reputation rhino

ONLINE
REPUTATION
MANAGEMENT

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE

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AN INTRODUCTION TO
ONLINE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

"You never get a second chance to make a first impression."

This idea is the essence of reputation management, whether you are an individual or a multinational corporation.

You influence the perceptions of others every single day, in the ways in which you interact with colleagues, family, friends, and strangers. You inspire by expressing your passions, lead by example, and encourage and motivate with words and action. But occasionally, everyone will slip up; someone will disagree with something you say or do. And just like that, your reputation can be ruined.

Source: https://www.flipkart.com/
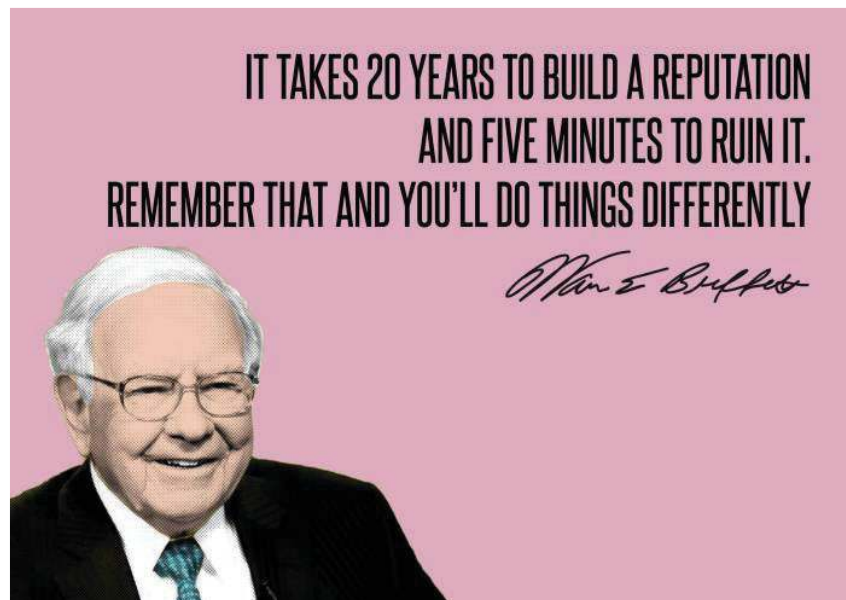
In the digital age, our first impressions are usually made online. One bad review, scathing evaluation or negative news story jumps from the screen, and once noticed, is nearly impossible to forget.

What does everyone see? That one moment of failure.

What does everyone talk about? That one black mark.

And what does everyone think about before they make their decision to hire, purchase, call or connect? Too often, that one, tiny imperfection.

According to a recent study, 78% of the respondents said they believe it is very important to look up information about people and/or businesses online before deciding to interact or do business with them and 74% would most likely refuse to interact or do business with a person or company if they found negative information about them online.

Online Reputation Management involves a combination of marketing, public relations, legal, and search engine optimization (SEO) strategies to promote, protect, and defend your online image or business reputation.

Online Reputation Management works to change your image in your favor, to highlight your strengths, the benefits of your products and services or emphasize your business's remarkable achievements.

Online reputation management is critically important for individuals, brands, and businesses that want to build a positive reputation, not just bury negative press and bad reviews.

Let's delve deeper into the world of Online Reputation Management: how it started, how it has evolved, what it looks like today and how you can use Online Reputation Management to build your personal reputation and turbocharge your business.

Reputation Management: A Brief History

The history of Online Reputation Management (ORM), tells the story of the evolution of a rather simple concept: Influencing Public Image. From the dawn of time, men and women moved forward together only after one rudimentary element was in place. That element was Trust.

Millions of years ago, when a band of men and women were planning to migrate to a greener plateau, trust had to first be established among the people. They had to believe that safety, security, and abundance awaited them on the other side if they were going to risk their lives trying to settle there.

More than 4000 years ago, a tablet was carved to convince Sumerian farmers of the best planting and growing processes, to establish trust with a move that closely resembles today's public relations.

Later, in India, investigators loomed in the shadows to gather information and report back to their rulers. This was used as a method for determining the state of mind of its citizens so that perceptions could be influenced before any unrest surfaced.

Plato was one of the first to recognize the power of reputation management in ancient Greece. He even banned poetry that had been written to influence public opinion—primarily because it was so effective.

Fast forward through medieval Europe's business guilds, the Magna Carta, the Peasants' Revolt, wandering minstrels delivering royal messages during the Middle Ages, newspaper articles publishing conflicting stories before, during and after wartime…to today's primary mode of communication, the Internet, and it's relatively easy to follow the history and development of Online Reputation Management.

The concept is the same as it's always been: Trust-Building and the Influencing Public Image. Not much has changed except the way we communicate; we're still saying, "trust me…and here's why." What has changed is the scale and speed with which reputations develop and shift.

