

How to build a winning review collection strategy

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Introduction

Your brand is only as strong as your reputation. While shoppers used to rely on friends and family as sources of truth for what to buy and who to buy it from, reviews are now most shoppers' go-to for product discovery and evaluation.

With more shoppers than ever turning to online reviews to get fellow customers' feedback to decide who to give their business to, it's crucial to build a review collection strategy for your brand. Increasing review volume is the key to boosting purchases and insights while enhancing SEO benefits. And increasing review volume isn't just a one time task – it's an ongoing effort that will pay off in dividends for your business.

In the following pages, you'll find strategies on how to:

- Implement post-interaction emails (PIE) to increase review volume
- Run sampling programs at-scale
- Leverage social media to mine for user-generated content (UGC)
- Request product reviews offline to improve collection online
- Partner with influencers and your most loyal customers to increase UGC

Why review volume matters

Review volume has benefits that go beyond the product page. From improving SEO and diversifying marketing tactics, to increasing conversion and providing more product insights, more reviews create more opportunities for success for your business.

Review volume increases conversion

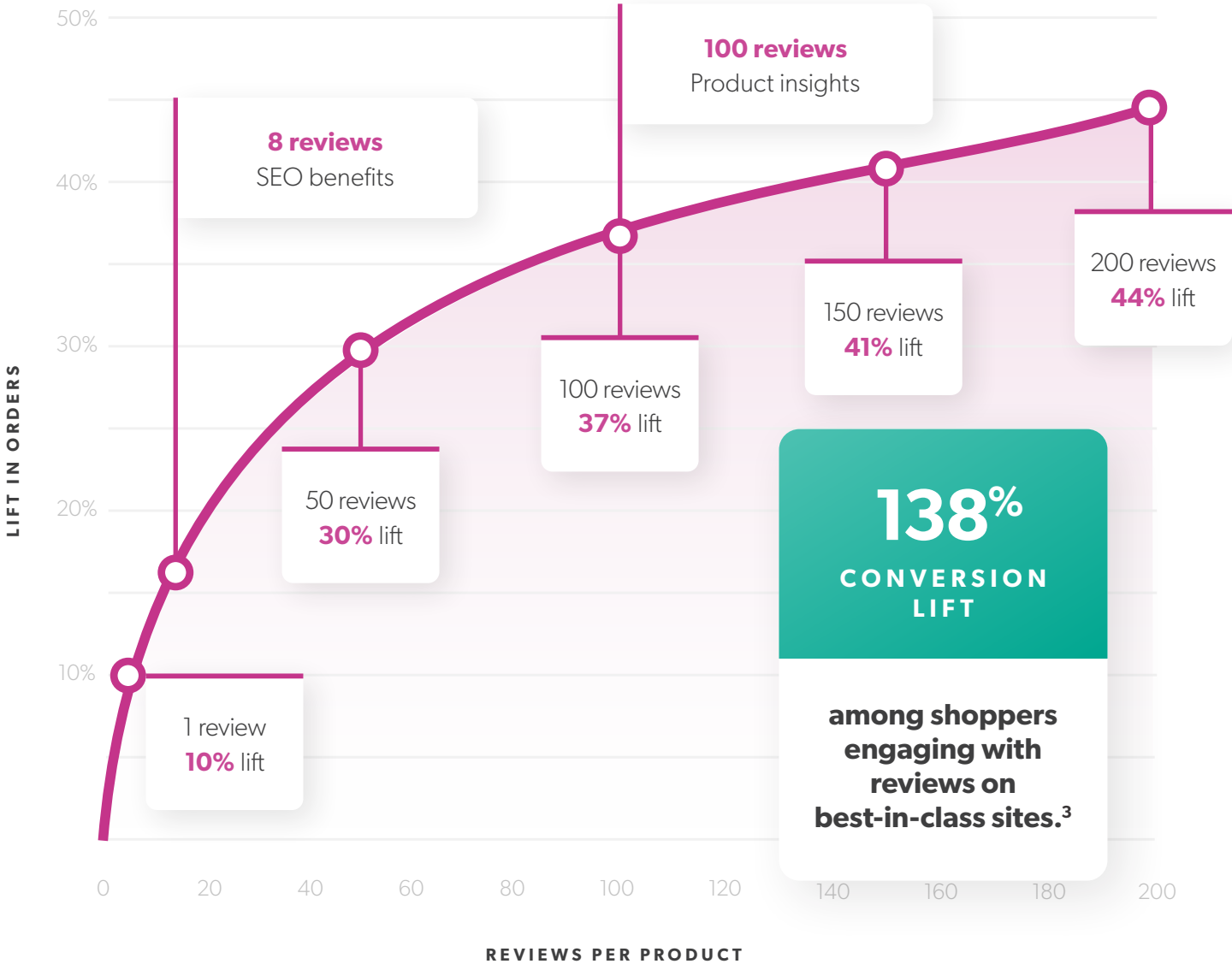
Shoppers are most influenced by products and services with the largest number of reviews. The more reviews you collect for your products, the higher you can expect the conversion lift to be. According to a study by Womply¹, companies can generate **82%** more in annual revenues when they have above average review counts.

Our research illustrates just how much of an impact review volume can have on your bottom line. Just one review may increase purchases by **10%**. Eight reviews bring lifts in natural search traffic and SEO benefits emerge. Once you reach 100 reviews, you'll see a **37%** lift in purchases and start to see valuable consumer insights, including consumer sentiment and product suggestions².

159%
REVENUE PER
VISITOR LIFT

when shoppers
engage with
reviews on
best-in-class sites.³

Sometimes, shoppers use their own language to describe your products or make typos in their reviews and fellow consumers make the same search queries. There are **keyword benefits**⁴ of site content written by consumers themselves, who use the same language (and misspellings) as their peers on search engines. Shoppers can find your brand more often and more easily in the way they're looking for it, resulting in a higher conversion rate.



