

# Google Reviews 101 for Marketing Agencies



# Introduction

Before the internet, marketing was more art than science. A banner ad was something you printed out and hung up in front of your business. Getting customers meant actually going outside and getting them.

Things have changed a bit since then. If you knocked on a customer's door now, they might call the police. Even a phone call can feel intrusive. And email isn't much better. The average open rate for emails is [18%](#), and the average click-through rate is only [2.6%](#).

Today, your clients get found online. If they want customers, they have to top the Google Map Pack. And that starts with Google reviews.



**We started in 1995 and grew an office from no customers to the largest in the city. We did it the old-fashioned way—knocking on doors and advertising in the Yellow Pages. Today, if you can't rank on Google, you're in trouble."**

Ted Byrt, Owner - Ted Byrt Insurance

# Business begins online.

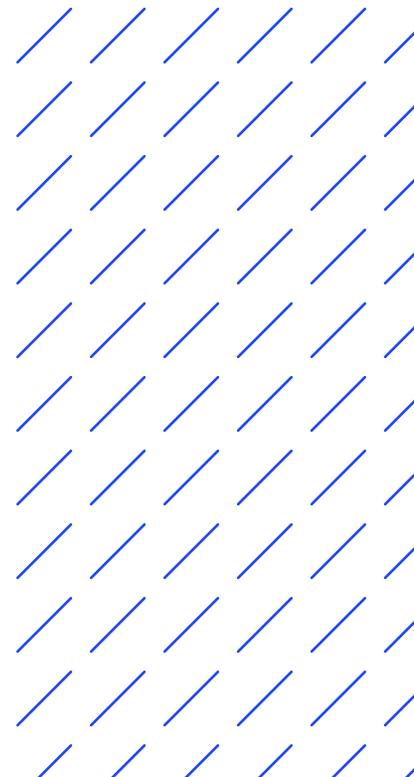
## It's true that most searches start online, but where do they end?

Approximately [97% of consumers](#) use online search to find a local business or service. Nearly [84% of those searches](#) are discovery, and the [vast majority](#) are made in Google. “Near me” searches have grown by [over 900%](#).

When customers near your clients search for a business like theirs, customers choose a business from the Google Map Pack.

## The top three search results get [75% of the clicks](#).

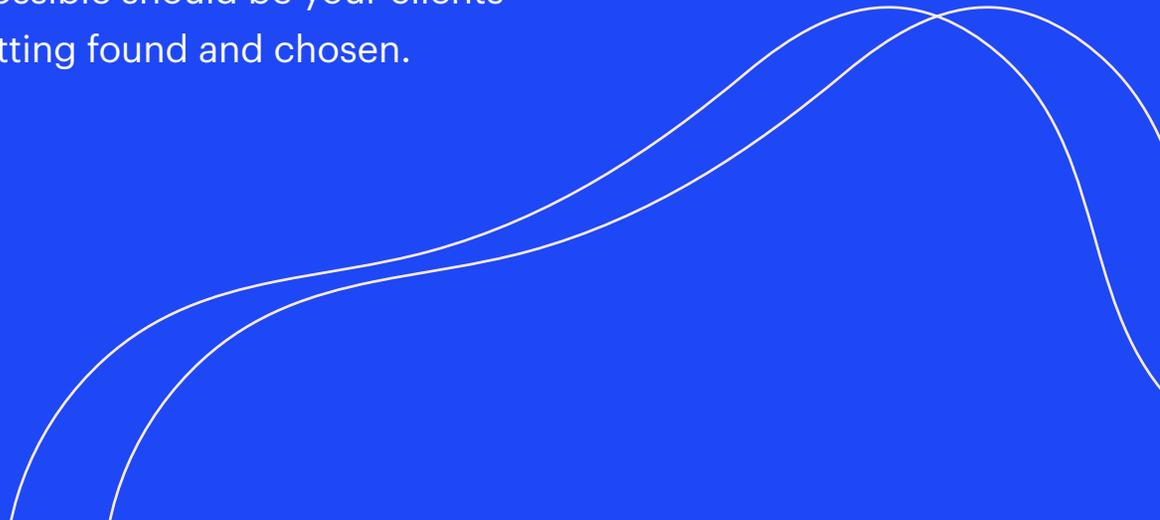
If your clients aren't featured on Google's Map Pack today, read on. We'll show you how Google reviews impact rankings and what your clients need to change to outrank their competition.





