

*How's*

**BUSINESS**



**Marketing to Tourists:  
Promoting Your  
Business**



# What's How's Business?

Hello. First of all, we'd like to say a big thank you for downloading our eBook.

We're How's Business, the growth hub for York, North Yorkshire and East Riding.

We're one of 39 growth hubs set up by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

Our role is to make it easy for you to find the support you need. This could be to find funding, help with marketing, or advice on how to expand your set-up.

As our patch is quite rural, travel times can really cut into your day. So, we try to focus on what's available locally. Our website (<http://howsbusiness.org/>) plays a vital role in offering advice for anywhere with an internet connection.

We hope you find our guide really useful.

# Introduction

Attracting tourists is one of the most important elements of your business. This eBook hopes to give you some tips on how best to market your business, draw in new customers and give some advice on how to conduct and promote your business online.

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Disclaimer: This guide's role is to highlight some of the things you might consider when marketing for tourists. If in doubt, please speak to an expert.



Whitby

# Attracting new customers



John Gallery  
Sales and marketing expert

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Whatever business you run in the tourism industry, it is important to be clear about your target customers, your own objectives and to plan for success. When you understand your objectives and your client needs, you can plan your tourism marketing strategy.

Of course, this principle applies to all businesses, but here are some tips for tourism marketing that will hopefully provide some ideas that you can implement easily and effectively.

## Research your market

Determine your product offering and focus on your core strengths, target the market sectors that match your product(s) and vice-versa. For example: if you run a small bed and breakfast, is your audience young professional couples seeking exotic weekend breaks, empty nesters, families or business people?

## Research what other businesses are doing in your area

You may pick up ideas that you can emulate – do not directly copy but use the information to develop your own niche.

Take time to sit down and create a tourism marketing strategy that you can follow. It doesn't need to be complicated – a simple calendar of actions will keep you on track.

## Ensure the basics are in place

The tourism industry is constantly changing, so you need swift, reactive sales processes, good on-site standards, and a friendly and professional team. If you employ people, train them for the market that you want to sell to. If you are a sole trader, look for ways to stay ahead and informed, keep abreast of trends: technology, social media, attitudes, business change etc.

Think about your target markets, decide what to include in your tourism marketing strategy that might be most likely to appeal to them.

## Newsletters that communicate directly with your past customers and potential customers

Newsletters allow you to communicate directly with your potential customers. A newsletter can convey what you want to say and provide you with an opportunity for feedback. They can also help you to build loyalty, can be used for 'exclusive' promotions, help you to gather opinions and can improve repeat custom.

## Manage your reputation

You should aim to keep in touch with your customers using social

media. Review sites such as TripAdvisor are an important part of the tourism industry and well-managed, can help you to gain referrals. People are more likely to visit a review site before making a decision to book your service or buy your product.

## Employ great PR

A vital part of tourism marketing is PR. Communicate your brand consistently and keep it at the forefront of people's minds. Use a good PR agency for best results – an expert 'outsider's' view of your business can help you to understand more clearly how it is perceived and how it can be managed. Good PR can make a huge difference for your sales.

## Think long term

Today's 'not interested' may be tomorrow's 'yes please' - build your database and keep it clean.

## Create partnerships

With other local businesses - think about charity connections, corporate social responsibility, accessibility and joint promotion.

## Engage and be creative

Try new ideas to interest your potential clients and don't be afraid to be different – people respond to enthusiastic 'tryers'. Ask for their opinion and respond to their ideas.

## Create combination offers

A simple piece of tourism marketing to employ is the combination offer. Two products offered at a lower price together than if bought individually – e.g. drinks and food dishes, rooms and dining can entice new customers with a great deal.

## Implement monthly promotions

Implement planned in advance promotions e.g. for hotels and restaurants:

- Lazy Sundays – including lunch and late check-out
- Mid-week option – Champagne, flowers and chocolates. A three-course meal with complimentary glass of wine – buy the rest of the bottle at half price

## Pick up the telephone



Making telephone calls to generate sales is still one of the best ways of getting business. If you have the right contacts, prepare well and call with genuine offers using good salesmanship techniques.