Customer reviews help your brand stand out with retailers

Review volume also helps retailers stand out in a crowded online shopping landscape. That said, ratings and reviews syndication is a mutually beneficial partnership between brands and retailers. When brands syndicate reviews to retailers, the median increase in reviews per product is **112%** greater than those without syndication; similarly, half of Bazaarvoice retailers source **76%** or more of their reviews from brands⁵.



For example, Petmate distributes the reviews it collects to retail sites in the Bazaarvoice Network. The brand has syndicated more than 8,500 reviews across more than 50 retailers. A majority of Petmate products on retail sites would have zero reviews if not for syndication, which is fueling retail channel sales and strengthening its ties with partners⁵. By driving a significant amount of reviews on product pages, a brand sends a strong message to retailers that your brand is worth cultivating a strong partnership with.



A majority of Petmate products on retail sites would have zero reviews if not for syndication.⁵

Review volume is important to shoppers

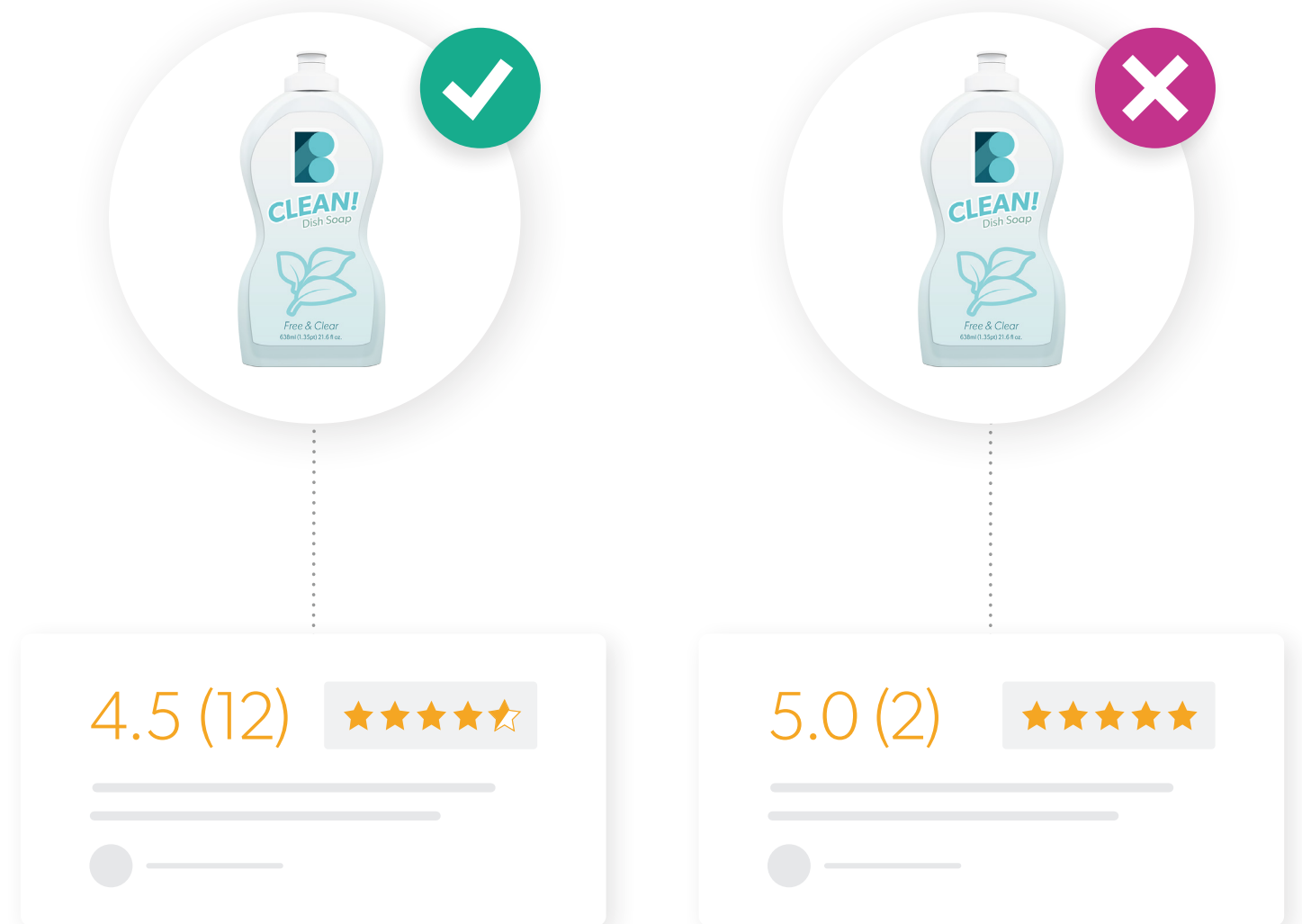
According to our research, consumers say review volume is even more important to them than star ratings on products⁶.

For two identical products, customers want to see a higher volume of reviews over ratings to make their purchasing decision. Where one product has a 5-star average based on two ratings, and the other has a 4.5-star average based on 12 ratings, **70%** of shoppers would choose volume over ratings.

This data stresses the importance of focusing on volume generation as part of UGC strategy.

With the abundance of competition in the retail and e-commerce landscapes, it is imperative to provide engaging and efficient shopping experiences for shoppers. **We found that engaging consumers in conversation is key to driving sales and customer loyalty. Here's how:**

- Include visual UGC across the shopping journey
- Ensure shoppers have the information they need to make informed purchase decisions

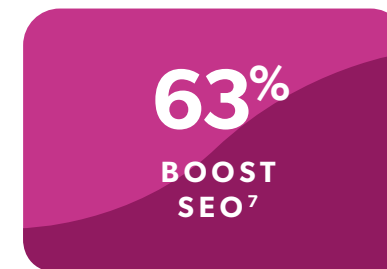


Prioritize your review collection efforts

Teams that proactively solicit reviews, collect more reviews. We have found brands that have a strategy for proactively soliciting reviews have:

- Higher average product ratings
- Increased consumer confidence
- Higher conversion rates

Not only will shoppers buy more on your website, but more shoppers will find your site. **We found that global brands and retailers rely on ratings and reviews to:**



Since there are a variety of ways to collect reviews, we have created three steps to help you decide which approach to take to yield the biggest impact.

