

# Ace Your Reviews

The 5 Things Diners Care About Most

A 5-MINUTE READ

**ECOLAB**<sup>®</sup>

# Contents



Digital Reputation: Your Recipe for Success.....	3
What Customers Want Most: CLEAN.....	4
<b>1. KEY FOCUS: First Impressions &amp; Curb Appeal.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. KEY FOCUS: Set the Table for Success.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3. KEY FOCUS: Make Your Restrooms Shine.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4. KEY FOCUS: Put Food Safety Front &amp; Center.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>5. KEY FOCUS: Don't Let Pests Pester Customers .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Take Control of your Digital Reputation.....	15
About Ecolab.....	16

# Digital Reputation: Your Recipe for Success

With the total number of U.S. restaurants growing roughly 10 percent annually,<sup>1</sup> the “restaurant boom” makes it more important than ever for restaurants to stand out from the crowd. No single factor plays as great of a role in driving customers to your restaurant (or keeping them away) than your digital reputation—the sum of customer reviews on social media and online review sites. Raise your ratings by just one star and you could see a big revenue jump.

This short tipbook shows you the five things restaurant customers care about most, as well as simple tips for delivering on these customer expectations every time.

## Online Reviews: A Fine Line Between Success & Failure

**THE HIGH COST OF BAD REVIEWS**

On page 1 search results:



**1 BAD REVIEW turns away 2 of 10 potential customers<sup>4</sup>**



**9 in 10**

**DINERS CONSIDER REVIEWS IMPORTANT WHEN CHOOSING WHERE TO EAT<sup>2</sup>**



**One star away from profitability**  
**1-star Yelp increase**



**= 9% revenue boost<sup>3</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> [https://www.restaurant.org/Downloads/PDFs/News-Research/2017\\_Restaurant\\_outlook\\_summary-FINAL.pdf](https://www.restaurant.org/Downloads/PDFs/News-Research/2017_Restaurant_outlook_summary-FINAL.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> TripAdvisor, 2017

<sup>3</sup> Harvard Business School research, 2016

<sup>4</sup> <https://moz.com/blog/new-data-reveals-67-of-consumers-are-influenced-by-online-reviews>





## What Customers Want Most: CLEAN

Today's restaurant customers have higher expectations than ever. They not only want good food and good value—they bring new expectations about health, sustainability and responsible business. But ask customers what they want most of all, and they'll tell you it's quite simple:

**THE CLEANLINESS OF RESTAURANT SPACES— BOTH INSIDE AND OUT—IS THE BIGGEST FACTOR DRIVING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION.<sup>1</sup>**

### CONSUMER REPORTS

#### Top Restaurant Customer Complaints:<sup>2</sup>

1. Dirty utensils/table
2. Dirty restrooms
3. Bad service
4. Poor staff hygiene
5. Food/beverages served at incorrect temp

2 in 3 customers say **UNCLEAN RESTAURANT SPACES** were the **TOP REASON FOR NOT RETURNING** – significantly outranking poor food quality and poor service.<sup>3</sup>

**HALF** of diners say they'd return to an exceptionally clean restaurant **EVEN AFTER A POOR SERVICE EXPERIENCE.**<sup>4</sup>



1 <http://www.mintel.com/blog/foodservice-market-news/cleanliness-menu-selection-and-comfort-most-important-when-dining-out-reports-mintel>

2 Consumer Reports, 2016

3 [checkit.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The\\_Financial\\_Impact\\_of\\_Getting\\_Food\\_Safety\\_Wrong.pdf](http://checkit.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The_Financial_Impact_of_Getting_Food_Safety_Wrong.pdf)

4 [checkit.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The\\_Financial\\_Impact\\_of\\_Getting\\_Food\\_Safety\\_Wrong.pdf](http://checkit.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The_Financial_Impact_of_Getting_Food_Safety_Wrong.pdf)