# Why do Google reviews matter?

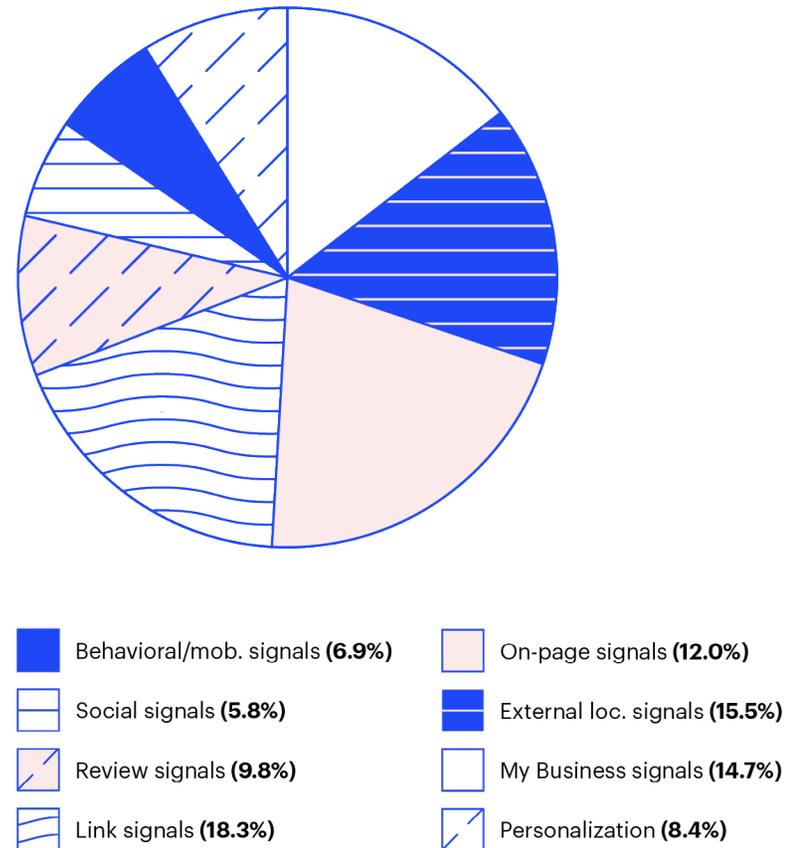
Today, Google reviews impact the customer journey more than ever. Reviews influence **88% of consumers** in discovering a local business. And Google currently hosts **the most visible reviews** on the internet. According to a **recent interview** with Neil Patel, collecting as many reviews as possible should be your clients' main focus when it comes to getting found and chosen.



# What are the benefits of Google reviews?

## Google reviews increase local SEO.

Google doesn't openly share details about how they calculate local search rankings. However, when ranking businesses, Google has claimed that they give attention to (1) Relevance (2) Prominence and (3) Distance. Reviews impact the first of these, alerting crawlers that a business is relevant to the searcher. According to their site, Google also carefully analyzes businesses' review [recency, frequency, quality, and quantity](#) when ranking. Moz suggests that roughly 10% of Google's entire search algorithm is driven by review signals such as review quantity, velocity, and diversity.



## ♥ Google reviews increase brand trust.

Transparency is becoming more and more relevant for consumers. [86%](#) say it's more important than ever, and [94%](#) say they're more likely to be loyal to a transparent brand. The growing relevance (and importance) placed on transparency can largely be accredited to the accessibility of in-depth information about any given business. The fact is that before engaging with your clients, online research is the first thing<sup>1</sup> customers do. And the [majority of them](#) read reviews.

Positive reviews [increase customer trust](#) in a local business significantly. The way businesses respond to reviews, both positive and negative, also impacts customer trust. [89% of consumers](#) read business responses, and [56%](#) say a business's responses have changed their perspective on the business.