1 Determine which products need reviews

When new products are hitting your retail channels or your site, they should come with live and pre-seeded reviews. Having pre-seeded reviews can drive the success of the product launch on day one.

Next, think about your most profitable SKUs and if you can increase volume and recency. Then, it's important to determine which products could increase volume and ratings for SKUs with few reviews or poor ratings.

Not all products have the same pressing need for review content. For example, some products are organically collecting a decent number of reviews, or if you're about to retire a product from your catalog, review volume becomes less critical.

That said, we recommend looking at new product launches and popular products with low reviews to be your top priorities for review collection.



2 Choose a volume strategy and collection method

There are two ways we bucket our review collection strategies: high-impact and incremental volume strategies. Using a high-impact strategy like emails, product samples, and social media can help you meet your review collection goals more quickly. But, incremental methods can also build rapport with shoppers and gather insights about them, offering longer-term benefits for brands.

We recommend implementing both an always-on (evergreen) method, which can provide a continual flow of fresh reviews overtime and a targeted method, which creates a volume spike over a specific duration increasing coverage for a product or category.

Using a combination of always-on and targeted methods to increase review volume will pay off in dividends for your business.

And remember – while shoppers want to see high review volume, they also want it to be fresh. **54%** of shoppers indicate that a review’s recency is a significant factor in its credibility, so increasing review volume isn’t a one time endeavor. It’s an ongoing effort⁸.

	Always-on	Targeted
High-impact		
Email	✓	
Sampling		✓
Social media		✓
Incremental		
ReviewSource	✓	
Live events		✓
Website	✓	
Product packaging	✓	
Loyalty program	✓	

3 Decide if you want to incentivize the methods

Just like consumers love freebies, they also appreciate receiving incentives such as cashback, coupons, or sweepstakes entries —and enjoy opportunities to share their opinions with their favorite brands. Offering an incentive in exchange for a review can boost your brand image and help you get more reviews.

We found that pairing your campaigns with incentivization **2-10x** the response rate⁹.

Pantene North America ✓
April 15, 2014 · 🌐

Review your favorite product for a chance to spin our prize wheel!
<http://bit.ly/1jbLYon>.

Win more of what you LOVE ★★★★★

**2-10x
RESPONSE
RATE**

**when pairing
campaigns with
incentivization.⁹**

4.5K 75 Comments 63 Shares

Decide on a review collection method

Now that you have a better understanding of what needs to be done to collect more reviews, it's time to get started. Here are the best tactics to collect reviews on an ongoing basis.

High-impact review collection methods

Direct emails to boost review volume

A post-interaction email (PIE) is an email that goes out to your customers asking them to leave reviews for online and offline purchase and service interactions. PIE can be triggered from either a purchase or a non-transactional action, such as product registrations or coupon downloads. PIE is consistently the biggest driver of review content for Bazaarvoice clients across the board. It can also add significant product coverage, content freshness, and search engine optimization (SEO) value.

If you don't have the ability or resources to implement PIE, explore other options to utilize your CRM database. For example, you can request reviews for 3 to 4 specific products, consider a generic ask that's incentivized, or include an ask in your broader CRM marketing strategy such as a newsletter.



PIE BEST PRACTICES

1

Optimize for mobile: More than half of customers read their PIEs on mobile devices, so make sure your PIE is optimized for mobile

2

Use a single call to action (CTA): Keep your CTA short and concise such as "Write a review" – limit the distraction of other messages

3

Periodically include an incentive: Incentives like coupons or product samples can boost results **2-10X**

4

Keep the body of the email short: Grab your customer's attention immediately with a concise email

5

Consider your PIE timing: Think about your customer's experience once they purchase a product – for example, if they are getting an item delivered, send your PIE once the customer has had time to enjoy the product

6

Send a follow-up PIE: Sending a follow-up PIE can result in a **50%** increase in volume

7

Continually A/B test: A/B test your PIE and fine-tune your emails to determine what's working and what could be working better

Use product sampling to accelerate review collection

Sampling is an excellent way to accelerate your review collection efforts and can be used in several ways. Sampling has become the go-to method to jumpstart content for new product launches and drive purchase volume on day one. You can also use it to inject fresh, new content for existing products.

Since recency is vital to your collection review efforts, you may want to consider an infusion of fresh, new content on priority SKUs that are coming into season or products that have outdated reviews. Lastly, the more content you have, the more action insights you can gather, which can bring improvement opportunities to the surface.

When tailoring your sampling strategy to your goals, you'll want to consider the following questions:

- What products do you want to sample?
- Who do you want to reach?
- What action do you want them to take?
- What is your budget and timeline?

We have several sampling solutions that Bazaarvoice brands and retailers add to their review collection strategy to push more traffic to their site, increase coverage, and enhance content relevance.



Engage active communities with Trylt sampling

Whether you want to send samples to jumpstart a review collection or empower your existing customers and brand advocates to write product reviews by inviting them to a custom white-label sampling program, matching your product with active customers from our Trylt community is a great way to engage your customers and boost your UGC. Using the Trylt community allows you to get honest feedback on your product while increasing your review volume.

Clarins, a French luxury skincare, cosmetics, and perfume company, was struggling to gather fresh content from their customers. So, they set out to rejuvenate their UGC content on their site and collect new reviews. Clarins sent products to a select group from the 1,000 French members of the Bazaarvoice Trylt community. The response rate exceeded expectations and speak to how impactful sampling efforts can be.