## Never give in

Marketing and selling is the oxygen for your business, without it you wouldn't be able to function. Make sure you stay up-to-date with the latest social media trends so that you can interact with your customers on the sites they're using. Create the best deals for them so they'll want to revisit your pub, or stay more nights in your B&B, and then go on to recommend you to their friends, creating a larger customer base for you.

Written by John Gallery. To contact John for some more advice, head to: [John Gallery on How's Business](#).



# Building word of mouth



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Word of mouth marketing is great if you can leverage it to deliver results for your business. It is often viewed as being “free” which isn’t always true, but people are more inclined to trust a recommendation than an advertisement so it is often a more effective marketing channel.

People like to talk about their holidays, and so recommendations from friends, family or influential figures can all help build your business’ reputation. Being able to access these people to encourage them to recommend you is the difficult bit.

Here’s ten ideas to implement in your business to improve word of mouth recommendations.

## Incentivising

Encourage word of mouth by incentivising – give a discount to the recommender when a new customer is acquired from their recommendation. This is the classic “friend get friend” model used to leverage word of mouth.

## Business cards

Give additional business cards to your customers (particularly if you are a tradesperson) so they can easily and accurately pass your details on.

## Social media

Use social media. Social media can be viewed as being word of mouth for the modern age – if people use your brand or business name in a conversation and it's positive: share that information.

## New websites

Embrace review sites: TripAdvisor, Revoo and countless others all provide a platform for capturing and sharing people's impressions of your business – share these but also encourage people to leave reviews.

## Case studies

Case studies not only explain the benefits of your product or service but also highlight the customer – thereby giving some endorsement. Sharing this via your website and social channels

is word of mouth. Some businesses also find them useful to talk through with prospective customers at sales meetings.

## Sharing tools online

Add sharing tools to your website and emails. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc. (whichever is appropriate to your business) and bookmarking tools such as Digg and Delicious. By making it easy to share, you are encouraging word of mouth recommendation.

## Your service

Ensure that you only provide a top quality product and service. Customers will only recommend you if they are happy with the product and the experience that they had purchasing from you. To achieve a good level of word of mouth recommendations, the culture of your business has to be right – with every employee being engaged with your values.

## Expertise

Establish your business as the expert in your field and offer to be a speaker – at seminars, conferences, industry meetings. By providing useful information about how you can solve a problem you can start to create a buzz around your business so yours is the name that people remember.

## Customer feedback

Collect your customers' thoughts by surveying them and ask them

if they would recommend your business. Using a statistic such as 95% of our customers would recommend us can help build trust and therefore works as indirect word of mouth.

## Be careful with 'new user' deals

Don't sacrifice current customers to try to gain new ones. Offering great deals for new clients or customers can alienate existing ones, keeping your current customers extremely satisfied will encourage them to spread the word about you and your business.

## And finally

Remember, people are likely to tell everyone they know about a bad experience – but will also tell people when they are delighted by something. Delight all your customers, everyday.

Written by Deborah Goodall. To contact Deborah for some more advice, head to: [Deborah Goodall on How's Business](#).



Ripley Castle

# Marketing tips for Yorkshire businesses



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The tourism industry is often overflowing with businesses that claim to be the best attraction, so it's important that you're promoting your business successfully to reach your target market. Yorkshire has plenty to offer for this industry but you can stand out from the crowd if you check out the tips below.

## Be Yorkshire and Proud

Market your business by taking ownership of your location. Be a Yorkshire-man or Yorkshire-woman in all your glory. People want the warmth of genuine hospitality and to meet quirky characters when they come to visit. Play host to your visitors and welcome them with warm Yorkshire fayre and locally made toiletries to cement in their minds that this is a living, breathing corner of the world like no other. One of the best ways to promote your business is this demonstration of uniqueness.

## Collaborate

Remember, you are not in business in isolation, however remote your farmhouse B&B or hilltop café might seem. Working together and partnering with other tourism businesses is a great way to promote your business and increase consumer engagement.

Team up with the local visitor attraction to share the cost of marketing initiatives. Offer to run a competition for them on your customer newsletter in return for similar exposure on one of theirs, or simply add details of these alternative local attractions to your own website and get them to do the same for you.

Work with tour guides and group operators so that you're included in their itineraries and turn competitors into allies by looking for ways to cross-pollinate customers.