<sup>1</sup> Taken from Podium's 2021 State of Reviews survey

## ↻ Google reviews create a valuable feedback loop.

One of the biggest advantages of Google reviews is the feedback loop and customer intelligence your clients can utilize. Every Google review they collect can serve as a customer survey response. Each Google review generally includes a few key insights:

- Whether or not a company delivered a positive customer experience
- Where a company excelled or under-delivered
- How a business can improve

Reading positive and negative Google reviews can tell a business exactly what they're doing well and where there's room for improvement.



## **Google reviews improve click-through rate to your clients' sites.**

Your clients may spend all the time and money in the world working with you to improve their SEO strategy, but if people aren't actually clicking on their sites, all that effort is in vain. Luckily, Google reviews [increase](#) the click-through rate to a business's website. And the more clicks a site receives, the higher it climbs in Google's rankings.

## **Google reviews increase revenue.**

Through their direct optimization of a number of factors (visibility, SEO, feedback, trust), Google reviews [increase the revenue](#) of local businesses significantly. They have a [direct impact](#) on purchasing decisions and the way customers find and choose which businesses to buy from. And because methods of collection are so much cheaper than other forms of marketing, a Google reviews strategy is one of the most cost-effective campaigns your clients can undertake, delivering maximum ROI.



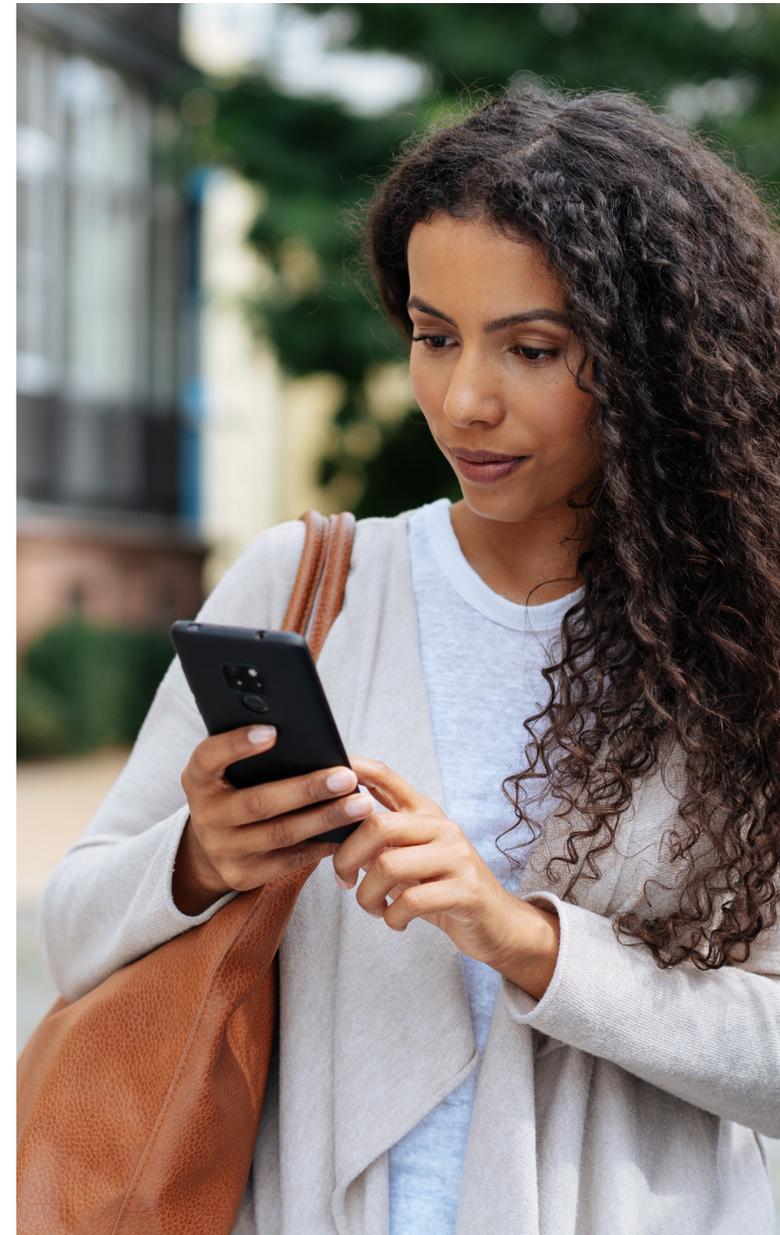
**Google reviews increase the revenue of local businesses significantly. They have a direct impact on purchasing decisions.**