CLARINS



Create a Co-op VoxBox to drive social buzz and reach

Co-op VoxBoxes strengthen your brand’s existing sampling offerings by incorporating Influenster’s unique and customized sampling box options and providing access to their global community, so that your brand can design the sampling campaign that best suits your needs.

Brands can sample individual products to community members in exchange for authentic reviews on their own or in themed sampling boxes that are sent to hyper-targeted groups. These boxes help drive trial and awareness ahead of product launches to generate high-quality reviews and social advocacy.



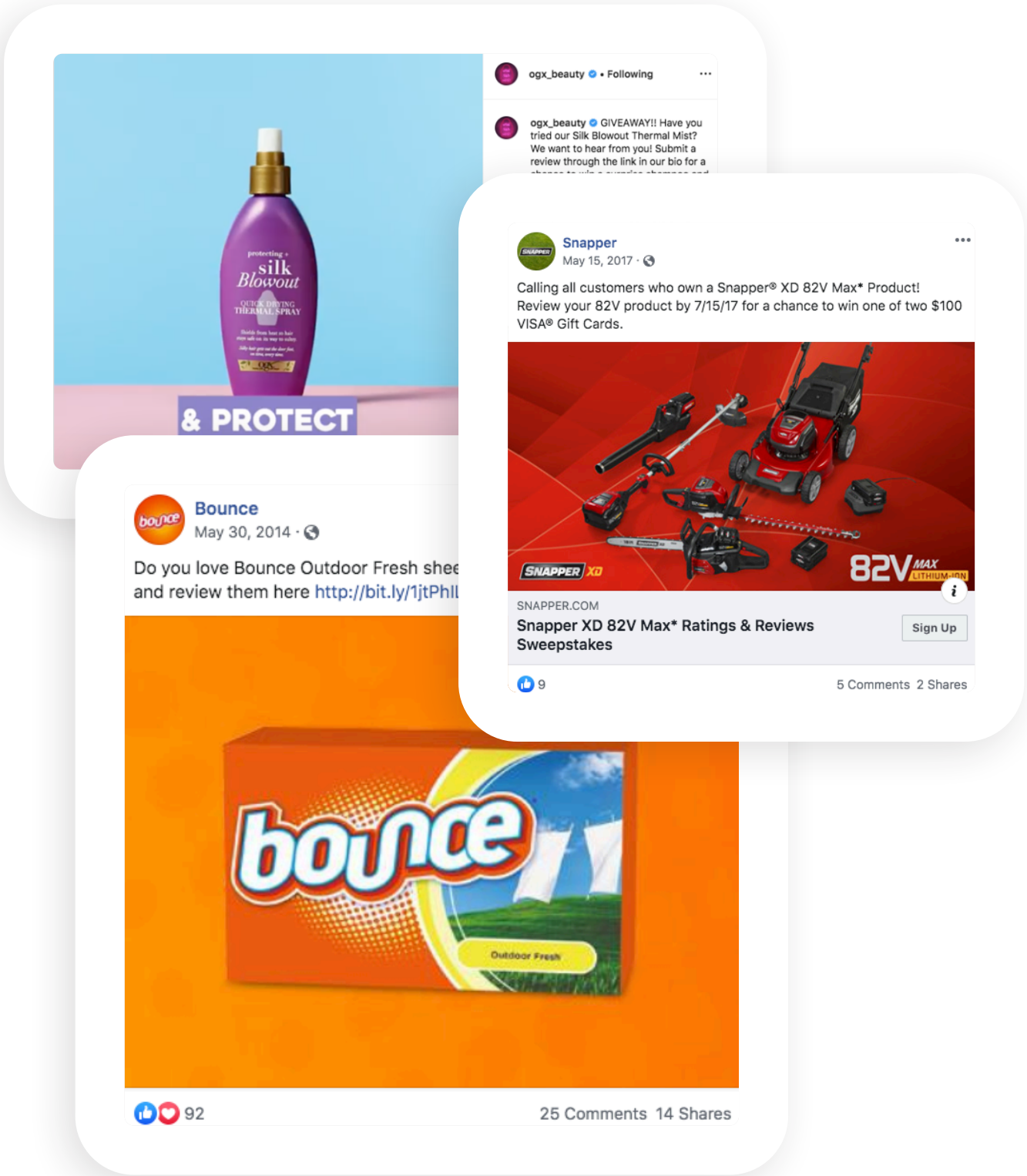
For example, a few mass beauty brands sent themed boxes to drive advocacy and reviews. On average, each branch received 2,200 reviews and 11.3 million social impressions.

Brands can also create a Custom VoxBox. For example, a VoxBox was created to include samples of Rimmel London mascara and eyeliner, which was hyper-targeted and sent out to 2,000 females between 18 and 30 years old with 1,000 + followers. As a result, Rimmel London received 1,200 reviews, 15 million social impressions, and a 4% higher sales lift for the sampled products. This is an excellent example of how to use the Influenster community to maximize your review collection.



Make an ask on social media

Since sampling can have a higher dollar amount tied to it – both in amount of product needed and paying for the program itself, it might not be in your review collection budget. Luckily, there are also low-cost methods such as leveraging social media to make a specific or generic ask for your members already on social media. You can also incentivize your ask. For example, you may ask for a review in exchange for a chance to win a \$150 AMEX gift card or gift card for your business.

