YOUR REPUTATION IS AT RISK!

YOUR REPUTATION IS AT RISK!

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

1REPWARN.COM

Table of Contents

Online Reputation Management

If you own a business in today's modern world, you know that it's no longer a question of whether you have an online presence or not. It's now a matter of what that online presence is. You need to know how people perceive your brand and whether that perception matches the one you want established. It's not wise to just let things fall where they may when your online reputation is involved. Businesses can't just let other people determine what their brand is, they should be the one on top of it controlling the narrative.

This is where online reputation management comes in.

What is online reputation management?

Online reputation management is the practice of taking charge of a brand's reputation on the web. It involves constant monitoring and making sure that the perception of a business stays on the favorable side by boosting positive content and decreasing the visibility of negative content.

Why is online reputation management important?

Everyone is online these days. Your customers have social media accounts, your competitors have a website, and your prospects are scouring forums for product reviews. There is no escaping the power of the internet and how it's become the ultimate source of business for a lot of brands.

Studies have shown that 75% of potential customers check reviews first before they make a purchase and four out of five of them choose the competition after reading one bad review. That's eighty percent of new customers lost due to a possibly mismanaged online reputation.

Take control of what your customers see online and don't let others – your dissatisfied customers or competitors – do it for you. Or it's eighty percent of your new customers out the door before they even reach it.

How do you go about managing your online reputation?

There are a lot of details involved in successfully plotting and executing a good online reputation management strategy. Depending on how big your organization is and how much of a presence you already have online, the amount of work and time needed will vary. But the three things that are consistent no matter what when dealing with managing your brand's online reputation are: 1) establishing where you currently are reputation-wise and your goals, 2) fixing any damage and working on accomplishing your goals, and 3) making sure you keep the goals you've reached.

Determining Your Online Reputation

Before executing any steps in managing your brand's reputation online, it's important that you figure out what the baseline is so you know how much work still needs to be done. Here are some important questions that will help steer you towards a good start.

What is your audience saying about you?

The most common sources that determine the general opinion about your brand are blogs, forums, social media, and review sites.

Go to these places online and type in the name of your business and check out the results. Are they mostly complaints about your product or service? Do they show your brand in a positive light? Is your website on the first page of search engines or are other sources shown first? The results will give you an idea on what your potential customers see and what their first impression might be when researching about you.

It's important to note specific quotes and complaints or praises so you have a more concrete idea on how you're being perceived online. This will also give you a more rounded view of your online reputation goals.

What are your reputation goals?

The Cheshire cat in Alice in Wonderland said it best when he told Alice, "If you don't know where you're going, any road will lead you there."

The same truth applies to reputation management. You can't just be general about your goals. "I want a better online reputation" will not do. You have to be specific in what you want to happen. Is your business being bashed in forums? Plot a game plan on how to combat that. Does the competition keep on posting untrue reviews about you? Find a way to make them stop. Does your brand need more positive reviews? Get strategizing to encourage happy customers to share their experience with you.

It also helps when you divide your goals into immediate ones versus the mid-term and the long-term. That way, you can prioritize better and can audit your accomplishments more clearly.

Is it necessary to conduct a reputation audit?

Yes. Again, you won't know how far you've come if you don't mark where you started. Write down all measurable info about your current reputation online, compare it to your goals, and set a game plan on bridging the two. Some of the most common things you can measure in your audit are:

- Your brand's average customer rating on review sites
- The number of positive results on Google when searching for your business
- The number of likes you have on Facebook
- The number of complaints your help desk receives in a specific period of time
- Your brand's Klout Score

These are just examples of measurable data you can base your goals and strategy upon. It's also essential to remember to set a timeline for these items so you know how often to conduct your audits and adjust any items needed.

Conducting Online Reputation Damage Control

Now that you're clearer on what the problem is and what your goals are, it's time to do some damage control. Consider the following questions when putting out some fires related to your online reputation.

Can you remove negative reviews?

It depends. If the reviews are posted on your space – your Facebook page, website, or YouTube channel – then you have the last say on what content gets to stay. You can remove anything negative about your brand and push the more positive comments on top of the pages. Some online personalities do this with the goal of fostering only positive thoughts on their spaces, especially in the comments thread in YouTube. You really can't blame them. YouTube is infamous for having some of the most vicious commenters in the entire World Wide Web. If the threads are not moderated, it can get quite ugly.

However, you need to be careful when deleting negative comments and reviews. There's a difference between removing a mean note from an online troll to removing a valid complaint from a customer. The former is understandable and usually necessary. The latter can send the wrong message to your audience – it might be construed as censorship and can have a negative effect in how your brand is perceived.

In cases like this, it's better to let the reviews stay – as long as they're not disrespectful – and just respond to them. This can be a great opportunity for you to give your audience a first-hand look into how your business handles criticisms and customer complaints.

How do you respond to bad reviews?

Very professionally. Here's a helpful guideline when replying to negative reviews online.

- ✓ ***Focus on the main issue and gear your response towards it***. Some reviews can go on and on since one of the reasons why customers write them is to vent, so you need to be the one to hone in on the specific cause of the complaint. Once you've dissected it, construct your reply with that issue as the main focus. This will

simplify the conversation, temper the emotions involved, and save everybody's time.

✓ ***Do some background research***. Arm yourself with as much context as possible regarding the customer's issue. If they're complaining about a delay in their order, check the appropriate department and confirm the order info. If they're unsatisfied with how your help desk handled their previous issue, go through the documentation and see what else could have been done. Don't reply without getting all your facts first. It's also important that you find out if the issue is an isolated or recurring one so you take the right steps in making sure it doesn't happen again.