## “Weather” Or Not

There is often an unlikely opportunity for tourism marketing by using the weather. For visitors, rain in the the Yorkshire countryside is still probably preferable to rain in city streets and there is plenty to do, so you can always use a so-called bad situation and play upon it.

Caverns with their magnificent limestone wonders are a perfect wet weather destination that you can champion, along with museums, castles, craft centres, artisan studios and browsing in the antidote-to-the-High-Street-chain-shops in pretty dales towns. Meanwhile, for the hardy outdoor types, the waterfalls and rivers are even more glorious in full spate.

## Be inspirational and exciting

From lambing and calving through to haymaking, farm life is fascinating for those whose daily lives are spent commuting and staring at a computer screen. Maybe your café could offer a Yorkshire pudding workshop for foreign visitors to learn the secret of our great cuisine. You could offer guided walks sharing your favourite spots.

Inspiring and adding value to your offering helps you to increase your customer base.

## Be Brand Aware

You and your staff are your business. Be the face of it and make sure that all your promotional material, website, signage, uniforms, menus, decor and messages present a consistent and welcoming impression. Write in a natural, simple conversational style; one real person to another. Your tourism marketing starts with you. If you know it's not your forte, consider enlisting the help of a copy (content) writer and beware do-it-yourself design and print in the same way you would avoid servicing your own car or dentistry. Professional help is usually worth the investment.

## Media Mix

Add to your tourism marketing by looking to alternative resources. Anything from *The Brontës* to *The Calendar Girls*, *Herriot* to *Jericho*, Yorkshire has been championed in the literary and broadcast media, so why not help the visitor to join up the dots and see how you fit into the tapestry?

Tell the media your own stories, exploit the potential of PR and utilise the mighty force of social media marketing to make a noise and offer a tantalising taste of your business, both visual and free.

## Face The Music

Seek reviews and testimonials in your visitor book and on sites like [TripAdvisor](#).

Utilise the good ones for tourism marketing opportunities and address the bad ones quietly, politely and constructively. Learn from the feedback to enhance customer experience and turning criticism into an opportunity.

## Leave Them Wanting More

When it's time for them to go home, remember the enthusiasm with which you welcomed your visitors and be as warm with your goodbyes. You hope they will return soon, so show them that you would genuinely like to see them again and remind them of all they have still to see and do, so they must come back or recommend a visit to their friends and family.

By following these ways to promote your business, you'll be giving yourself an increased chance of growing your customer base.

Written by Jane Ellison-Bates. To contact Jane for some more advice, head to: [Jane Ellison-Bates on How's Business](#).



Hawes

# Taking pictures



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If photography for businesses is an essential marketing tool, then photography for those in tourism is vital. You have a website, you have some content, but that online marketing is ineffective without quality photography. Yorkshire is so beautiful, why wouldn't you use that to promote your business?

## Do it yourself

The problem is that you've never got enough photographs, and the ones you have could always be better.

So how do you go about optimising your photos for marketing your website to tourists?

The answer is probably beside you right now, possibly in your pocket.

## Smartphones

Smartphones, which you most likely already own, have cameras that are perfectly suited for conveniently taking quality photos that can be uploaded to your website.

All that is needed is a little knowledge and some perseverance. Whilst we cannot provide the latter, here's a little guide on how to take photos on your smartphone for your tourism website.

### Get the right camera

All iPhones from 5s and up, and most Android smartphones, will do a great job, and their software will make the job almost foolproof. There are a few other phones that are more than capable of shooting great photos too.

## The three key essentials for photography

### 1) Subject – What do you want to say?

It might sound obvious, but every photo needs a subject, a reason for being. So what is the theme, or purpose of your photo? They will fall into one of three categories:

- Inside - rooms, facilities, food, entertainment
- Outside - buildings, gardens, views
- Around and about - the attractions visitors have actually come to see!

Remember, each subject should be shown from your customers' point of view. Ask yourself, what would I want to see if I was a visitor?