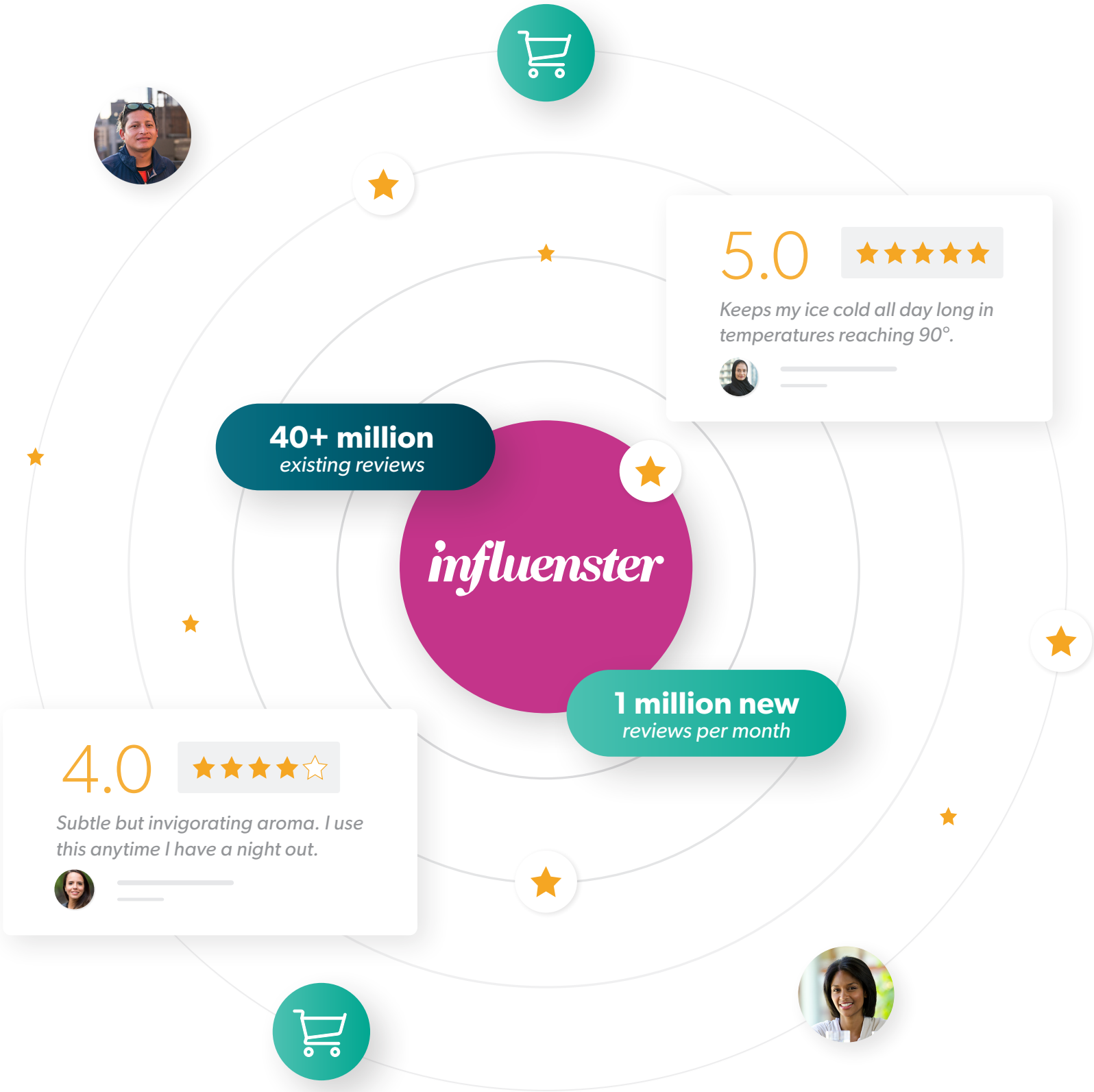


Incremental review collection methods

Utilize ReviewSource

ReviewSource lets you supply your brand and retailers’ sites with fresh, high-quality review content. Through Influenster’s member community, you can constantly refresh your UGC and steadily increase review volume. You can select the volume as well as products that receive syndication of this high-quality content.

Since high-quality content inspires shopper confidence, you can achieve product coverage and volume goals effortlessly, while increasing conversions. And with ReviewSource being an always on method, there will consistently be an influx of fresh content to your site.

