

Tips to Manage Your Online Reputation

Be a good digital citizen

1. Create a Presence On Any And All Relevant Web Networks

Your company should already have Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn accounts, at minimum. If you're in a highly competitive market, you may need to be active on some additional social media sites, as well — there are dozens available, some of which may be specific to your industry.

2. Don't Neglect Your Social Media Accounts

It's important to build out your social media accounts. Merely *having* a Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn account/page for your business is insufficient — you need to develop your audience on them, too. With ongoing development, you can build your social media accounts in order to interact with customers and to increase your influence and engagement scores.

3. Consider Your Brands and Products

You may need to build out online materials and social profiles for more than just your company name. If you have brand and product names beyond your company name, you likely ought to develop content to rank for those names as well. You may need to develop websites, web pages, social media profiles and collateral materials just to claim and reserve each brand name.

4. Protect Individuals Associated With the Business

Develop a strong social media presence for your founders', owners', or executives' names, particularly if they are distinctive. Keeping a low online profile to preserve your privacy also leaves out transparency.

5. Be Authentic

Be who you say you are, do what you say you will do. Make rules before running your company. It's okay to change them but have **policies** in place and talk to your staff about them

6. Blog

For reputation purposes, it not only can rank for your name, it can give you a solid “home court” ground where you can directly respond to any major questions made about your company.

7. Listen

When responding to online complaints or bad reviews, seriously consider that there may be some weaknesses in your company that need to be addressed — particularly if you get frequent negative feedback about a specific thing. The customer isn't always right but it's important to listen to them.

8. Apologize

If you or your company mess up own up to it — and make a genuine apology to those who have been affected. Being real and transparent in apologizing can go far toward settling the situation and putting it behind you.

9. Don't Get Into Online Arguments

It's very easy to get sucked into this — but even if you're technically right, you might lose out overall by just coming across as petty, harsh or unprofessional. Worse yet, you might actually be wrong... and once you get riled up, you could end up saying and doing things that damage your reputation.

10. Make the Investment

Reputation development requires an investment, both in time and money. Most small, local businesses are either ignoring proactive reputation management or they are doing it themselves, on a shoestring, and on an as-needed and as-they-have-time-to-do-it basis.

Final Thoughts

Following these tips may help to put you and your business in a stronger position to follow what is being said and being able to tell your side. Proactive online reputation management is going to cost you something to put in place, time and maybe money. Think of it as a form of insurance. It won't absolutely keep you from getting damaged, but it could mitigate the damage and keep it from being worse than it might otherwise be.

Keep in mind people do like to brag and support other companies. Be a good customer and do the same.