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By Mauricio Mendoza, Bixli / September 30, 2023

How Review Velocity Affects Local Search Rankings

Google says review count and rating can help local ranking and is silent on recency. Consumers discount old reviews, and local SEO experts rank a steady flow of new reviews modestly. Here is what the sources support.

Updated October 8, 2026 with additional research.

Most owners know reviews matter for first impressions. Fewer have thought about the rate at which reviews arrive. A profile with eighty reviews that all date from two years ago tells a different story than one with thirty reviews spread over the past year.

Here is what the evidence supports about that rate, and what it does not. Google says review count and rating can help local ranking. It says nothing about recency or reply activity. Consumers clearly discount old reviews, though, and local SEO experts rank a steady flow of new reviews as a modest factor.

What Google Says About Local Ranking

Google's Business Profile help says local results are ranked on relevance, distance, and prominence. Prominence is how well-known a business is. Google says it draws on links from other websites and on how many reviews a business has. The

same page says that “more reviews and positive ratings can help your business’s local ranking.”

The page does not mention how recently reviews were written, how quickly they arrive, or whether replying to them affects ranking. Google says replies show that a business values feedback and can help it stand out. That describes how readers see the profile, not a ranking input.

Anyone claiming to know how Google weighs review age or pace is working from inference. The inference may be sound, but it is not something Google has confirmed.

What Local Search Experts Rank

The clearest available picture of practitioner opinion is Whitespark’s 2026 Local Search Ranking Factors survey. It asked 47 local search experts to score 187 factors. These are expert judgments, not confirmed facts.

For map results, the experts ranked high Google ratings 6th, the quantity of Google reviews with text 9th, recency of reviews 11th, and a sustained influx of reviews over time, rather than bursts, 14th. Owner responses to most reviews came in 122nd.

Two points follow. Review volume and rating ranked higher than recency and pace, so a steady flow does not outrank a large, well-rated profile in this survey. And replying to reviews matters far more to the people reading them than to rankings.

A steady flow is a modest factor among many. It makes a poor ranking trick.

What Consumers Do With Review Dates

The consumer evidence is firmer. In BrightLocal’s 2026 Local Consumer Review Survey of 1,002 US adults, 74% said they only care about reviews written in the last

three months. The same survey found that 47% would not use a business with fewer than 20 reviews, and 68% required four or more stars.

Those three screens show why pace matters in practice. A business can have plenty of reviews and a strong rating, yet still fail the recency test if nothing new has appeared for a year. Prospects reading the profile may take that silence to mean the business has slowed down, changed hands, or stopped serving clients.

For a buyer comparing an accessibility consultant, a fractional CFO, or a marketing strategist, current evidence of satisfied clients is the question being asked. Fresh reviews answer it before the prospect clicks through.

Why Occasional Asking Produces Uneven Profiles

Many owners ask for reviews when they remember. A good meeting prompts a mention, a few reviews arrive that week, and then nothing comes in for months. The profile ends up with clusters and long gaps.

That pattern is a process problem. The owner has to remember, find the right moment, draft a message, and follow up, all while delivering the work. When the workload rises, asking is the first task to go.

A steady flow comes from a request tied to the end of each engagement, so it happens whether or not the owner has time to think about it. The difference between asking and running a review system covers that distinction in more detail.

Replies Still Matter to Readers

BrightLocal's survey found that 89% of consumers expect owners to respond to reviews. A profile with forty reviews and no replies can look like a business that

collects feedback and ignores it.

Replies to positive reviews can be short. Two or three sentences that name the client and refer to something specific are enough.

Replies to negative reviews need more care. Defending or disputing the reviewer in public usually makes things worse. A better reply acknowledges the experience, leaves private details out, and invites a direct conversation. A measured reply often shows future readers more professionalism than a spotless record would. The post on responding to a negative review goes through the approach.

Building a Steady Flow

A repeatable process has four parts. First, a request one to two weeks after completion, not at invoice. That is a reasonable starting point rather than a settled rule, because the research on timing comes from online purchases. When to Ask for a Review covers the evidence. Second, a direct ask that names the platform and links straight to the review form, as described in how to ask for reviews. Third, one follow-up for clients who meant to respond. Fourth, a reply to every review that arrives.

One guardrail applies to all of it. Google bars incentives for reviews and selectively soliciting positive ones, and the FTC's Consumer Review Rule, effective October 21, 2024, applies too. The how-to-ask guide covers what that means in practice.

None of this is technically complex. It takes consistency, which makes it a system problem rather than a motivation problem. The wider gap between the quality of a business's work and what its reviews show is the subject of Why an Online Reputation Can Lag Behind the Quality of the Work.

COREfeedback sets review requests at defined moments, with response standards and a way to monitor profile recency. It makes no promises about

ranking, rating, or review volume. If the reviews on your profile don’t match the work your clients experience, a 15–minute conversation is a concrete place to start.

About the Author

Mauricio Mendoza is the CEO and co-founder of Bixli, a systems strategy firm in Wilmington, North Carolina. He spent more than a decade in software development and product leadership before founding Bixli, and treats reputation as a system to design and maintain, the basis of Bixli's COREfeedback™ system.

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