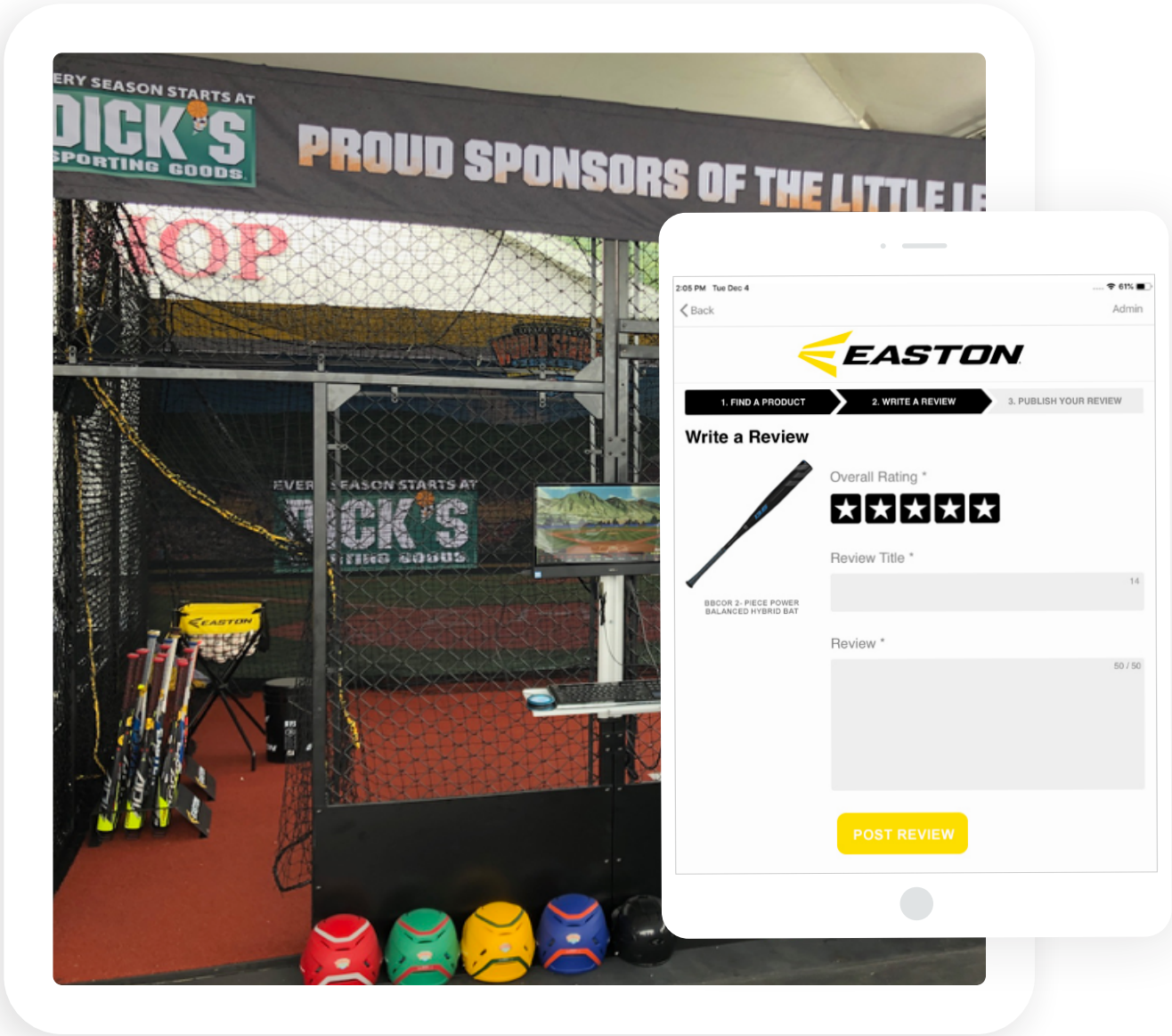


Host live events to boost review content

Hosting live events allows consumers to interact with your products in-person and provide feedback in real-time. Live events increase transparency, boost data collection, and increase user-generated content.

If you have a heavy live event schedule, you can collect reviews on your own or partner with Bazaarvoice to use our Live Event application, which is a powerful way to solicit reviews.

With the Live Event application, you can set up customized iPads so customers can review your product at your event.



Have a prominent ask for reviews on your website

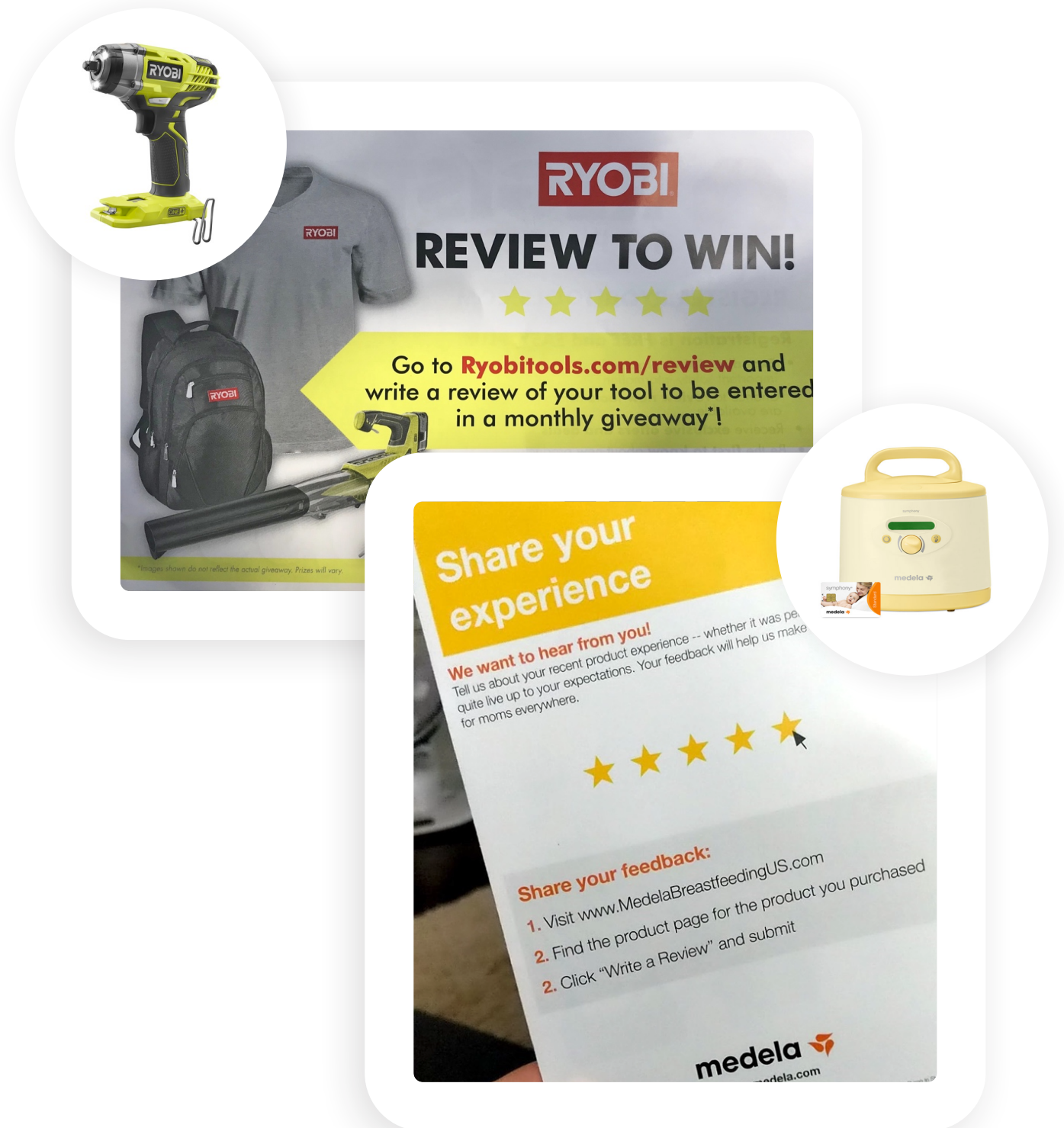
If you already have traffic going to your website, using your website to ask for a review is a great touchpoint. Whether you're asking for a specific product review or any review, you can build landing pages and content on your site to do that. Similar to social and email campaigns, you can offer an incentive for leaving a review on your site.