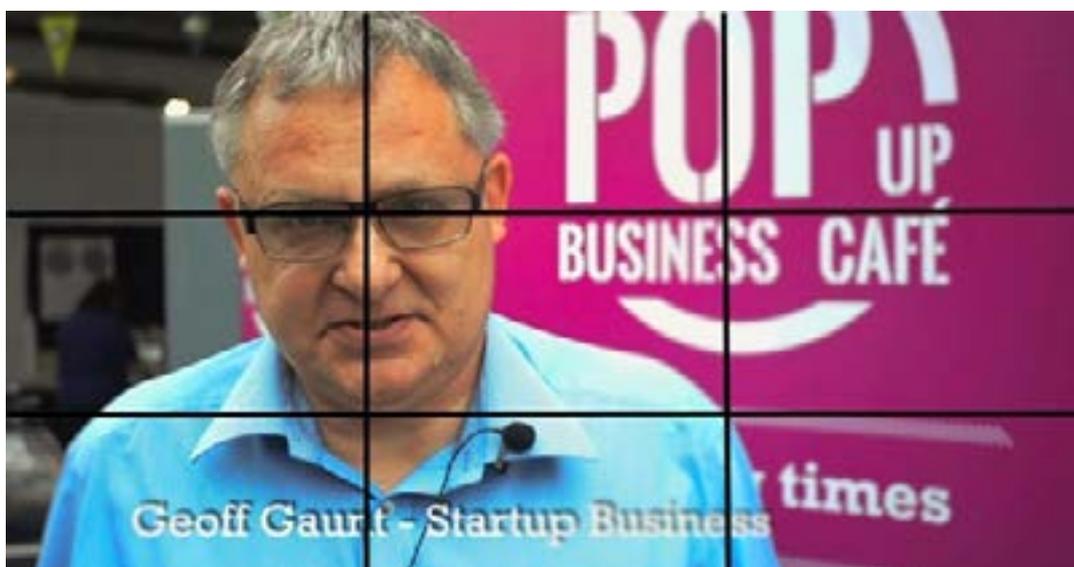
## 2) Light - Keep it natural

It's all about the light. Without any, you'll have nothing and provided it's natural (never use flash) you almost can't have too much.

However, it is best to shoot early morning or late afternoon.

## 3) Composition - Keep to the 'rule' of thirds

Try and get the principal interest of your composition arranged on the horizontal, vertical lines of a 3x3 grid – or better still, where these lines cross.



When composing your shots, try and get the most important subject located on the intersection of the lines of an imaginary 'noughts and crosses' image on the screen.

Most cameras understand how important this is and offer a rule of thirds 'overlay' to help guide you. The lines also help you keep the image straight.

There's a good introduction to the rule of thirds on the [Digital Photography School](#) website.

So it's as simple as pointing your camera at the right thing, making sure you have plenty of light and a pleasing composition.

## Additional tips for perfecting your photography

### Keep close

Einstein used the maxim: 'Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not one bit simpler'.

Generally, if your photos aren't interesting, then you're not close enough to your subject. While it is always possible to crop photos, removing uninteresting areas of images, you'll find that getting closer, then closer still, will help your photos to no end.

### Keep it Steady

Don't move the camera when you take your shot. This is more important indoors, when there's less light and when you're closer to things.

Consider using a tripod. They're cheap - as are phone mounts for them and cable/wireless shutter release devices that stop you

from moving the camera when you touch/press the shutter.

## Keep Focused

Smartphones focus automatically before taking each shot. Make sure that you focus on the right subject by touching the screen where your subject is. Again, a tripod/camera mount can help with this.

## Keep True to Life

There's nothing worse than seeing an image that is obviously 'fake'. Don't over-process images. In fact, avoid all post processing, if you can.

Make sure that images are clear and simple – declutter by moving to a different position. Remove all the unessential items you can from an image before you take the shot. Ask yourself: is there anything in this shot that shouldn't be there? If there is, get rid of it before you press the shutter.

## Keep Motivated

Like all crafts, practice makes perfect in photography. You can take hundreds of images in a day with modern digital imaging devices.

If you want to get better at taking photographs, practice both taking and reviewing them, then practice some more, then more, then more.

Lighting is everything in photography, so make sure that you're taking your shots from the right angle and that the image is well lit.



Credit: Image from [Evivvo](#) article: [B&Bs are losing out on £8.9m a year due to poor photography](#)

If you'd like some free pictures of tourist destinations around Yorkshire, you can download them from How's Business here: [free library of Yorkshire images](#).

Written by Mike Phillipson. To contact Mike for some more advice, head to: [Mike Phillipson on How's Business](#).



