

## SOLVING THE SOCIAL MEDIA HEADACHE



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The internet has become a dominant force in consumer culture. Whether it is on price comparison sites, blogs or via social media, consumers have never had such a wealth of information about moving and its associated risks.

Word of mouth recommendations from social media have become trusted pre-purchase reference points for many consumers and, as social media's veil of anonymity allows people to vent dissatisfaction on a more open forum, consumers are becoming less passive.

As the consumer voice gets louder, negative feedback and critical comments can have a direct impact on prospective customer perceptions of your company and your sales activity. The big question in the moving industry worldwide is: how do you turn negative word of mouth in social media into an opportunity?

Research suggests that a trustworthy brand with a solid track record, good customer service and a strong, ethical, claims and complaints procedure – in today's uncertain world – has the biggest influence in the decision-making process. Here are several steps moving organisations can take if they want to build trust and loyalty via social media, and deal effectively with customer complaints and claims:

- Develop a social media strategy. Set clear company policies and procedures for responding to and monitoring social media conversations about your company, whether for claims, complaints or negative feedback. Make sure you communicate the policy to your whole organisation from the boardroom to ground-level staff. When dealing with claims-based complaints, using trained staff, with a good insurance understanding and PR skills to manage your social media communications – will be critical to success
- Listen. A good listening strategy makes it easier to catch negative comments and spot issues before they become a problem. There's an extensive choice of social media management and monitoring tools available – such as Google Alerts – which can help you listen in on your customer's chatter
- Deal with complaints promptly and publicly. Being quick to respond shows you care about your customers and may prevent a situation from escalating out of control, but be cautious of admitting liability. Social media is an open channel where your responses are out in the open for all to



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see, and a fully transparent claims process will help make you seem safe and dependable

- Be personable. Offering a canned corporate response or quoting small print is likely to infuriate a disgruntled customer even more. Apologise with conviction, show empathy and respond in a personal manner. Include a first name so the customer knows that a human being is contacting them
  - Maintain a high moral stance. It's impossible to please all customers all of the time, and there will be situations where you're better off leaving it alone. Don't get drawn into an argument, especially if it gets into legal or ethical problem areas. Keep a cool head and respond intelligently and professionally
  - Move difficult complaints and claims onto a private channel. When you have only 140 characters to explain a complex claims issue, or you have a particularly upset customer, give them the chance to discuss their issues another way, such as a phone call or email. Don't make it difficult to get in touch, otherwise you could make a bad situation worse
- It may not be possible to control all comments about your firm, but making considered choices in social media can help humanise your brand – turning hardened critics into vocal ambassadors along the way. **fi**

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