# Why are Google reviews so important for your clients today?

**Google reviews do much more than improve local search ranking. They impact the entire customer journey.**

**Awareness.** Google reviews are not just about getting noticed and staying top of mind. Online reviews are also [where consumers go](#) to learn about new products and businesses.

**Consideration.** According to recent research, the minimum star rating an average consumer would even consider is a [3.4](#). Approximately [half of consumers](#) are willing to travel farther and pay more in order to patronize a business with higher reviews.





**Purchase.** Online reviews play a huge role in whether or not a consumer ultimately chooses to buy from a business. [93% of consumers](#) say that online reviews influence their purchase decisions. [92% of B2B buyers](#) are more likely to purchase after reading a trusted review.

**Post-Purchase.** After the purchase is made and a review is left, reviews give businesses valuable insights into their operations. Reviews and subsequent improvements attract more customers, starting the journey all over again.





**Now that you know how Google reviews impact the customer journey, let's look at real businesses that are succeeding with reviews.**





## Real businesses are benefiting from online reviews in big ways:

- 01. Gallery Furniture** has gathered 9,517 new reviews online, resulting in a huge increase in web traffic and inbound leads. They spend less on paid search results and other marketing efforts because of their online presence. [Learn More](#)
- 02. The Smile Studio** has a spot on the Google Map Pack thanks to all the patients who choose them because of their positive online reviews. [Learn More](#)
- 03. Shannon Fine Jewelry** has a 5-star rating on Google and almost 200 Google reviews, which has led to increased traffic to the site. Customers say this is directly because of the reviews they've read online. [Learn More](#)
- 04. Zerorez** carpet cleaners has greatly improved their customer service and business thanks to the feedback of 13,000+ online reviews. [Learn More](#)

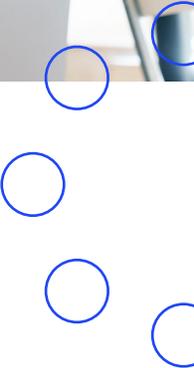


# How to get Google reviews step-by-step.

Helping your clients gather more reviews involves optimizing key touch points over an entire customer journey. However, it begins with making a few critical updates to their GMB listings. [31% of consumers](#) say they're more likely to look at a local business's Google listing before visiting than they were before COVID.

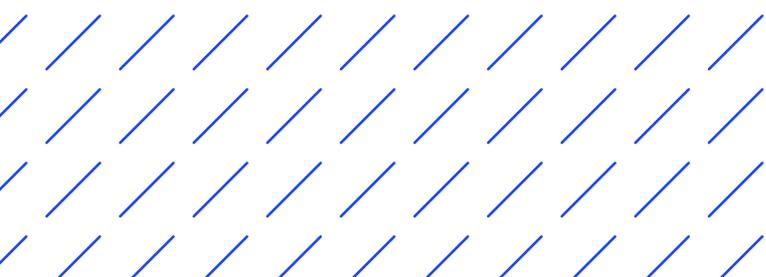
If your client's GMB listing is unverified, they can't show up in searches or maps.

If their listing is incomplete, it's harder for [Google](#) to match them with local customers. And even when they're matched, customers won't click unless the GMB listing is **optimized**.



## Optimizing GMB listings for more reviews.

**Businesses must work to make sure their listings are complete, updated, and filled with relevant information that will entice searchers to click on them.**



Google reviews are vital to making listings stand out by bringing real customer feedback to the forefront. At the very minimum, businesses need to:

- **Add relevant information.** Businesses need to ensure that their business name, address, and phone number (commonly referred to as NAP) are consistent across the web so customers and crawlers can identify them. Business descriptions and any customer-facing content should include all of the information that customers might find relevant. Businesses should employ keywords but avoid using these fields as opportunities to stuff keywords. Oftentimes, Google views this as spam and local search rankings can suffer as a result.
- **Upload high-resolution photos.** One thing many businesses neglect to do is upload enough photos to make their listings stand out among the competition. Photos help businesses gather significantly more interactions with online searchers.