Never, in the history of the world, has communications been able to spread so far, so fast. Never have so many people been free to express their opinions, weigh in on global news, or change perceptions with just a few keystrokes—regardless of their credentials or expertise. And that is where reputation management takes a dramatic turn. An errant tweet, email, or blog post can now take on a life of its own in minutes.

Does that mean every persona, every organization or business, has to resort to being vulnerable to online trolls and armchair experts? Not at all. If the history of reputation management has taught us one thing, it's this: ORM is no longer just damage control, employed for emergencies or in a crisis. It's part of a comprehensive communications strategy that builds a wall protecting personal and corporate brands, so they're strong enough to withstand any significant damage.

Now that you have a better understanding of reputation management's history, it's time to get to know today's ORM.

Know the importance of ORM (Online Reputation Management) and ultimate free tips to improve business reputation which also helps in brand building

Online Reputation Management Today

What does modern ORM look like? You may have a general idea. You might know that it involves managing perceptions so you can build a reputable, trustworthy, and credible identity for yourself and/or your business.

Source: https://birdeye.com/

What you might not know is that until fairly recently, it was a public relations term for the action of public relations, legal, technology, and communications professionals swooping in during a moment of crisis to save a company's reputation.

Many of the tactics that used to work for online reputation management no longer work. For example, exact match domains on .com, .net, and .org used to all rank on Page 1 for most keywords. This is no longer the case. Press releases have a short life on Page 1 and the majority of links in most publications are now "no follow" – reducing their SEO effectiveness.

Google has penalized several well-known reputation management companies for manipulating search results.

Today, online reputation management is more of an ongoing effort—an active feature of most personal and business brand management strategies. In the past, it was primarily defense. Now, it's mostly offense – a proactive response to the slings and arrows of our digital age.

Let's share a brief story. In 2012, Reputation Rhino was a local advertiser on WABC radio in New York City. We bought a block of advertising to appear anytime throughout the day. A Reputation Rhino ad run during Rush Limbaugh's radio show in March right in the middle of the controversy surrounding Mr. Limbaugh's comments about Georgetown Law School student Sandra Fluke.

Various organizations launched a boycott against advertisers on Rush Limbaugh's radio program and Reputation Rhino unexpectedly found itself right in the middle of a PR disaster, facing a barrage of angry emails, phone calls, and tweets. Reputation Rhino founder and CEO Todd William took to Twitter to publicly announce the company's decision to stop advertising on Limbaugh's show.

The message which went out to Reputation Rhino's 8,000+ Twitter followers: "Our repu-tation is our most important asset @reputationrhino will no longer advertise on The Rush Limbaugh Show." The response was immediate. The tweet was picked up by media across the country and Reputation Rhino received over 1600 emails in the next 48 hours praising their decision.

The immediacy and reach of Twitter allowed Reputation Rhino to make a bold statement and turn a crisis into a tremendous PR opportunity for our company.

The crisis for our company lasted about two days, but the lessons learned have stayed with us for nine years, and counting.

A strategic approach to Online Reputation Management can change a crisis into an opportunity.
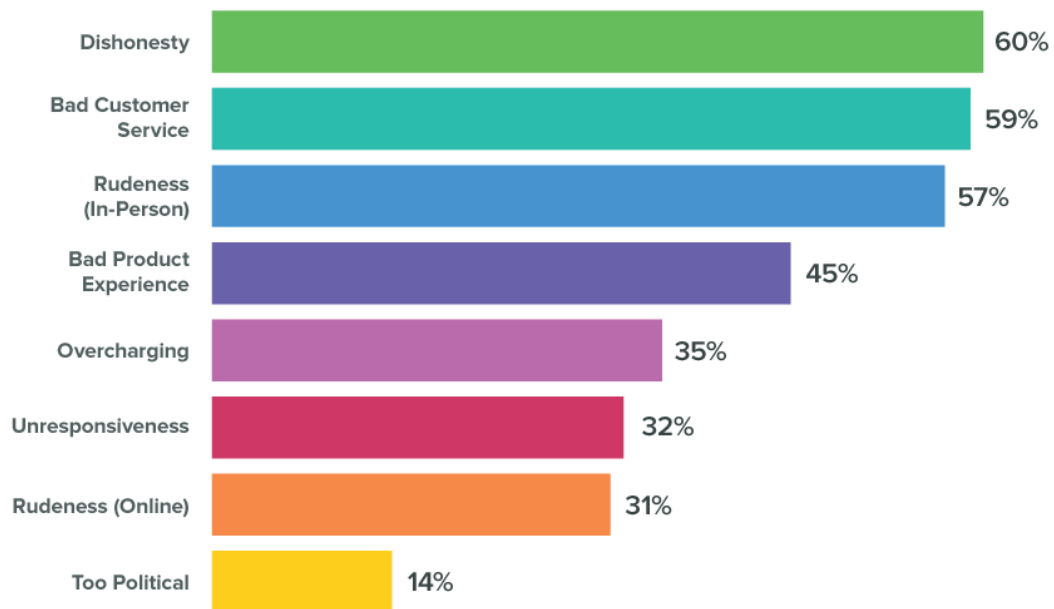
What is the Cancel Culture?