## Which social media should you use?



Rachel Moore  
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Get in touch

Social media has made a huge impact on the tourism industry. More and more consumers are reaching out to use social media and sites such as [TripAdvisor](#) to research their holidays and make informed decisions about their travel plans. Getting your business in front of potential holiday makers is the key marketing element that all tourism businesses need.

Social media allows consumers to engage with spots of interest before, during and after their experience as they look for fast real-time responses and share their experiences with others. Being on the right platforms to make this happen is essential. Here are some of the top social media sites that are perfect for tourism businesses and tips on how to make the most out of them.

## Instagram

Encourage visitors to post pictures and short videos alongside reviews and highlights of the holiday using a hashtag associated with your tourism business and Instagram account.

For example, if you own a static caravan in a holiday park that you rent out to holidaymakers – let's say Caravan 52 in Berwick-Upon-Tweed - your Instagram could be @Caravan52Berwick and anyone staying in your caravan could post pictures and videos of their time in Berwick-Upon-Tweed and link it to you. This builds an interest not only in the local area but in your business as well as people following the holiday makers through their holiday. This use of hashtags allows this method to also be supported in Twitter.

## Facebook

Facebook is an excellent way for you to engage with visitors, encourage repeat visits and allow others to tell their holiday tales. Your customers can “tag” your business in their status updates or post directly to your page with comments that all their “friends” can see. This advertises your business without you having to spend a penny. You can also pay to have your business promoted on Facebook, which can give you direct access to your target market. For example, if you have a B&B in the Yorkshire Dales, you can target your adverts at city-dwellers with an interest in hiking.

## TripAdvisor

Although not a traditional social media platform, TripAdvisor is a major site to have any tourism businesses listed on, as it has a wide-reaching effect on the tourist industry. On average, there

are 50 million unique monthly visitors to the site. These users are actively seeking out travel information and advice from the sources they trust the most: other tourists and holiday-makers.

If a tourism business is to be on one site, it should be TripAdvisor. Once you have signed up, it is definitely one social media site that you can't afford to stop updating. It requires regular monitoring because if one bad review is left without an apology or positive reaction, it could be detrimental to a small tourist business. Keep your contact details up to date, refresh your images and encourage visitors to "check-in" and let other users know they have had a positive experience using your business.

No matter which social media platform you choose to use as part of your marketing strategy, keep the content fresh, post regularly and even provide a few blog posts that let people know what is going on. Blog posts are an excellent way to engage people with lighter content and nice imagery. Holiday makers value word of mouth, so encourage visitors to check in, upload a picture and share a little bit about their experience.

Written by Rachel Moore. To contact Rachel for some more advice, head to: [Rachel Moore on How's Business](#).



# How to use hashtags on Twitter



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Twitter is a great platform for interacting with your customers. They can get in contact with you directly, hashtag your products and promote you for free. However, it's important that when you use a Twitter hashtag, you do so in the right way.

We've put together some top tips for using hashtags successfully on Twitter.

## 1. As a catchphrase

Use it as a catchphrase. You haven't got much room on Twitter, so the fact that hashtags don't have spaces or punctuation can really help you stay on topic. Things like `#yorkshirepride` or `#holidayspam` are perfect. They're short, snappy and get your message out there.

## 2. Be in with the in crowd

Hashtags are a great way to be in with the in crowd. For example, the tweet: 'soggy bottoms time' is going to be a bit confusing unless you add the hashtag #GBBO for Great British Bake Off.

## 3. Make things obvious

Use hashtags to make things obvious. For example, for this tweet: 'Join the team! We need a new chef here in Malton' put the hashtag '#jobs', then people who are searching for Malton and jobs will find it. Always put your hashtag before your call to action. Here, you want people to click on the link to your website.

Don't go overboard: #do #you #find #this #difficult #to #read? It can be irritating if every word is hashtagged. Use them to connect with current trends or to emphasise the key point of your message.

## 4. Mind the gap

We use punctuation for a reason, read through your hashtags before you put them out there. For example, in Switzerland, they used the hashtag #hobbit and then add a ch, which are the letters which represent Switerland on the web. Not the best idea, we'll let you join them together and see why for yourself!

## 5. Do you even need a hashtag

You might not even need a hashtag. If you do use them, don't go overboard, just use one, maybe two. 'I can't wait for the new series of Poldark on BBC One' is a completely valid tweet. The Poldark fans will see it, and BBC One will see it, with no hashtags involved.