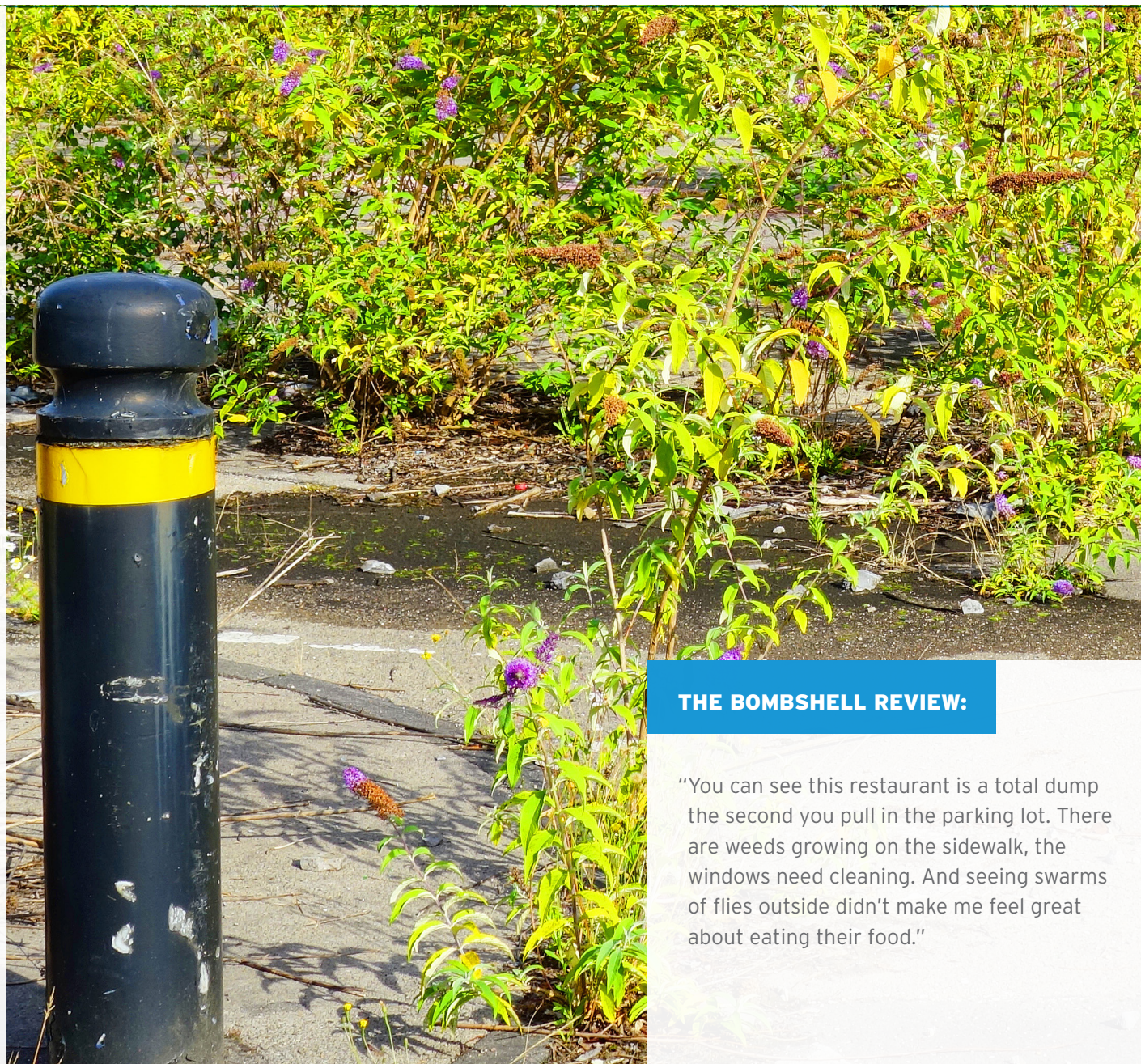


# 1

## KEY FOCUS:

### First Impressions & Curb Appeal

You likely spend a lot of time thinking about a customer's first impression of the food on their plate. But what about the true first impression they have of your restaurant, formed the second they pull into the parking lot or walk up to your doors?



#### THE BOMBHELL REVIEW:

“You can see this restaurant is a total dump the second you pull in the parking lot. There are weeds growing on the sidewalk, the windows need cleaning. And seeing swarms of flies outside didn't make me feel great about eating their food.”





## RECIPE FOR SUCCESS:

- **Clean exterior:** Make sure exterior windows, doors and walls are clean. Because exterior surfaces often have different materials and are exposed to different kinds of filth, make sure you partner with a vendor that can offer the right products to keep these surfaces looking their best.
- **Tidy landscaping:** Keep all exterior vegetation and landscaping looking neat and well-maintained—including sidewalks and parking lots.
- **Outside-in pest management:** Ensure your pest management partner addresses pest prevention and elimination around the exterior of your building, as well. Avoid vegetation and landscaping that may attract or harbor pests.