Cancel culture is the attempt by a vocal minority or majority to silence an individual or business from the public sphere – essentially to "cancel" that person or company. Today, we see this trend online via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and other viral channels — and this groundswell or tidal wave quickly bleeds into the "real" non-digital world.

Why Consumers Call Out Brands on Social

Q3 2017

Category	Percentage
Dishonesty	60%
Bad Customer Service	59%
Rudeness (In-Person)	57%
Bad Product Experience	45%
Overcharging	35%
Unresponsiveness	32%
Rudeness (Online)	31%
Too Political	14%

sproutsocial

sproutsocial.com/index

Source: https://sproutsocial.com/

The Problem with Cancel Culture

Cancel culture has always existed – at least since ancient times and I can easily imagine cavemen getting shut down or shut out for heresy. The word "ostracism" is derived from the Ancient Greek and the idea of the "scarlet letter" is nearly 300 years old now.

Remember people tried to cancel Abraham, Jesus, Socrates, Mohammad, Martin Luther, Gandhi, Martin Luther King – it's just that today everything is moving much faster, we have a louder microphone and our voices are amplified.

There will be a counter-revolution to all this tearing down online. Europe has taken some very bold steps over the past few years toward individual privacy and giving people more of a say in what is said about them online, the United States will, one day, inevitably follow.

Even in this cancel culture era, we cannot forget about forgiveness. We can close the door, but we don't need to lock it and throw away the key. We all make mistakes. It's humbling, but it's true. If we offer people a chance to come back and learn from those mistakes we will have a better, more productive, and happier society.

We have this strange fascination with tearing people down and watching people self-destruct, it must somehow feed our insecurity, but we also love the comeback story. It's an amazing irony. Brittany Spears, Justin Bieber, Mike Tyson, Robert Downey Jr., Bill Clinton they all suffered spectacular, often-self-inflicted falls, but were able to find their way back and rebuild their reputation. And for public figures, even though they have access to crisis communications professional, the best online reputation management companies and PR experts, it is in some ways harder because there every move is followed and dissected by the media.

For ordinary people, when we do a mistake, we don't have to worry about flashing cameras wherever we go. We have the chance, if not to turn back the clock, to at least turn the page.

So, it is possible to repair a damaged reputation, but it will take work.

What to Do If You are a Victim of the Cancel Culture

First, Breathe. You are not your worst mistake. You are in the middle of the storm and there is thunder, lightning all around, you can't see very far ahead and it's raining. But because we live in a 24/7 news cycle, it means that soon someone else's mistake will follow yours. So, take a deep breath and know that this too will pass.

Next, Listen. This is the hardest part. People can be incredibly cruel, hateful and hurtful online. But try and dig a little deeper to find out what it was
that made people so upset and angry. You may find some uncomfortable, but important truth.

AND

Learn. I think our biggest mistakes can be our best lessons. From this traumatic experience of being on the receiving end of cancel culture, we can learn to be a better person, more understanding, more
forgiving, and emerge a better, more professional employee or executive.

FINALLY

Take action. After an appropriate time of introspection and self-improvement you can start to change the narrative. Charity, philanthropy, religion, writing a blog, starting a new business venture can all be proactive ways to turn things around.
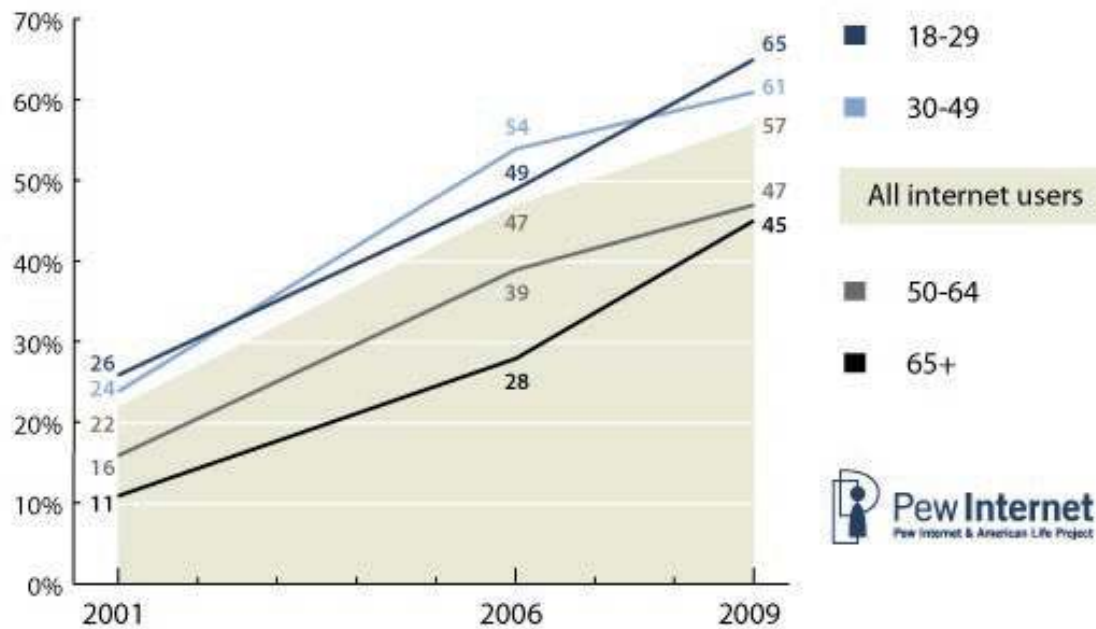
You have an online reputation; most people do. If you're not convinced, just Google your name.

