Online reputation management: how to control what's out there

Devin Morrissey

5–6 minutes

Your reputation is one of the most powerful assets you can have as a successful businessperson. Having a reputation for honesty and quality can be the key to locking down major clients or building a standing in a fledgling market. Alternatively, having a poor reputation can be detrimental to the point of completely running you out of business.

In this day and age, online reputation management is a critical component to building and growing a successful business. People will analyze how a business is described online just as often (if not more than) as they will in more traditional ways,

such as word of mouth. Strong business reviews and a solid online reputation can be a substantial driver for business.

Taking steps to manage and promote your personal and business reputation is now an important component to success. Especially when it comes to [web domains](), management of things such as search results and reviews is a game changer. Below are things to look out for and be aware of as you assess your current reputation management efforts for your business:

Personal information

For individuals working in the business world, the management of personal information online has the power to influence the types of jobs that will be attainable and the number of doors that will open up. This information can take many forms, including personal files, emails, and social media accounts. Basically anything that can help a stranger identify you could be considered personal information.

One problem that many young professionals run into is the oversharing of information or the lack of valuable privacy settings. Mismanagement of these things can lead to an excess of (potentially compromising) personal information being available to job interviewers, managers, or potential clients. Just imagine being a sales manager attempting to lock down a new client when a photo of you overly intoxicated and hugging a friend's toilet emerges on one of your social media profiles.

Even bigger problems can arise if this information is either lost or stolen. For instance, malicious

users could trash your reputation and personal credibility by becoming an active participant in unsavory blogs or online discussions. Regardless of whether or not you were actually involved, it could take a great deal of time to clean that up.

Business management

Many of the same issues have the potential to arise for businesses when managing their online reputation. In addition, things such as numerous negative online reviews or awkward search results can have a profound negative impact on a business. Many potential clients are significantly influenced by their initial review and Google searches of your business. If what they find is bad, your business could be in trouble.

Because of this, negative items, such as hubbub about a poor manager with many negative reviews that has since been fired, can come back to haunt businesses over the years. To help combat this, many large companies are hiring [online reputation management services](#). These services can help to

promote the positive aspects of your business and redirect internet traffic over time to represent a more balanced and realistic view of the company.

Working on monitoring things like incidents that impact IP addresses can help online reputation security professionals track and protect a company's reputation. Potential risks include things such as malware infections, malicious activities, breaches, compromised websites, or botnet creation on host websites. Most of this monitoring can be completed simply by registering an IP address and list of domains to be monitored.

As an aside, don't forget that protecting your customers' information is inextricably tied to reputation management; a data breach can mean [a severe loss of trust and loyalty in consumers](). Ensure that you follow and advocate for strong security practices online.

Courtesy is key

Regardless of whether you are worried about protecting your personal or business reputations,

there are a number of tips and tricks to help combat potential issues. Perhaps the single most powerful one is courtesy and professionalism at all times while online. No matter what is said about you or the company, always respond by taking the higher road — never snap back in anger.

One tip is to always think twice about what you are willing to post online. One negative or thoughtless post can have lasting impacts. For instance, responding rudely to a potential customer can lead them to spreads the interaction far and wide. Sometimes, having a coworker read your response before sending it can be a good way to help avoid any potential issues that may arise.

In addition to being strictly online, the way you or your company conduct yourself in the presence of potential customers can also have an impact in the form of online reviews. When interacting with customers [try to avoid phone use as much as possible](). If you must be on a device, try to continue to make as much eye contact as possible, take necessary phone calls outside, and refrain from

texting.