# 2

## KEY FOCUS:

### Set the Table for Success

It shouldn't be surprising that customers expect to sit down to a clean table. Yet dirty utensils and dirty tables are the number-one complaint. Since these are the surfaces customers will directly eat from, there is absolutely no margin for error.



#### THE BOMBHELL REVIEW:

"I was so excited to try this place, but the second we sat down, we realized we wouldn't be eating. The table had been hastily wiped down, so the last customer's ketchup spill was just smeared around. And both our forks had food crusted on them. We left before ordering."





## RECIPE FOR SUCCESS:

---

- **Smarter table turns:** Make sure bussers and servers have effective, cleaning and disinfecting products for fast table-turn cleaning. It's better to keep guests waiting a few extra minutes than sit them at a dirty table, but the right cleaning products can minimize these delays.
- **Shining wares:** Your dishes, glasses and utensils are the canvas for your customers' dining experience—and one of your biggest investments. A high-quality dish machine is essential to keeping your restaurant running smoothly. But you also need to invest in the right dish machine products to make sure your dishes are always spotless, utensils always shining and glasses always sparkling.
- **Sweating the details:** Customers notice every little thing. Are the menus clean—free of stains and fingerprints? Are salt, pepper and condiment containers clean, full and tidily arranged?
- **Shoo the flies:** Flies buzzing around customers' heads and landing on their food are more than just a nuisance. Flies disgust diners and drive potential customers away. Make sure you're following best practices to minimize both large ("house") and small ("fruit") fly activity.





# 3

## KEY FOCUS:

### Make Your Restrooms Shine

Customers tend to take a lowest-common-denominator approach to judging cleanliness. Case in point: customers believe the cleanliness of the restroom is immediately indicative of the cleanliness everywhere else in the restaurant.



**1/3**

of consumers will **NEVER RETURN** to a business with an unclean restroom.<sup>1</sup>



**HALF** will proactively **WARN FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES** about an unclean restroom.<sup>2</sup>



**80%** of customers will **IMMEDIATELY AVOID** a restaurant reported to have dirty restrooms.<sup>3</sup>



#### THE BOMBSHELL REVIEW:

“This was going to be a really good review. Our food was tasty. Our server was funny. But on the way out I stopped in the bathroom: disgusting. Smelled bad, the toilet needed cleaning and the soap dispenser was broken. It made me worry about the food I’d just eaten, and I don’t think I’ll be back.”

1 [bradleycorp.com/handwashing](http://bradleycorp.com/handwashing)

2 Harris Interactive survey for SCA Tissue North America

3 [qsr.com/magazine.com/outside-insights/dirty-little-secret](http://qsr.com/magazine.com/outside-insights/dirty-little-secret)



## RECIPE FOR SUCCESS:

- **Regimented restroom cleaning:** In the kitchen, process is absolutely critical. The same is true for ensuring a consistently clean restroom. Staff should know exactly what needs to be done, how often and by whom.
- **Ongoing spot cleaning:** Restroom cleaning can't be a once-a-day task. Spot-cleaning checklists should hit touch-points and high-traffic areas (door handles, sinks, floors, toilets etc.).
- **Make "right way" cleaning = "easy way" cleaning:** Restroom cleaning is a dirty job, and it's tempting to take shortcuts. Cleaning tools and chemicals should be chosen to minimize the hassle of an already frustrating task. In short, it should be easier to clean the right way than the wrong way.





# 4

## KEY FOCUS:

### Put Food Safety Front & Center

With food safety incidents in the headlines, restaurant customers say their concern about food safety in restaurants keeps increasing.<sup>1</sup> That's why review sites like Yelp now list health inspection scores for restaurants. Safe food should be a given—and food safety concerns should never even enter your customers' minds. Proactively demonstrating your commitment to food safety creates powerful peace of mind. How powerful? Most customers say they'd willingly tolerate poor service in a restaurant with a good food hygiene rating.<sup>2</sup>

**75%** of customers would **NEVER VISIT** (or never return) to a business implicated in a food safety incident.<sup>3</sup>



### THE BOMBSHELL REVIEW:

“My girlfriend and I both got terribly sick after eating here. I heard they've had issues before. **DO NOT GO.**”