Include a printed insert to ask for reviews

Whether someone buys your product in-store or online, you can use packaging to your advantage. Printing CTAs within packaging drives consumers to a product-specific or generic review. For example, you could include an insert that asks customers to go to a specific URL on your website to leave a review and be entered into sweepstakes.

While we tend to focus on digital touch-points, printables can enhance your customer's experience and increase the odds they review your products.

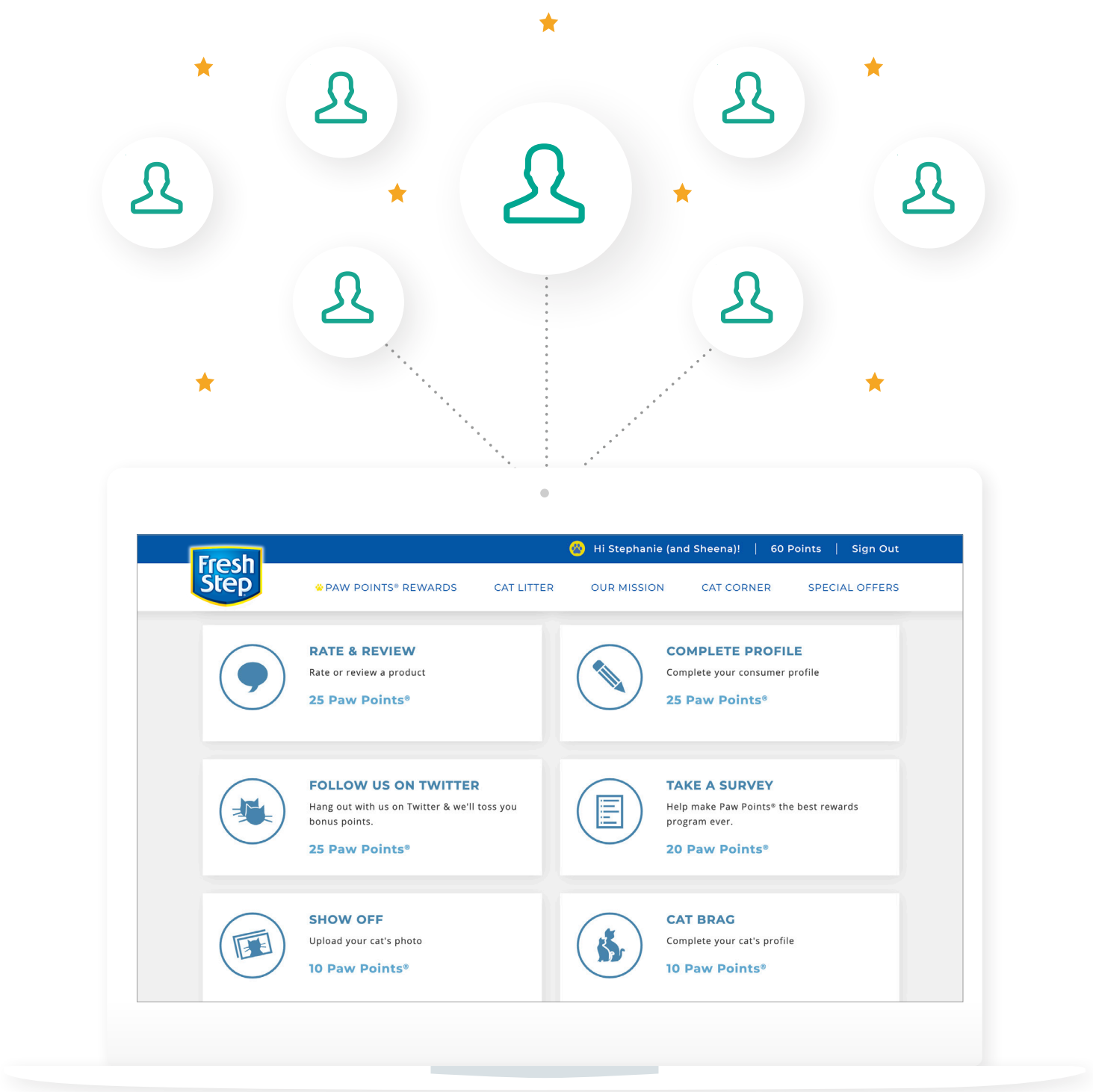


Use a loyalty program to empower brand advocates to share reviews

Loyalty programs help turn satisfied shoppers into brand advocates. Whether you already have a loyalty program or are thinking about launching one, it's highly recommended you use your program to solicit reviews. In fact, existing customers are **50%** more likely to try a new product as well as spend **31%** more than a new customer¹.

Creating a loyalty program can empower your current customers to recruit new ones through their love of your brand. The customers that are ecstatic about your brand will spread the word and share their voice via reviews.