✓ ***Be polite and earnest***. Apologize for the issue and thank the customer for taking the time to let you know about it. Starting with something simple but sincere like this will go a long way to making your customer feel better.

✓ ***Identify yourself***. Make sure the customer knows who you are and how you're connected with the company. This will let them know that the right people are paying attention and they're being taken seriously.

✓ ***Be prompt***. Nothing gets upset customers more upset than when they think they've been ignored. Always make it a point to reply to complaints within 24 to 48 hours. You want to make sure your side of the story is heard way before other people control the narrative.

Maintaining Your Online Reputation

Performing damage control is not enough when you want to be consistent in managing your online reputation. Once you've put out the more critical fires, it's essential that you have a plan in place that focuses on the upkeep. In online reputation management, being reactive is only good if you're catching up. After that, the goal is to be proactive. That means monitoring, tracking, and constantly updating.

Can you prevent any more bad reviews?

Realistically, you can't – unless you tirelessly censor every mention online that puts your business in a negative light. In which case, you should probably stop because it's not a very productive use of your time.

There will always be someone who won't be very impressed with you or your product or your service, and they might get very vocal about it. You can't really stop them from doing so, but you can mitigate the damage those reviews can cause.

What are the ways of lessening the damage from bad reviews?

- ✓ ***Regulate the narrative***. Since you can't control exactly what people say about you, then it's better that they talk about you where you can see them. This means inviting the conversation to happen in your space – your Facebook page, your website, or your Twitter account. If you have no FB page, create one. If you don't have a customer feedback form, publish one.

  If there's a way to directly address the business when there's an issue about their product or service, most consumers will use it. Only when that's unavailable will most of them resort to grumbling on their personal FB account or going on a Twitter rant. You don't want them to do that. You want the conversation to

happen in your space not only so you're updated but also to make sure you have the capability to moderate it.

- ✓ *Boost the positive*. Post regular updates on all your spaces that put your business in a positive light. This does not only mean good reviews, but basically anything that reinforces the quality of your brand. Share helpful articles related to your industry, upload funny images that also make your audience think, update your status with pertinent info on anything your audience will find useful. Do this regularly, so your prospects and current customers find this first in your spaces and not the bad reviews.

- ✓ *Monitor and track*. Don't let your reputation get away from you anymore. Set up tracking and monitoring for your brand, business, and keywords to make sure that you're informed any time anyone says something about you online.

What's the best way of monitoring and tracking your online reputation? The goal now is to be on top of the conversation. You're already aware of the general audience consensus and have done some considerable work into repairing any damage caused by any lack of online reputation management. At this point, you just want to be kept abreast and just using basic Google search is not going to cut it anymore.

You now need the big guns. That means a tool or software that's designed for online reputation monitoring. How these usually work is you set up the tool with the keywords you want monitored – your business name, your competitor's, the keyword for your industry, etc. – and the tool will send you an alert when these words are pinged, giving you an opportunity to deal with any issue as soon as it pops.

What features do you need in an online reputation monitoring tool?

- ✓ **_Real-time updates._** Look for a software that you can configure to send alerts as soon as you get an online mention. Many will only send you one email a day and others will require you to log in to the software to access your notifications. These are acceptable options for everyday routine monitoring, but if you're dealing with a launch or something time-sensitive where you want to be notified as soon as someone mentions your brand or name, then it pays to already have real-time update capability in your tool.

- ✓ **_Unlimited keywords monitoring._** This means you're looking for a tool that lets you set it up with as many keywords and names to track as you think necessary. The most common limit is five keywords per account, and that won't do when you're tracking not only one business and its competitors and keywords, but others as well.

- ✓ **_Unlimited results._** Some tools have a cap on how many results they can send per month depending on the package you've purchased. You want the software that will send you as many mentions as your keywords can generate.

- ✓ **_Direct links to your mentions._** For ease of access, you want a tool that takes you to where your keyword was pinged without you having to leave the tool itself.

- ✓ **_Ability to track all over the internet._** You want your tool to be able to scour Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, forums, news sites – you get the idea. There's no point of paying for something that only tracks news sites and ignores the discussion happening on social media. You need to have access to all.

Do you also need to focus on good reviews?

Definitely. They say you need at least five good reviews to counteract one bad one. Find those good reviews as well. Be approachable to happy customers. You want them to post about their positive experience so your prospects don't just get influenced by those that wrote bad reviews.

How do we get people to post positive reviews?

You can do it directly or through some other subtler ways.

The direct method would be to offer your products for free in exchange for a review. Of course, it doesn't usually follow that the experience for the reviewer is going to be positive, but if you're confident about what you're offering, chances are they'll be writing something good about you. You can also have contests or promos where the winner will then write something about the product. This will work not only to help you get more positive reviews for your brand, but as advertising as well.

A more indirect method of encouraging your happy customers to post about you is making social media sharing buttons prominent on your online spaces. Any time you write a new blog post or record a new YouTube video, close it with something like: "Have a story to share about our product? Email us, leave a comment, or post your story in our Facebook page!" Most of the time, your audience want others to know how much they like your product, they just need to be reminded.

The rising popularity of social media and the internet has made online reputation management a necessity for all kinds of businesses. It's not just a witty phrase marketers throw around anymore. It's become an

essential part of how you take care of your brand. Be vigilant when it comes to protecting your online reputation. Know what people are saying about you and make sure you have the tools that will help you track your brand and manage the conversation. Remember, bad reviews will influence prospects and can cost new customers while proactive reputation management will engender loyal consumers and invite more. Give your brand's reputation the focus and work it deserves.

For CUTTING EDGE

Reputation software

Go to: 1REPWARN.COM