell more people about their bad experiences, but they had a system in place for bad reviews," McIntyre says.

Cresta Pillsbury, chief operating officer at Shopper Approved, explains that bad reviews can be "locked" for up to 30 days. "This allows the florist to fix the problem and even publicly comment on the review, so they can explain the situation and how they handled it," she says.

She adds that florists "often get hammered unfairly by negative passive reviews, so giving them the ability to actively address and resolve issues when they arise helps to improve their ratings and provides a more accurate picture of their true reputation."

To McIntyre, even bad news is good news with Shopper Approved because he believes when consumers see that the florist acknowledged the problem and then fixed it, it adds that much more credibility for the florist.

"First, if there are no bad reviews, that's not credible," McIntyre says. "People will get suspicious. Sure, it's in our nature to avoid the negative reviews. But when consumers see that a delivery was late in a blizzard, they understand it. Then they see that the florist came in and made it right. That means a lot."

The results? McIntyre wouldn't share specific numbers but said, "I handle analytics and we saw a lift in conversion rate, definitely. And that lift didn't require any effort from my members. Plus, the lift got stronger as the program matured."

And as an unexpected benefit, he adds, "Our members better understand what consumers expect to prevent bad experiences, so they're more proactive to reduce complaints."

Pillsbury says studies have shown that companies with 5-star ratings see a 22-percent-higher click-through rate for conversions, on average, and customers are willing to spend up to 20 percent or more with merchants that show better reviews.

"It's amazing to work with FTD and give them practical tools that help them control their brand in such an important way," Pillsbury says.

For more information on **Shopper Approved**, please visit: <http://www.shopperapproved.com/>