Written by Helen Reynolds. To contact Helen for some more advice, head to: [Helen Reynolds on How's Business](#).



# How to deal with negative reviews on TripAdvisor



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Every business during its lifetime will experience a bad review. It's how you deal with that review that makes the difference. One of the largest review sites used today is [TripAdvisor](#), especially for location based businesses, so knowing how to handle negative reviews is a must. If incorrectly handled, a negative review can start a downward slope for a business.

Here are some useful steps to help you handle any negative reviews that may come your way.

## Find out what happened

The initial step when dealing with a negative review is to find out what happened. Try to look at the review impersonally and use it to better your service. Is this the first time you are getting this feedback, or is

it a developing trend? What was the main problem the customer experienced? Knowing the background can help you determine the cause of the problem.

It might be that the customer was having a bad day so nothing went right anywhere, or perhaps your business was having a bad day.

For example - if a customer complains about the length of time it took to cook a meal, kindly apologise and advise them of the circumstances that may have led to the delay (maybe you had a few members of staff off sick, or equipment malfunctioned), then ask them to ring and book again with you promising a service on par with the other 5 star reviews you have received. When they rebook, make a note and provide a little extra service when next dealing with them. This could result in the customer returning and this time leaving a much more satisfactory review. Do not be afraid to actually ask them if there is anything you can do to make it right.

## Reply promptly and correctly by coming up with a polite management response

Once you've established the problem, you must acknowledge it even though it may be annoying to do so. Apologise for the experience they've had with your company, making sure you take the time to collect your thoughts and then come up with a polite, friendly management response.

You could say something like:

“Thank you for taking the time to review our property/business/hotel. We greatly value the opinions of our customers, and we

apologise for not meeting your expectations. We would cherish the opportunity to speak with you about your experience and would ask that you kindly contact us at your earliest convenience.”

TripAdvisor themselves suggest addressing the unknown by writing a confidence building management response which includes:

- Who are you writing this for?
- Are you addressing their core concerns?
- Are you showing that you care?

To do this, log in to the management area and under menu choose the “Reviews” tab followed by “Respond to Reviews”. TripAdvisor has several guidelines on how responses to reviews must be written, these can be found here (<https://www.TripAdvisorsupport.com/hc/en-gb/articles/200614337-Management-Response-Guidelines>).

The response guidelines are: it must be family friendly, no profanity, hate speech or threats – although friendly, you must still be professional and represent your business in the correct manner. Even if you know the individual who left the review, or remember them attending your business, it is advised against identifying them to others. If you do not follow these guidelines your response will not be posted to the customer and they may feel they have been ignored.

On the other hand, if you feel the review has been left maliciously, then contact TripAdvisor directly and request it to be looked into. It may be that it is a fraudulent review, such as a competitor or paid for review, which is not welcomed by TripAdvisor.

## A negative review can also contain good

Specific criticism of your business could be used to improve your business practices. If a bad review genuinely highlights a flaw within your business practices then use it and any follow up comments to improve your business. One bad review is not going to ruin your business. Encourage visitors to leave feedback, even following up a day or so later to check everything is okay, so they feel more valued as a customer. The good reviews will definitely drown out the bad one.

One thing that shouldn't be shied away from is dealing with a bad review publicly and in a professional manner. If others see a bad review with no interaction or solution, they may feel it's been ignored, whereas commenting publicly allows people to see your acceptance, apology and willingness to fix the issue.

Use a negative review to your advantage to prove you genuinely care about your clients and the service they receive. As long as you keep on top of the reviews by checking them on a regular basis, you can intercept any trouble before it significantly impacts your business.

Written by Rachel Moore. To contact Rachel for some more advice, head to: [Rachel Moore on How's Business](#).



Hawes

## Next steps

Hopefully, we've given you an insight into some of the ways you can improve the way you market to tourists. Before we say goodbye, we want to leave you with a few more places to get general business advice.

### The National Business Support Helpline:

If you need advice for your business, give the folk at the National Business Support Helpline a call. Their advice is free and the number is **0300 456 3565**

### Articles on How's Business:

We've got loads of really helpful articles on different topics to help you grow your business. They're all listed on the [How's Business](#) website and all of them were written by trusted local business experts.