Searching for ourselves

The % of internet users who have ever used an online search engine to look up their own name or see what information about them is on the internet, by age group.

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Survey, August 18-September 14, 2009. Margin of error is plus or minus 2 percentage points for results based on all adults [n=2,253]. For smaller subgroups, the margin of error may be larger. Please see the Methodology section for details.

Source: https://www.pewresearch.org/

So the question isn't, "Do you have an online reputation?" The question is, "What kind of online reputation do you have?"

If you're not paying attention to what's going on with your online reputation, you may be in for a surprise. What do I mean by that? Misrepresentations and malicious gossip can develop a life of its own and damage your name.

Here's how it happens:

1. Someone makes a negative comment about you or writes a negative review about your product or business.
2. Others notice, and they share it, creating links and generating more and more views.
3. Those links and shares get plenty of attention because negative content always gets lots of clicks.
4. All those clicks result in a higher search engine ranking for that negative content.
5. Those high Google rankings get the attention of others, and they promote the damaging link(s) as well.
6. The social media crowd gets involved, hoping to jump on the viral bandwagon.

And the worst part? If you're not actively engaged in Online Reputation Management, you won't notice until your name has been smeared across the web. The damage could be irreparable.

But why be so concerned about information that's only online?

294 million Americans use the internet for research, shopping, and socialization. That's 90% of the population who might be…

- Your children, parents, other family members or friends looking to learn more about you
- People who want to date you
- Professionals who are considering doing business with you
- Potential customers and clients
- Landlords considering renting to you
- Exes who want to know what you're up to
- Consumers looking for solutions to their problems
- Employers interested in hiring you
- College admissions departments considering your application
- Insurance professionals evaluating risk
- Other professionals seeking to connect with you

… all using what they learn about you on the internet to make decisions.

Your online reputation is your reputation.

To fully understand Online Reputation Management, it can help to envision it in action. For instance, any negative online review about your business should be met with...

▶ ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Acknowledge the reviewer's discomfort or dissatisfaction, in as rapid a manner as possible, in the same forum where the criticism appeared.

▶ APPRECIATION

Next, thank the reviewer for their feedback, and for sharing their experience. Show gratitude for this information, letting them know their comments will help you to improve your product, customer service, business processes, etc.

▶ APOLOGY

Even if you don't feel sorry, taking responsibility and expressing regret that someone is dissatisfied will go a long way in diffusing their anger and reducing the impact of the negative review.

▶ ACTION

Tell the reviewer how you intend to proceed, the changes you intend to make, or the solution you intend to find. Follow up with the outcome.

Ignoring a negative review is not going to make it go away. It puts your reputation in the hands of competitors who can and will profit from inaction or overreaction. Handling it promptly, and demonstrating the positive side of your brand for all to see, becomes imperative.

Customer service is another effective Online Reputation Management strategy. By integrating outstanding customer service at all levels of your company, you will build a reputation that can overcome an online attack.

Just like responding to a negative review, when there is a customer service failure, Acknowledge, Appreciate, Apologize, and Act. Know your customers well enough to understand what will make them happy, and use your exchange with them to rebuild a relationship that is stronger after the incident than it was before.

Before we move on, I have to mention the importance of dedicating resources to ORM. Individuals and businesses with the best reputations all have one thing in common: they have one person, one department or one part of every day dedicated to building their reputation online.

Those are just a few examples of what Online Reputation Management looks like. But what if something goes wrong to make the initial incident worse? Let's look at some specific instances of ORM done badly.

Bad Reputation Management

If your goal is to avoid a bad online reputation, it may be helpful to look at a few examples of bad Online Reputation Management.

So let's look at three examples of big brands making bad online reputation decisions.

FACEBOOK / CAMBRIDGE ANALYTICA

When 87 million Facebook users' data was shared with Cambridge Analytica, without consent from those users, CEO Mark Zuckerberg came forward to assure the public that the social media platform would be shifting its focus to privacy. That was great, except it was soon reported that he had failed to disclose the full scale of the data leak and subsequent infiltrations. Facebook was forced to admit that most of its 2 billion users had been vulnerable.