1 Packaged Facts Report: <https://www.packagedfacts.com/about/release.asp?id=3851>  
2 [http://www.checkit.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The\\_Financial\\_Impact\\_of\\_Getting\\_Food\\_Safety\\_Wrong.pdf](http://www.checkit.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The_Financial_Impact_of_Getting_Food_Safety_Wrong.pdf)  
3 [http://www.checkit.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The\\_Financial\\_Impact\\_of\\_Getting\\_Food\\_Safety\\_Wrong.pdf](http://www.checkit.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The_Financial_Impact_of_Getting_Food_Safety_Wrong.pdf)



## RECIPE FOR SUCCESS:

---

- **Focus on food contact surfaces:** 25% of all food safety citations are due to food contact surfaces not being properly cleaned or sanitized.<sup>1</sup> Engage your cleaning chemical vendor to ensure you're using EPA-registered hard-surface food-contact surface sanitizer. Also, create cleaning checklists to ensure staff are regularly cleaning equipment in between tasks to avoid cross-contamination.
- **Make hand hygiene easy:** One in four cases of foodborne illness are due to poor personal hygiene.<sup>2</sup> The easiest way to mitigate this risk is with basic hand hygiene. Make it a priority for your staff—and make it easy. Conveniently located sinks and highly visible soap and hand sanitizer dispensers not only increase staff compliance—they show your customers you're serious about proper hand hygiene.
- **Safe food storage goes digital:** One-quarter of foodborne illness accidents result from keeping food at improper temperatures (hot or cold).<sup>3</sup> Digital technologies help reduce the burden of constantly monitoring and recording food holding temperatures. Talk to your vendor partners about digital thermometers and other monitoring equipment that automatically observes and records food storage time and conditions.
- **Leverage external assessments:** You never want to wait until there's a problem to talk with a food safety expert. Plus, ongoing engagement with food safety experts helps you focus your attention on running the rest of your restaurant's operations. Build a relationship with health inspectors by inviting them into your business and proactively engaging with the health department regarding customer complaints or potential issues. Engage with third-party food safety partners that can provide regular audits and assessments, providing feedback on opportunities for improvement and food safety best practices.



1 [https://mehaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Ecolab\\_FDA-MEHA-2017-v5.pdf](https://mehaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Ecolab_FDA-MEHA-2017-v5.pdf)  
2 [https://mehaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Ecolab\\_FDA-MEHA-2017-v5.pdf](https://mehaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Ecolab_FDA-MEHA-2017-v5.pdf)  
3 [https://mehaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Ecolab\\_FDA-MEHA-2017-v5.pdf](https://mehaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Ecolab_FDA-MEHA-2017-v5.pdf)



# 5

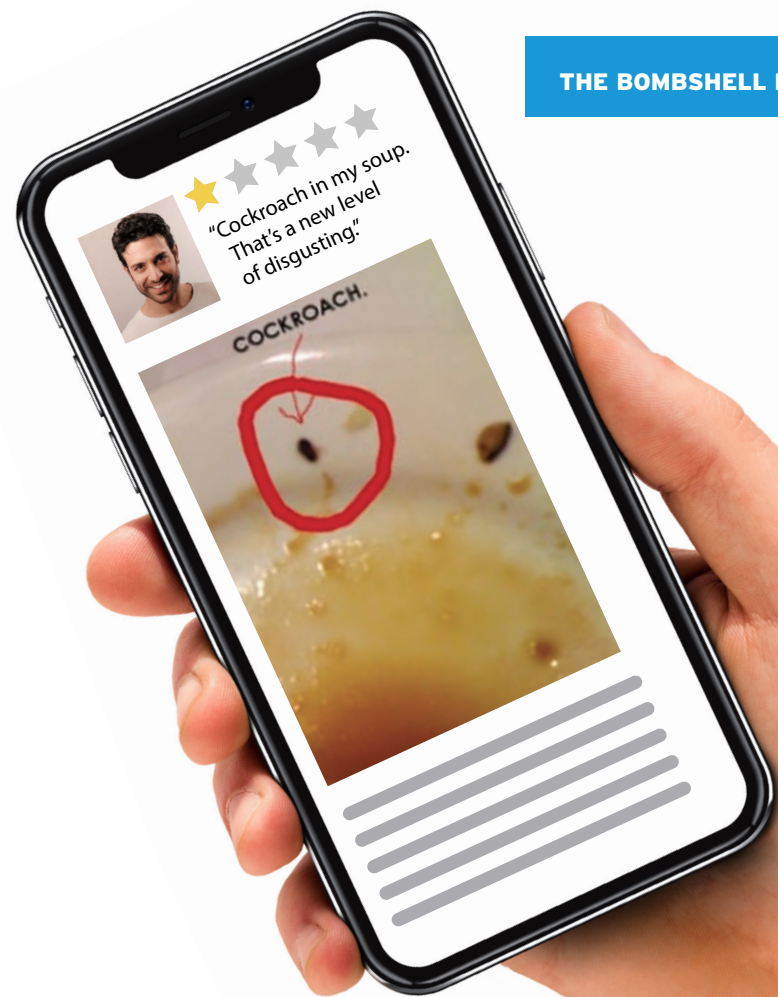
## KEY FOCUS:

### Don't Let Pests Pester Customers

A picture is worth a thousand words—and a picture of a cockroach can cost you thousands of customers. Pest issues have always been damaging to a restaurant's reputation. But with smartphones, customers can snap a quick photo and add it to their bombshell review. Few things generate such a visceral, negative reaction as a photo of a fly, rodent, cockroach or other pest in a restaurant. But that's not all: Pest issues can dramatically hurt health inspection scores, and can even pose serious food safety and public health risks.

A negative review with a photo of a pest will spread **2-3x** faster.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE BOMBSHELL REVIEW:



<sup>1</sup> <https://revive.social/most-shared-content/>





## RECIPE FOR SUCCESS:

---

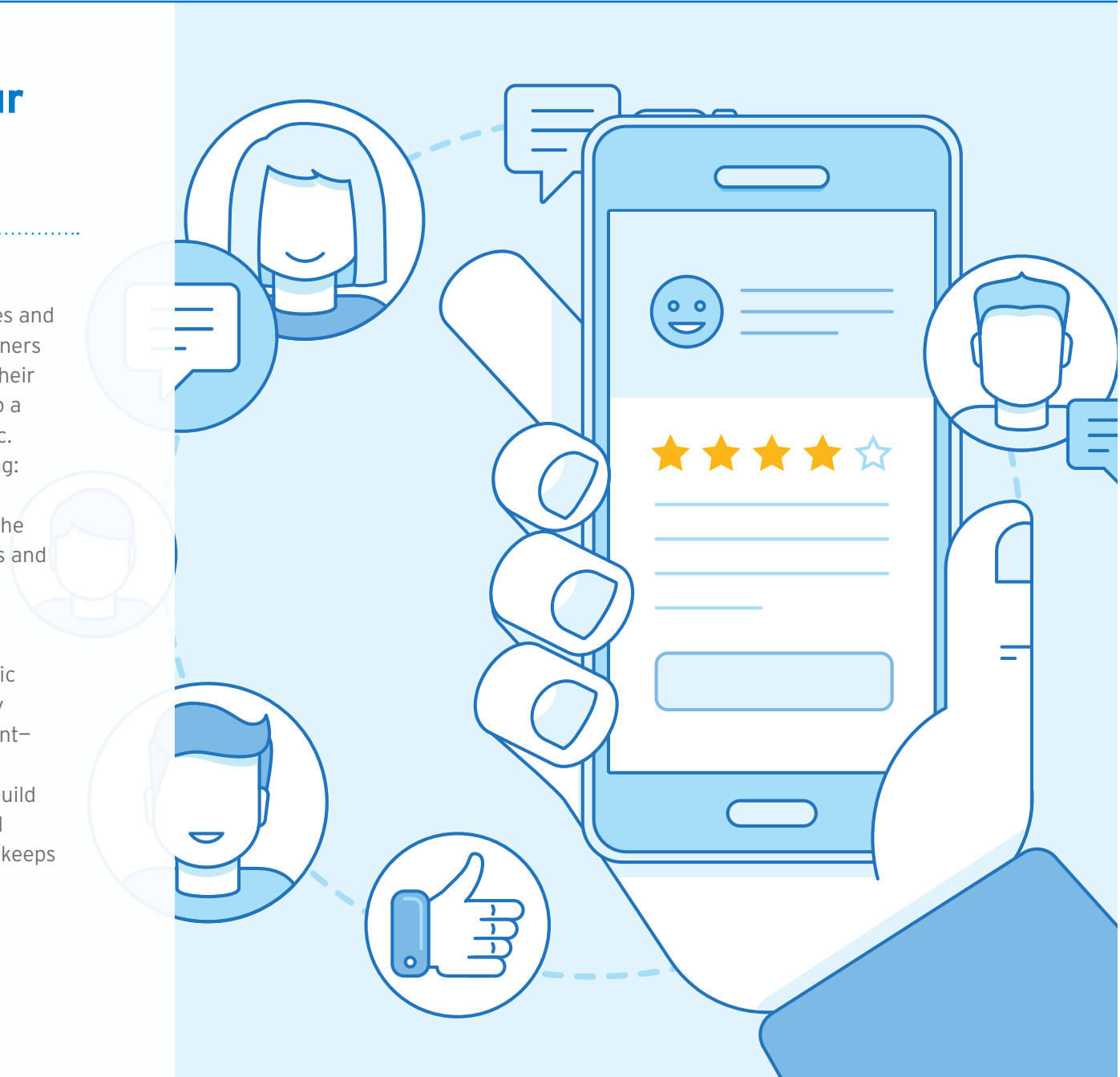
- **Create a barrier:** Avoid attracting or harboring pests outside your restaurant by covering garbage, keeping vegetation trimmed and away from your buildings, cleaning up organic material and eliminating standing water. Create a barrier by keeping doors/windows closed, using screens on windows, regularly inspecting and sealing holes and gaps in the exterior, and creating positive air pressure inside your restaurant. Inspect all incoming goods for signs of pest activity or spoilage.
- **Target pest hot spots:** Following cleaning best practices will eliminate pest feeding and breeding grounds. Make sure all perishables are stored in closed containers, and pay special attention to inspecting, cleaning and repairing plumbing, flooring and drains.
- **Educate your staff:** Employees in the front and back of the house are your first line of defense against pests. They should be able to recognize specific pests, as well as signs of pest activity—droppings, nests, gnawed packaging, etc. Finally, they should report these issues immediately, as pest issues quickly spiral out of control.
- **Look for a proactive partner:** Restaurants need to be proactive in mitigating pest issues—and that means looking for pest management providers that go beyond just showing up when they're called. A proactive pest management partner will make regular visits to your restaurant to provide preventative treatments and identify issues—such as leaks, holes in exterior walls or pest attractants—that could lead to future pest issues.



