

THE INTERNET: MAKING LIFE BETTER

Five Tips For Being A Better Online Neighbor TM

(NAPSA)—If you're like a growing number of people, you look to the Web for local advice.

Online reviews—firsthand accounts of experiences at local shops and services—are gaining popularity. In fact, 73 percent of online adults now read them, and 98 percent of readers have been influenced by them, according to research by Harris Interactive.

Reviewers write about topics ranging from a favorite barbershop or house painter to local laundromats, delis or any other businesses. And because a review can be read online by others in the neighborhood, they're a great way for anyone to be a critic. However, as Spider-Man would say about critiquing and giving feedback about your neighborhood, "With great power comes great responsibility."

Yahoo! Local was one of the first services to provide online reviews, and its general manager, Frazier Miller, offered five tips that can help you write reviews that are insightful, credible and useful for the benefit of all your online neighbors:

1) Share opinions and experiences about businesses and services in your neighborhood. Share what you're an expert on. Reviewing your favorite places lets you use the insider knowledge you have gained from countless visits to give your review a unique perspective. Your favorite places are a great starting point to the world of online reviewing.

2) Make your reviews personal. Adding anecdotes and personal experiences is one of

the best ways to make your review compelling to your neighbors. Did you stop by the corner store just after they closed shop and they let you in anyway? Did the barbershop cut your hair in the exact style you requested? A personal touch breathes life into the review and gives the reader an engaging, real-world account of your experience.

3) Be fair. We all occasionally have bad experiences at places; it's bound to happen. But you shouldn't base your whole review on one negative experience. Stick to places you know well and frequent often so you can give a fair review. If you have gotten cold food at the same restaurant three times, then that is worth noting, but don't let one bad experience determine your lasting online impression.

4) Invite friends to read your review. Share your review with friends, family and neighbors who might be interested in what you have to say. Of course, ask to see their online reviews as well (sites like Yahoo! Local allow you to subscribe to your favorite reviewers), and pass the knowledge around the neighborhood.

5) See what others have written. This may seem like a no-brainer, but the best way to be a good neighbor is to get involved and learn about your neighborhood. Read other reviews to find new places in the neighborhood, or check out reviews online before heading in to a new restaurant or store to get the inside scoop.

To get started, visit <http://local.yahoo.com>.