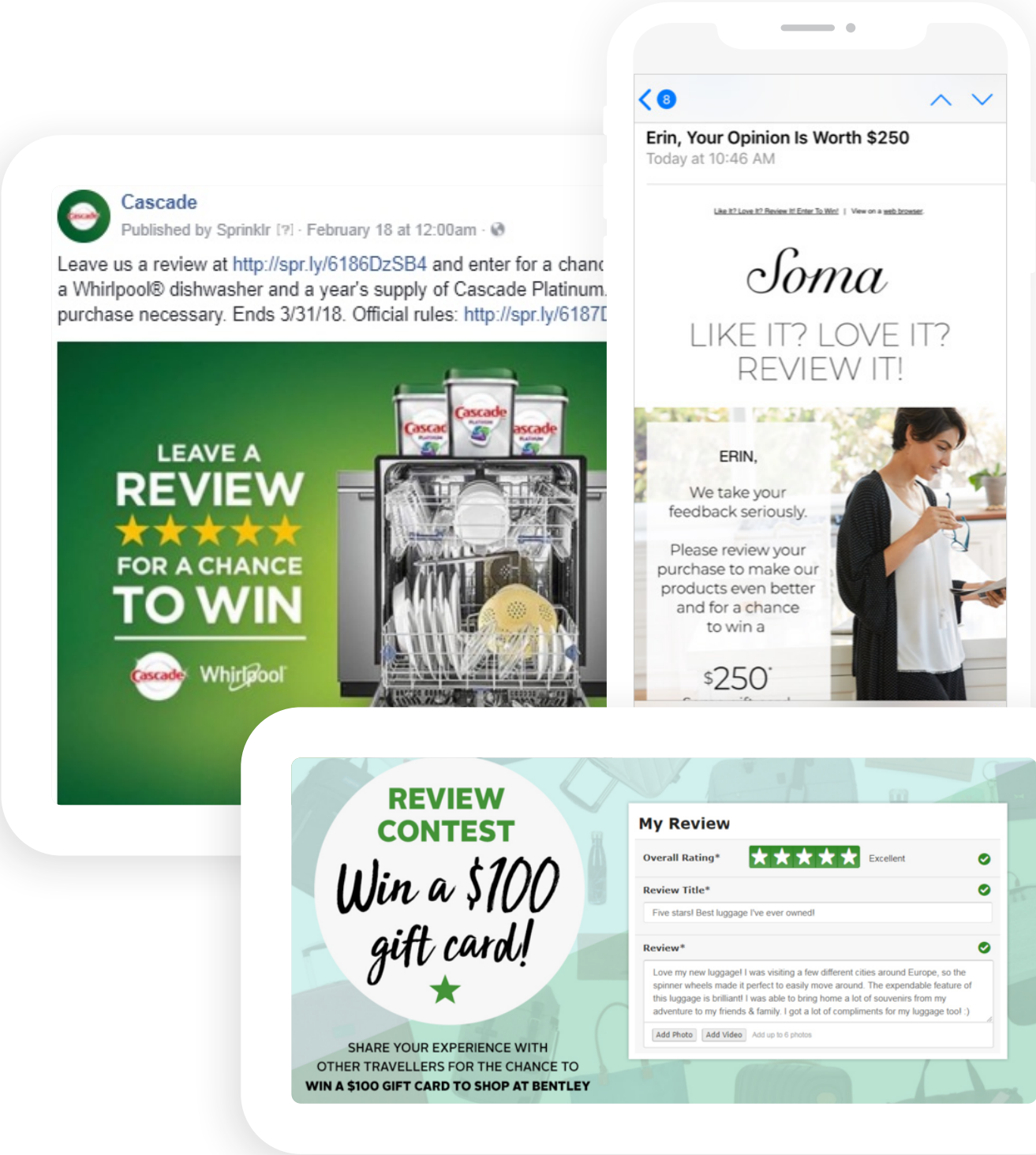
You can create a loyalty program by using a simple points system, charging an upfront fee for VIP benefits, partner with another company to provide exclusive offers, and more.



Create a sweepstake to incentivize feedback

While we’ve touched on it already, using sweepstakes campaigns can improve review submission rates, drive volume spikes, and improve products’ average star ratings. You can use sweepstakes as a standalone method or layered with other review collection methods. For example, if you’re implementing a PIE strategy, you can use a segment of time and incentivize that PIE. That said, the CTA will change from just leaving a review to leave a review and get an incentive in return such as a sweepstakes entry.

A well-designed sweepstake gives shoppers a reason to share their honest feedback since they will be receiving something in return such as cash or merchandise. While there are plenty of ways to run sweepstakes, it’s crucial to focus on content to make the experience engaging for users. Not only will you build your brand, but you will also build better relationships with your customers in the process.



Conclusion

Reviews and ratings are the keys to boosting purchases and insights while enhancing SEO benefits. In an age when consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendation, brands must develop a robust review collection strategy.

Three takeaways to keep in mind when developing your review collection strategy:



Prioritize your efforts

Prioritize your review collection efforts by identifying products that need reviews and then select the best methods to gather them. Whether you need pre-seeded reviews for a new product launch or an infusion of fresh content for older SKUs, having a firm strategy in place will increase review volume and traffic to your site.



Combine collection methods

Brands and retailers should exercise all available tactics when soliciting feedback from consumers. Combining high-impact and incremental methods to increase review volume will pay off in dividends for your business. A strong ratings and reviews program is inclusive of both organic and incentivized collection.



Invest in a UGC program

With UGC it's not a one-time thing, it's an ongoing effort. The retail and e-commerce space is ever changing. As the landscape changes, shoppers expect brands to adapt and accelerate innovation to improve and enhance the shopping experience.

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About Bazaarvoice

Each month in the Bazaarvoice Network, more than a billion consumers create, view, and share authentic user-generated content including reviews, questions and answers, and social photos across more than 6,200 global brand and retailer websites. From search and discovery to purchase and advocacy, Bazaarvoice's solutions help brands and retailers reach in-market shoppers, personalize their experiences, and give them the confidence to buy.

Founded in 2005, Bazaarvoice is headquartered in Austin, Texas, with offices in North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. For more information, **visit www.bazaarvoice.com**.