Google has found that listings featuring photos receive [42% more requests](#) for driving directions from Google Maps and [35% more clicks](#) through to a business's website. Before uploading any photo, businesses should ensure that size is [optimized for the platforms](#) customers are using to find them. It's also important to optimize for various devices. Consider that nearly [68% of consumers](#) are likely to engage with a business using a mobile device compared to [32%](#) who would engage via desktop.

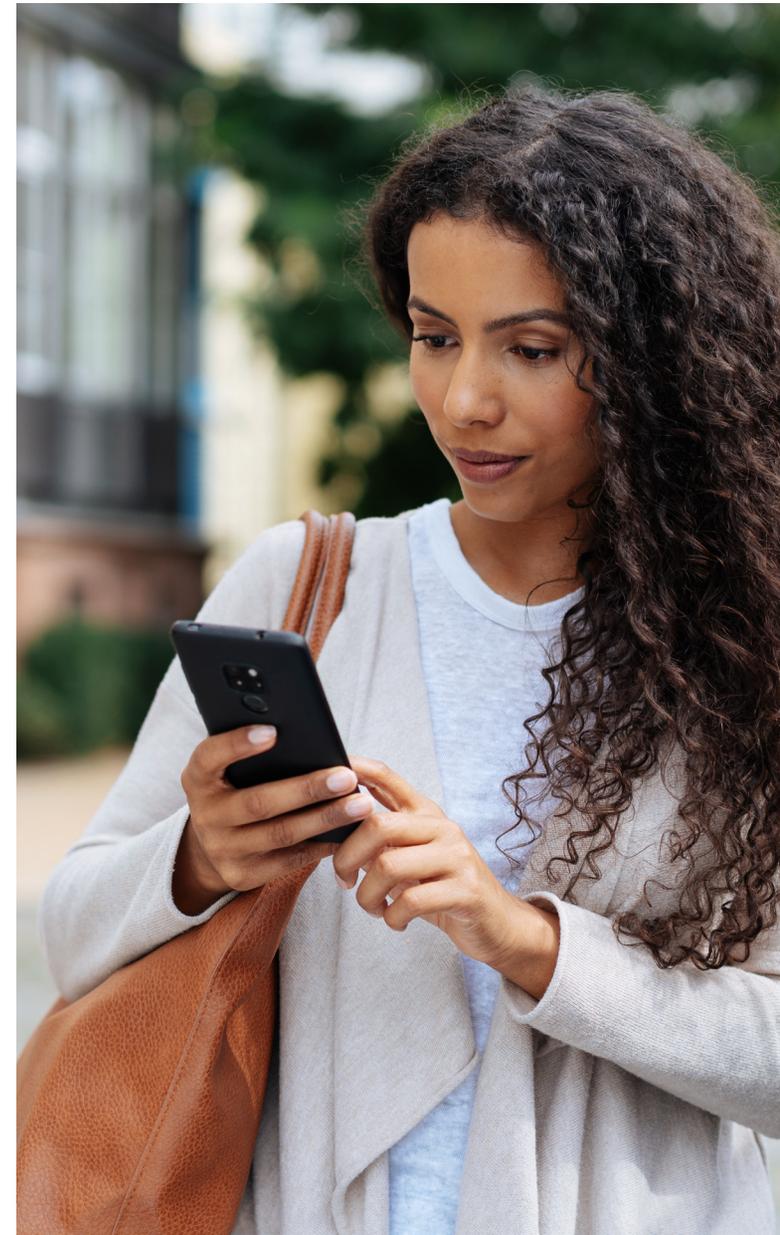
- **Include up-to-date hours of operation.** One piece of information customers are looking for when they Google a business is whether or not they are open. Because of this, businesses should take the time to update hours of operation whenever a change occurs. It's also important to include any variations, such as special holiday hours. Businesses should include updates on safety measures, changes to their onsite location, and any other relevant information.