In a press conference that followed, it was revealed that Facebook's reference to 87 million users was just a high estimate, and they didn't know how many accounts were compromised. And despite the world knowing that a "data breach" had taken place, Facebook refused to use that phrase, further solidifying the perception that they were not fully owning up to what had happened.

And as if all this wasn't enough, the company failed to assure users that their data would be protected in the future, but that the types of user data would be limited...not exactly what their 2 billion users wanted to hear.

As this series of events unfolded, Facebook landed itself at the bottom of US RepTrak's list, a ranking of The United States' most reputable businesses. The only company farther down that list than Facebook? The Trump Organization. And the one right above it? Philip Morris with a reputation for misinformation about the dangers of tobacco.

To add insult to injury, Facebook was named the "worst-performing company of 2019" by Harris Poll Reputation Quotient.

What Zuckerberg did right was admitting that they didn't put enough effort into preventing data breaches. That apology was warranted, but the social media giant was hobbled and the company's market value plunged by billions of dollars as the scandal came to light.

And what became of Cambridge Analytica? The business's Wikipedia page now reads, "...a British political consulting firm that combined misappropriation of digital assets, data mining, data brokerage, data analysis and strategic
communication during the electoral processes."

Bad reputation management? No doubt.

BOEING 737 MAX

When a Boeing 737 Max crashed and killed 157 passengers in Ethiopia, the world mourned. But when another Boeing 737 Max fell out of the sky less than 120 days later, taking almost 350 lives, suspicion and anger started to mount.

The tragic loss of life could never be replaced or restored, but the bad Online Reputation Management example set by the company was a tragedy in its classification.

Boeing's CEO responded to the calamities with defensiveness, asserting that there was no need to ground the plane (even though airlines around the world were doing just that). He even bucked the FAA's decision to ground all 737 Maxes.

If you could define a proactive approach, Muilenburg did the exact opposite. And to make it worse, once the information came out that a brand-wide software failure was the root cause of the crashes, Boeing fell silent.

Boeing could have been more careful in their testing and pilot training for sure, but beyond that, after the first crash, they could have been more forthright, halted production and showed a concerted company-wide effort to find the cause of the malfunctions. But now, because they broke every rule for reputation management, they spent billions in groundings and repairs—and that's nothing compared to the cost of damage to their reputation.

NFL / COLIN KAEPERNICK

When San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick first sat down during the national anthem in the 2016 preseason to protest police brutality and violence, no one noticed. It wasn't until a few games later, when he switched to kneeling, that the media started to ask questions… and a firestorm broke loose.

Despite backing from the 49ers, the NFL was largely silent during this time. When the season ended, the team did not re-sign Kaepernick, and he filed a grievance against the NFL.

In 2018, the NFL released a statement saying that any player who kneels on the field would be fined. They also attempted to deny Kaepernick's grievance (but failed).

Then in 2019, when Kaepernick didn't show for an NFL workout session but instead ran his own at a different site, the National Football League didn't end it with a simple, "we were disappointed in his decision." Instead, it went into a long, bullet-pointed diatribe about why Colin Kaepernick was wrong, with enough details and background to make the defensiveness of their response palatable.

The lesson encapsulated in this bad reputation management example isn't about who's right or who's wrong. It's about demonstrating that there are multiple sides to a story, and not cultivating an atmosphere of vengeance for the whole world to witness doesn't play well on social media or too many minority football fans who saw Kaepernick's stand as one of principle and courage, in response to systemic institutional racism.

Even when you have something to defend, defensiveness is never a good way to manage your reputation. This situation would have been better handled by the NFL had it acknowledged the objections of its players and responded in a timely, evenhanded manner. The NFL could have collectively worked toward an agreeable private resolution that could satisfy its high-profile employees, its fans, and its owners.

Best Examples of Reputation Management

Now that you've seen how not to handle a crisis or manage a reputation, let's take a look at some good examples of Online Reputation Management. These companies followed the formula: Acknowledgment, Appreciation, Apology and Action.

JETBLUE

JetBlue Airlines' reputations have been pummeled over the past few years. From forceful passenger ejections, to disorderly employee conduct, to equipment malfunction, to the spread of disease... it seems that no airline is immune.

However, JetBlue has made the conscious decision to approach reputation management with a proactive, offensive game focused on customer service.

Whenever a criticism comes in, JetBlue's reputation management team responds directly and promptly. They communicate clearly, and come up with a resolution that has something positive for everyone. They are, in essence, ahead of the curve and in a much better position than most, should something threatens their good reputation.