## Take Control of your Digital Reputation

The rising influence of online review sites and social media leaves many restaurant owners and operators feeling out of control of their businesses' reputations—helpless to stop a single nasty review from wreaking havoc. But the reality is much more empowering: restaurants have tremendous power to shape customer impressions and steer the conversations happening on review sites and social media.

Ultimately, while customer expectations seem to grow higher each day, their basic expectations aren't that complicated. By creating a consistently clean environment—and focusing on key areas most likely to generate bad reviews—restaurants can build the solid foundation for a sterling digital reputation that draws customers in and keeps them coming back.





## About Ecolab

---

A trusted partner at nearly 3 million customer locations, Ecolab is the global leader in water, hygiene and energy technologies and services that protect people and vital resources. When you partner with Ecolab you can be confident you are getting comprehensive solutions, data-driven insights and on-site service to promote safe food, maintain clean environments, optimize water and energy use, and improve operational efficiencies for customers in the food and hospitality markets in more than 170 countries around the world.

### Helping protect your business and reputation

We partner with you to offer services and solutions designed to help your business improve customer satisfaction and operational efficiency.

We understand the importance of keeping pests out of your restaurant. Our program gives you comprehensive protection against your most common pests. Additionally, we have products that meet your needs – providing a superior clean for your customers that ensure the best reputation for your business. Our products help improve employee/customer hygiene practices, sanitize equipment used to prepare or serve food, and clean a variety of surfaces with a spot free shine.

It's about making an impact everywhere it counts. Drive customer satisfaction, safeguard your brand, and achieve your sustainability goals with our programs that keep your property clean, sanitized and pest-free. Together, we protect success.

For more information about how Ecolab can help your property, visit:  
**[www.ecolab.com/solutions/pest-solutions-for-foodservice](http://www.ecolab.com/solutions/pest-solutions-for-foodservice)**