

When to Ask for a Review (Timing Matters More Than Wording)

Owners spend most of their effort perfecting the wording of a review request. The bigger lever is when it's sent. Here's how to find the right moment for project work and ongoing relationships.

Most advice about asking for reviews focuses on wording: what to say, and how to say it without sounding like you're begging. The wording does matter, but it's the second question. The first one, which most owners skip past, is when to ask at all.

Timing changes the answer far more than phrasing does. A well-written request sent at the wrong moment gets ignored. An ordinary request sent at the right moment gets answered.

Too Early Feels Like Pressure, Too Late Gets Forgotten

The research on review timing finds two separate ways to get it wrong.

Ask too early and the request reads as pressure. Two field experiments covering more than 300,000 online customers, published in the Journal of Marketing, tested reminders sent 1, 5, 9, and 13 days after the experience. Asking the next day backfired: 6.32% of those customers posted a review, against 12% of customers who got no reminder at all. The day-5 reminder fell short too, and day 9 made no difference. Only the day-13 reminder raised the review rate. The researchers'

explanation is that a reminder arriving before the customer would have written anything on their own feels like being told what to do, and people push back.

Ask too late and the experience has faded. The same researchers note that people become less likely to write a review as time passes because their recall gets blurry, and that reviews written late tend to be lower in quality. An analysis of 22.3 million review requests sent through Trusted Shops found the same decline: the longer the gap between purchase and request, the lower the chance of getting a review.

So the client who would have written three specific sentences in the second week might write one vague sentence on day ninety, or nothing at all. Their opinion hasn't changed. The details have gone.

Both studies looked at online purchases, not service engagements, and no rigorous study settles the exact day for service work. Review software vendors commonly recommend asking within 24 hours of finishing a job, but the numbers behind that advice come without published methods. The Trusted Shops analysis points the other way for service work. It concluded that sellers of high-involvement purchases, the kind a buyer has to experience before judging, should wait longer before asking. A reasonable starting point for project work is one to two weeks after completion, once the client has lived with the result. From there, a business's own response data should set the timing.

Ongoing Relationships Have More Than One Right Moment

For clients a business works with continuously, the calendar-based approach ("ask every client at the six-month mark") misses the signal. Ongoing relationships have several good moments to ask, and they're tied to specific wins: a problem finally resolved, or a goal hit.

The request that works here is triggered by an event. Something specific happens that reminds the client why they value the relationship, and the ask follows shortly after, while it's still fresh. "We just hit the goal we talked about in January" is a stronger prompt for a review than a generic check-in. It gives the client something concrete to reference, so they don't have to reconstruct a general impression from memory.

Specific prompts also produce better reviews. In [an online experiment with restaurant reviews](#), reviewers given a template suggesting aspects of the service to cover wrote longer reviews that covered more of them. They didn't report it as extra effort.

Why Owners Default to the Wrong Moment

The instinctive moment to ask is usually right after the invoice is paid. That's when the engagement closes out in the owner's mind, and the ask feels administratively tidy. But the client's experience of "closing out" and the owner's often don't line up. The invoice closing is an accounting event, not an emotional one. The client's best moment to write may have passed two weeks earlier, or might not arrive until they've seen the results play out.

This mismatch is easy to miss. The ask still goes out, some clients still respond, and a modest response rate looks normal with nothing to compare it to.

None of this is an argument for asking less. In my experience, what separates the businesses with unusually high response rates is that they're professionally persistent and unafraid to ask. The numbers back that up. In BrightLocal's [2026 Local Consumer Review Survey](#) of 1,002 US adults, 83% of people who were asked for a review in the past year wrote one. And in [Growave's 2026 data on Shopify stores](#), the 75 stores that sent a second reminder collected a median of 838 reviews, against 451 from the first reminder alone. Only 35% of the stores in the dataset sent that second reminder.

What Bad Timing Costs

The cost of bad timing shows up as silence, and silence is easy to misread. A client who would have written a strong review at the right moment doesn't send an email explaining why they never got around to it. They just don't respond. That non-response gets filed away as "not everyone leaves reviews," which is true but hides a fixable pattern.

That changes where an owner looks for the fix. A business that treats response rate as a fact of client personality has no reason to touch its process. A business that sees a timing problem can test it: change when the request goes out and track the response rate. In the Journal of Marketing experiments, the difference showed up within a week of the reminder. Those tests had thousands of customers, though. A business with a small client list needs a few months of engagements before it can judge.

Building Timing Into the Process, Not the Memory

Getting the timing right consistently can't depend on the owner remembering to check in at the ideal moment for every client. That fails the same way any task kept in memory fails under time pressure. It requires a defined trigger tied to the work itself: a set interval after project completion for project-based clients, and a defined list of trigger events (goal reached, milestone hit, positive outcome delivered) for ongoing ones.

This is the mechanism behind COREfeedback™'s Open pillar. It removes the friction between a satisfied client and a posted review by making the timing systematic, so it no longer depends on the owner noticing the right moment. Timing is one piece of a larger gap between how good a business is and what its

reviews show, which Why Your Online Reputation Doesn't Reflect How Good You Actually Are covers in full.

If review requests are going out but response rates feel lower than client satisfaction would suggest, timing is the first thing to check, before the wording. A 15-minute conversation can help you see whether your current timing is helping or hurting.

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