Here's one example of how JetBlue's swift action found its way to Twitter, which further enhances their brilliant online reputation:

https://twitter.com/MattBarrie/status/1238220355157794816

NIKE

When you're a brand as big as Nike, it can be difficult to keep track of everything necessary for Online Reputation Management. However, if we look to Nike, we see they have established a dedicated handle (@TeamNike) specifically for resolving customer service issues.

The bigger a brand gets the more essential Online Reputation Management is. It might seem that these big companies are impervious to reputation damage; but remember, the bigger they are, the harder they fall.

A social media page, just for customer complaints, is a terrific way to manage everything that's rolling in—but there's more. Anyone who goes there, prepared to write a scathing post, will see how professionally, and in what a timely manner, problems are addressed. In many cases, this alone can put out the fire—maybe even stop that bad review in its tracks:

https://twitter.com/teamnike/status/1124691896280989696

And to reference back to the Colin Kaepernick story, Nike decided to wade head-first into the controversy by having Kaepernick star in a dramatic televised ad to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Nike's "Just Do It" Campaign. The ad featured the slogan: "Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything."

The decision netted Nike a sneaker launch that sold out in its very first day, priceless PR as every media outlet featured the commercial and story with generally favorable coverage and an Emmy Award for best commercial.

ZAPPOS

Zappos has always had a reputation for treating its employees to a unique workplace culture with things like team-building activities, an in-house library, relaxation areas, food and drink discounts, casual dress code and the freedom to express themselves.

Zappos' good reputation doesn't end there, though. Employee contentment spread to the company's customer base, with extraordinary customer service and complaint resolution that, get this…employees are happy to deliver.

The company never contests returns, it expects problems, has strategic solutions in the wings, and gives every customer tailored communication experience. What does that look like in action? Deciding what it will take to make a disgruntled customer happy, and then going far beyond that.

For instance, Zappos had an employee deliver a pair of out-of-stock shoes to a customer's hotel room, and they overnighted a pair of shoes to the best man AND refunded his money to avoid putting a damper on a wedding day.

Among Online Reputation Management best examples is Zappos, a company that nurtures its reputation from the inside-out:

https://twitter.com/DRGNTIII/status/1193275218279550976

A Few More Words About Online Reputation Management

Most people believe what they see online. Despite repeated mantras like, "Don't believe everything you read on the Internet," we are still conditioned to adopt what we see and read as truth. We regularly hear stories about imposter Twitter accounts and fake news, but still, our psyches have been conditioned to believe that an Oz-like gatekeeper is guaranteeing the truthfulness of what we read online.

Sorry to pull-back the proverbial curtain… There is no such gatekeeper.

Most of us have learned the hard way that Wiki is NOT Encyclopedia Britannica, and that Facebook is NOT the Discovery Channel. And yet, people cling to blind belief—especially when the information is scandalous. We are living in the digital age, and are highly dependent on the Internet, but human nature is still at the root of everything created, shared and consumed online.

That's why ORM is no longer optional. It's no longer a reasonable business practice to wait and hope that the truth will surface online or that your best self will emerge from the wreckage of a PR disaster.

94% of people have said that just one negative review will prevent them from making a purchase (ReviewTrackers).

If you want something better for your business, it's time to learn about the different types of Online Reputation Management.
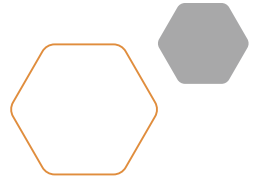
TYPES OF
ONLINE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

You own a business or manage a non-profit. You deliver superior customer service and you work hard to make sure your products and services are top-notch, and your online reviews reflect that. People recognize your efforts. They sing your praises. And that's good for your business and your business reputation management.

But not everyone loves what you're doing. A few people leave their mark with a vicious single-star and angry emoji reviews.

And just like that, your business's reputation is at risk.

But does it have to stay there?

With business review management, you can shift the overall review quotient of your company, eCommerce sites where your products are sold, your social media pages, others' social media feeds, blogs, forums, aggregate review-gathering apps like Yelp, and more… so they're overwhelmingly positive.

Types of Online Reputation Management

There are several different types of reputation management. Reputation repair commonly refers to projects where the client has clearly identifiable negative search results appearing on Page 1 for their name or business. The goal of a reputation repair campaign is either removal (if possible) or suppression.

The other type of reputation management is reputation building. In a reputation building campaign, the focus is online public relations, and we are trying to create new content and optimize existing search results to build a wall of positive and neutral content on Page 1 to make it difficult for negative search results to ever rank. We try to own, control or influence as many highly visible search results as possible, so Page 1 is essentially a billboard for the client.

Critically important to either reputation repair or reputation building is the responsibility to closely monitor online mentions and conversations across a wide variety of sources — organic search results, images, videos, online conversations and mentions on social media. You cannot effectively manage an individual or business reputation if you do not know what is being said about you or your business.

▶ ONLINE REVIEWS

Online reviews are comments, statements or ratings by users about a product or service. Online reviews are how potential clients and customers discover, evaluate, and develop trust for your company. 97% search online to find local businesses and 95% of consumers read online reviews for local businesses. 85% of consumers trust online reviews as much as a personal recommendation.

