5 Steps to Protecting Your Online Reputation

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6–8 minutes

Online reputation management is as an orchestrated effort to improve an individual, family, or group's digital reputation while eliminating or limiting harmful online experiences.

To protect your or your family's online reputation, you'll need to create, either by yourself or with the help of an online reputation specialist, unique strategies designed to protect and improve your online reputation.

Anyone with an online digital footprint can benefit: Families, individuals, professionals like doctors, lawyers, and small business owners—basically, anyone who seeks to have a positive presence

online, or who seeks to eliminate negative outcomes from persons who could do their reputations serious harm online.

Notably, while 75% of U.S. adults want to check their online reputation, 48% don't like what they find when they do, according to data from Google.

How to Improve Your Online Reputation

Make no mistake, you and your family's online reputation is a big deal. There are myriad individuals, including business associates, neighbors, other family members, and yes, even potential [identity thieves](#) searching for you on a regular basis.

You can take these five steps to ensure your you and your family's online reputation is both well-received and well protected:

1. Secure Private Information

You need to emphasize the importance of keeping family and [personal information](#) private. Other

family members—especially children—should understand that any personal data that can be used to commit [identity theft](#).

That list includes Social Security numbers, bank and credit account numbers, email addresses, home address, phone numbers, birth dates, and current locations. Any one of these pieces of data can be used by fraudsters to commit identity theft, or even compiled with other data so a criminal can make a [synthetic identity](#).

2. Set Firm Privacy Settings

[Online privacy settings](#) can help protect a family's data and reputation from individuals seeking to do harm. When establishing privacy settings, eliminate any public sharing of family member data and limit access to online posts.

This is especially true on social media, which is a ripe target for identity thieves and which can be screened by potential employers, colleges, and yes, nosy neighbors and other interested observers. Make sure you also set [guidelines for](#)

[your children's social media usage](#) in order to protect them from cyberbullying and to keep their information out of the hands of identity thieves.

3. Have Everyone Google Themselves

You can't protect your or your family's online reputation or correct any potentially harmful posts or images online unless you know what the public side of the Internet has stored in your name. That's why it's so important to conduct an individual or family Google name search, with everyone who has an online digital footprint included in the search.

Simply log onto Google, type in your name, and follow the links, including posts and images, and build an inventory of every family member's name online. If you detect any potentially troubling posts or images or view any posts or images that reveal sensitive personal data, you'll want to look into online reputation platforms and firms to work on deleting the post or the sensitive information included in the post.

4. Clean up Family Social Media Platforms

Many people use and enjoy social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat—[81% of U.S. population](#) has a social media profile, according to Statista. But reputational damage can occur if you or a family member posts something inappropriate on social media; for example, drunken or sexually explicit behavior, or bullying or character assassination against another social media user.

When discussing social media usage online with your family, emphasize the importance of the positive traits and characteristics you want your family members, especially the kids, to demonstrate. The idea is to build a "family brand" that shows an upbeat and positive online presence, one that will help create a sturdy, friendly, and optimistic family reputation.

5. Register Your Name Online

To gain more control over your own name or your

family name, register your name as an online domain if it's available. By doing so, you control your own name online, and not someone else who could do you or your family harm.

Also, register a domain name for any family-run business, as well. The idea is to control your family's good name online, in as many ways possible; registering a family or individual domain can eliminate the threat of someone using your own name, and controlling your family's reputation, against your wishes.

Is It a Good Idea to Hire an Online Reputation Management Specialist?

While there are good, "do-it-yourself" ways to protect your online reputation, hiring a reputation management specialist can be a good option as well. Online reputation management firms can take the burden off you by handling the regular tasks needed to protect your family online, including:

- Regularly monitoring each of your family members activity online, and any attacks or threats against a

family member.

- Remove a web link that casts you or another family member in a negative manner.

- Registering an official complaint with an Internet search engine or online webmaster.

Make sure the online reputation management company you're considering is listed with the [Better Business Bureau](), and ask for testimonials or references before signing on the dotted line. Ask about costs, learn success rates in protecting online reputations, and look into if there have any complaints or lawsuits lodged against the company.

It's Ultimately up to You to Protect Your Family's Online Reputation

Remember, the Internet neither forgets nor forgives. It's up to you take the reins to build and protect your family's online reputation. In an online world where influence can be controlled by anyone, and where reputations can be destroyed in a short

period of time, building and protecting a positive online reputation for you and your family can give you what's needed most—a solid reputation in an increasingly digital world.

For more information about on online reputation management and effective ways to build and protect online reputations, check out [this white paper](#).

You can also sign up for a family identity protection plan like [Experian IdentityWorks](#) which offers identity theft monitoring and alerts such as social network monitoring.