## Help your clients collect more Google reviews.

**Once your client has claimed and optimized their business listing, it's time to start collecting Google reviews and interacting with customers.**

The [vast majority](#) of consumers leave a business review once a quarter, or less. And a [fifth](#) say they've never left one.

One of the main reasons customers who are more than willing to leave a review fail to do so is because the process is usually cumbersome. They don't know where to go on Google to leave a review. Sometimes businesses send them an email with a link, but there are too many steps and customers often give up before actually leaving a review.





Your clients need to rethink how they ask for reviews and make the process as frictionless and convenient as possible. They can do this through text.

Over a [third of consumers](#) who receive a text review invite leave one, and approximately [41% of consumers](#) prefer text to communicate vs. [18% who prefer email](#). With the right platform, your clients can make collecting reviews as easy as sending their customers a text with a short review link.

Using text review invites can result in significantly higher response rates and enables businesses to collect as many as [15x more Google reviews](#) than traditional email-based platforms. After switching to text to collect reviews, [Paul's Pest Control](#) jumped half a star on Google within 24 hours and gathered more reviews in one month than they had in five years.



## How Ted Byrt Insurance rose to #1.

**“We’ve been actively collecting Google reviews for five or six years. One thing we’ve found out is that it’s really difficult. If we got two [reviews] a month we were pretty happy.”**

We bought a security system from a company here in the city. At the end of the service he asked if I would do a review for him on Google. He pulled out his phone and sent me a review invite. I was dumbfounded at how amazing and flipping easy it was, because I know how hard it is.

I was sold. I contacted Podium and pretty much signed up on the spot. I would’ve been happy with two or three reviews per month. In our first month we had 25.”

**8x** increase in average monthly reviews

**4%** increase in average star rating

**361** total reviews

## 5 tips to get more Google reviews.

**Implementing text is a great way to start. But to open the floodgates, your clients should also do the following:**

**01. Determine the right timing of the invitation.**

When is the best time to invite customers to leave a review? In our experience, the best time to ask is when there's some downtime in the sales process. For example, in the auto industry, a good time might be after the sale is completed and the customer is waiting in finance.

**02. Set expectations for the review.** After your client has determined the right time to invite the customer, they need to set expectations. When setting expectations, businesses should let the customer know:



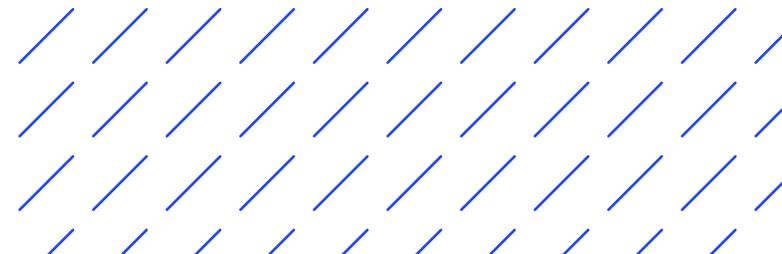


- ⦿ Why online reviews are important for their business
- ⦿ How they will be receiving the invite (text or email)
- ⦿ When they will be receiving the invite

**03. Manage reviews.** If businesses want to collect reviews, it's [crucial to show their customers that reviews matter to them](#). That means managing them. Businesses should respond to negative reviews within 2 hours and positive ones within 24 hours. Google's [GMB support page](#) explicitly says responding to reviews "shows that you value your customers and their feedback" and helps "build consumer trust."

**04. Change according to reviews.** Another great way to increase collection and demonstrate responsiveness is to implement changes according to the feedback. [Griffin Fast Lube](#) crushes the competition by continuously improving their business through the valuable feedback they get from their customers.

**05. Use a reputation management platform.** Responding to, collecting, and analyzing reviews can be quite a task for any team to take on. But a platform such as Podium makes managing reviews a breeze for any local business of any size. After adopting Podium, [Dunn Tire](#) saw a 5% increase in rating and 41x increase in average monthly reviews, surpassing 4,500.