▶ SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT (SMM)

Social media management involves posting content, promoting user engagement, responding to messages and growing fans and followers on selected social channels.

▶ SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)

Top search engine rankings are achieved through a combination of on-page and off-page activities on an ongoing basis. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process of positioning your website to rank highly in search results, making your website more visible to people who are looking for your company, your products or your services.

▶ CONTENT REMOVAL

Content removal refers to the deletion of articles, images, videos, sometimes an entire website. In contrast to suppression, with content removal, the content is no longer accessible online.

▶ REPUTATION MONITORING

Reputation monitoring enables you to track, in real-time, online mentions of your name, brand or company. It involves discovering where conversations are taking place, what people are saying and who are the key influencers — measuring sentiment and following trends.

▶ SPAM BOTS

Spam bots are computerized programs designed to send spam e-mail and other junk messages to users. Spam messages account for approximately 54 percent of e-mail traffic (March 2020).

▶ NEGATIVE SEO

Negative SEO refers to using search engine optimization tactics to damage the search engine ranking of a competitor's website through tactics designed to exploit and take a dvantage of the algorithm of Google and other search engines. Examples can include hacking, spamming, "bad neighborhood" link building (e.g., to porn or gambling sites) and other "black hat" tactics. Negative SEO may also be used to reduce the visibility or influence of negative search results.

▶ ASTROTURFING

Astroturfing is the practice of creating the appearance or illusion of widespread support for a personality, brand or public policy. Companies, lobbyists, PR companies, marketing firms, nonprofits, or activist organizations are often the "hidden hand" behind these efforts. While there are legal restrictions on astroturfing in connection with commercial advertising, in an era of widespread distrust of the media and increasing reliance on crowdsourcing, it is be coming more and more common practice.

▶ REPUTATION MARKETING

Reputation marketing refers to using online reviews, social media buzz, endorsements on popular online forums, press releases and positive news articles to bolster the image of an individual or company. Not only does this serve to support your branding and strengthen your overall messaging, but it makes it more difficult for negative content to damage the brand

▶ THE STREISAND EFFECT

Sometimes efforts to suppress or hide negative or private information can have the unintended consequence of further publicizing the information, particularly online. The phrase alludes to the 2003 efforts by Barbra Streisand to sue a photographer for violation of privacy that inadvertently resulted in considerable adverse publicity for the singer.

Business Review Management

Online reviews are today's word-of-mouth advertising. When we used to ask friends and neighbors for recommendations and referrals, we're now asking strangers. 91% of 18- to 34-year-old consumers trust in-person recommendations and online reviews equally (BrightLocal).

All of this means more reviews, more information… but it also means more reviewers with keyboard courage. It means more people with ulterior motives, and more competitors disguised as customers. And there is a tendency for reviews to slant negative, even if genuine sentiments are overwhelmingly positive.

How can a consumer know what's real and what isn't when the era of fake news also means fake reviews?

It used to be a potential customer could drive past a restaurant, see that the parking lot was full, and know the food was good. Now they have more information, but less first-hand information. Just last year, 86% of people said that negative reviews affected their buying decisions (Dimensional Research), while 94% said that one bad online review steered them away from a business (ReviewTrackers), while most of them said they wouldn't buy from a business with an overall rating of less than 3.3 stars (Podium).

And that's why your business needs to be putting its best word-of-mouth forward, with business review management.

Review management is one type of Online Reputation Management, and involves monitoring all reviews, addressing poor reviews and increasing the number of positive reviews.

Monitor Your Online Reviews

Set aside time every week (or better yet, every day) to check for new online reviews of your business. Check sites where your products are sold, your social media business page reviews, Yelp, Angie's List, Google, Superpages, Yellow Pages…and the list goes on.

Claim your online business profiles on review sites (Yelp, FourSquare, Facebook, Google My Business, TripAdvisor) so you'll know when a new review is posted.

I also recommend setting up Google Alerts with your name, the name of your business, the name of your product, etc. so you'll know when your business is being talked about online.

Address Negative Reviews

You must know about negative reviews as soon as they happen, so make sure you're checking for them regularly and setting up as many alerts as possible.

If a negative review does come to your attention, remember the formula we talked about in Chapter One: Acknowledge, Appreciate, Apologize and Act. Not only will this show the customer (and everyone else on that platform) that you care about their experience, 34% of people who have written bad reviews will delete them if their concerns are addressed by the business (RightNow). Remember the huge impact that negative reviews have. Eliminating just one negative review will have a significantly positive immediate influence on your business's reputation.

And one more thing about negative reviews: You might be tempted to only deal with those that are most damaging. Instead, read every review and address every review – positive or negative. It's always better to get ahead of a problem than to try dealing with it after it's blown up. And for the positive reviews, a simple thank you and show of appreciation is a great way to build loyalty.

