

Are you the cause of your negative sentiment online?

 By [Mike Saunders](#)

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Think about it for a second. Someone is upset with your brand and you respond with a simple statement: "Dear @someone, we are sorry for the problem you are experiencing. We will sort this out ASAP!"

A fairly typical response to a customer service experience that many brands adopt on an ongoing basis. Sometimes our responses are less urgent or aggressive but we tend to adopt the same structure. We present the brand as humble, willing to admit mistakes and dedicated to resolving the problem. It's how we were all taught that good social media should be done.

Were we taught wrong?

So I discovered something very interesting while designing and working with a new social data tool DigitLab developed.

A brand reply like the one above is logged as negative sentiment. It's not a mistake, it is a negative statement, full of negative words and punctuation that amplifies the sentiment score of the statement.

It seems that many brands are contributing to their own negative brand sentiment; sometimes up to a third of the negative sentiment conversation is created by the brand.

We started relooking at the normal sentiment pie chart. Marketers use this pie chart to tell the sentiment around their brand and it has been a very useful tool to date. However, we segmented the conversation a bit further to separate owned and earned conversation. We did this to get a more real perspective on the earned conversation but discovered that the owned conversation was more interesting.



In most cases, especially for brands that use social channels to manage customer service queries, brands are contributing

to their own negative sentiment.

Learning to speak positively

Brands need to relook at the way they speak to customers online. Not because their graphs look bad, but because it's a better practice. Positivity breeds more positivity.

So often marketers focus on the negative portion of the graph, but there is a lot we can do to fix the negative sentiment by focusing on the positive nature of our brand.

1) Respond in a neutral or positive manner to customer complaints

Find a great wordsmith and negotiator and get them to craft a new language for your brand. One that is humble, acknowledges the issue, supports the customer and still motivates a positive response.

As [Dan Zarella suggests](#), negative social media accounts get fewer followers, less shares and less engagement. Facebook even did a study that proved [happy posts](#) in your feed encourage people to post happier posts. [BMJ](#) takes the idea further in their research stating that emotional behaviour spreads by mimicry. People can "catch" emotional states they observe in others over time frames ranging from seconds to weeks.

Finding positive language to respond to negative circumstances could potentially change, not only the outcome or the interaction, but also the emotional state of the people we engage with.

2) Be more positive and less neutral

Kevan Lee, Content Crafter at Buffer, says "The tone of your tweet, update, and post matters. And studies have shown that positivity in social media wins in online interactions."

Essentially becoming a more positive brand, (driving for more positive sentiment in your owned conversation), will drive down your volumes of negative sentiment. Focusing on a positive sentiment output should increase the volume of positive shares around your brand and promote the positive promotion of your brand.

ABOUT MIKE SAUNDERS

Mike Saunders, CEO of Digitlab, is a renowned Digital Business and CRM Consulting expert acclaimed for his unique ability to blend technological expertise with insightful business strategy. His leadership in digital consulting, combined with his roles as an international keynote speaker and author, has solidified his reputation as a visionary in the digital realm.

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