**Google reviews should be an integral part of any business's digital marketing strategy. They help increase visibility, build trust with consumers, and push consumers through every stage of the buyer's journey. If your client takes proactive steps to secure reviews, they will see both an increase in traffic to their website as well as their physical location.**



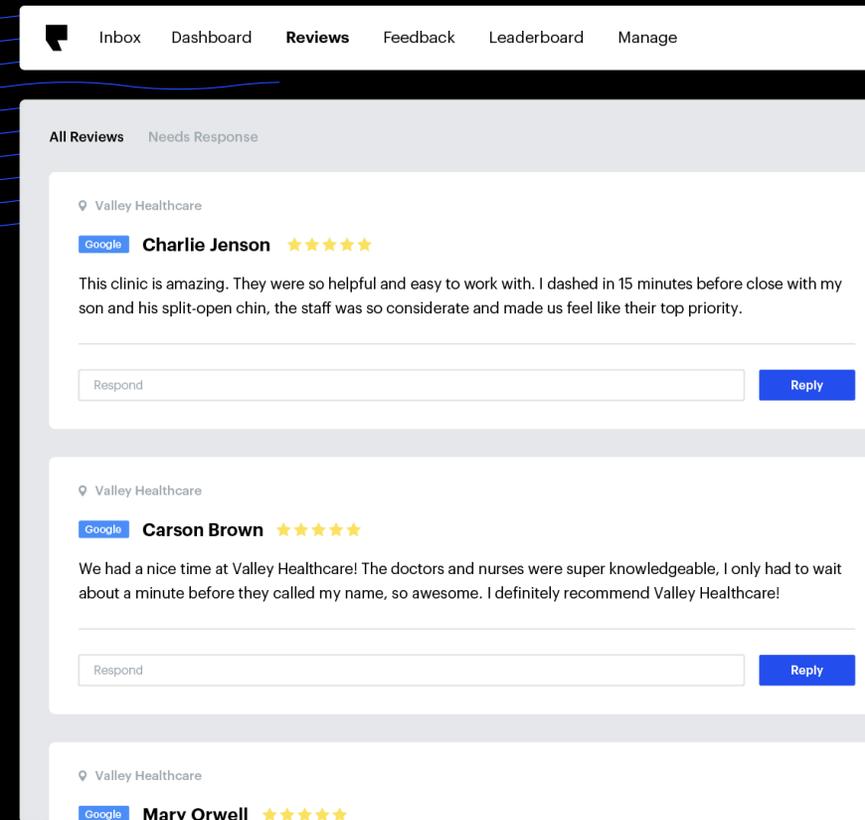
# Dominate the local market.

To top search results and collect a ridiculous number of reviews easily, [Neil Patel recommends](#) Podium. Podium helps thousands of local businesses of all sizes get found and chosen daily by allowing them to:

- Collect and manage thousands of reviews
- Drive and convert leads online
- Provide a modern customer experience

All through the power of text. See how Podium can help your clients get found and chosen consistently by watching a demo.

[Watch a demo here](#) ↗



The screenshot displays the Podium 'Reviews' dashboard. At the top, a navigation bar includes 'Inbox', 'Dashboard', 'Reviews' (highlighted), 'Feedback', 'Leaderboard', and 'Manage'. Below the navigation, the main content area is titled 'All Reviews' and 'Needs Response'. It shows a list of reviews for 'Valley Healthcare'. The first review is from 'Charlie Jenson' (Google) with a 5-star rating. The review text reads: 'This clinic is amazing. They were so helpful and easy to work with. I dashed in 15 minutes before close with my son and his split-open chin, the staff was so considerate and made us feel like their top priority.' Below the review is a 'Respond' input field and a 'Reply' button. The second review is from 'Carson Brown' (Google) with a 5-star rating. The review text reads: 'We had a nice time at Valley Healthcare! The doctors and nurses were super knowledgeable, I only had to wait about a minute before they called my name, so awesome. I definitely recommend Valley Healthcare!' Below this review is also a 'Respond' input field and a 'Reply' button. The third review is from 'Mary Orwell' (Google) with a 5-star rating, but the text is partially cut off at the bottom of the screenshot.