Multiply Positive Reviews

An overall positive review is rooted in ratios. The larger the review ratio, the better. In other words, a 1:100 negative-positive review ratio is much better than a 1:10 ratio. You can and should work to diminish your negative reviews. You can and should also work to increase the number of positive reviews. Both approaches broaden your overall review ratio, for the better, and both approaches are used in a comprehensive business review management strategy.

How can you make that happen?

The first method is to simply ask for positive reviews. Identify your most loyal, satisfied customers. Has every one of them already posted a review? If not, just ask. In most cases, they will be happy to oblige.

Also, encourage new customers to post a review if they like your product or service.

Finally, tout those positive reviews! Publish a testimonials page on your website, share positive reviews on social media, publicly thank your reviewers and let them know that seeing them happy makes you happy. When the consuming public starts to see all the positive reviews your business has, they will be more likely to speak highly of your brand, too. It's human nature.

Source: https://www.reputationrhino.com/

Whatever you do, avoid paying for fake reviews, and do not write positive reviews yourself. Both are disingenuous and unethical, and you will be found out.

What is Content Marketing?

Brand awareness is an essential growth strategy that can help position you or your company brand awareness was the number one objective of every business surveyed.

Content marketing is focused on creating, publishing, and distributing content for your target audience online to drive consumer action, such as brand awareness, lead generation or sales.

60%
of consumers **enjoy** reading relevant **content** from brands

82%
of consumers **feel** more positive about a **company** after reading custom content

70%
of consumers **feel** closer to a company as a result of content marketing

Source: https://instapage.com/

Types of Content Marketing

Content marketing can include blogs, press releases, white papers, research reports, guest articles, social media posts. Even contributing quotes and insight into new and existing content can be an effective form of content marketing.

▶ BLOG MARKETING

Companies that blog get 97 percent more inbound links, 55 percent more website visitors and generate 88 percent more inbound leads than those who do not blog.

▶ PRESS RELEASES

Although press releases have lost some of their influence, for small and midsize businesses, the press release is still the preferred and most affordable channel for immediately generating widespread coverage across a wide range of news sources, from print and broadcast media, trade journals, websites (including Yahoo!, Google News, CNet News, Forbes & Bizjournals.com) and social media.

The average price for a premium press release ranges from $299 -$500 and there is no other form of content marketing that can deliver a higher ROI in a shorter period than a well-written, well-timed press release.

▶ WHITE PAPERS

White Papers are short, authoritative documents focused on a specific topic or solution to a particular problem. White papers are most often used to promote a certain product, service, or viewpoint.

▶ RESEARCH REPORTS

Research papers are longer than white papers, with more of an academic or scholarly style. In certain professions, like healthcare, academia, technology, research reports may be preferable – especially if there is peer review or specialized editing that can help ensure the completeness and accuracy of the work.

If you have enough traffic and more leads than you can handle, you probably don't need content marketing.

But if you want more links, more visitors, and more sales you need content marketing.

If you want to learn how to do content marketing, you should first look at whether any of your competitors or peers are already engaging in some of the marketing activities outlined above. You will discover that you are either the first to arrive or late to the party, but you are not too late.

Next, write down various topics that are of interest to your target audience.

For example, if you are doing content marketing for an executive recruiting or staffing company, you may want to write about topics such as: How to Write the Perfect Cover Letter; How to Improve Your Resume; What Not to Say During an Interview; or How to Negotiate for a Higher Salary.

If you are doing content marketing for a financial advisor or investment professional, you want to write about topics such as: How to Choose an Insurance Policy; How Millennials Can Pay Student Loans and Save for Retirement; or Protect Your Assets in the Event of Death or Divorce.

You are the expert. Once you have identified some of the topics that are of interest to your audience, it's time to start writing or find a company that specializes in content marketing or blog marketing to help.

One advantage that online reputation management companies can offer is access to a wide range of publishers that can publish the newly created content or magnify its visibility. For example, at Reputation Rhino we have content publishing relationships with over 3,000 blogs and news sites.

Not only do we create and promote high authority positive content, such as news articles, press releases, executive interviews, blog posts, etc. but we can support that content via advertising and link building so your content will achieve maximum search engine visibility.

A Final Word About Content Marketing

There are more online, print, radio, and television media covering individuals and businesses than at any other time in the history of the world. There is an insatiable thirst for new content, but the sheer amount of options can be dizzying and paralyzing.

If you are just getting started in content marketing, and are looking for opportunities to demonstrate thought leadership or contribute to others' content, sites like HARO (Help a Reporter Out), ProfNet and SourceBottle can connect you to media.

You will need to do personalized outreach to authors and editors that cover your industry with a short, concise description of you, your company, or your products and services and various ways we may be able to help contribute your expertise.

The outreach can result in an exclusive interview, an expert quote or analysis for an upcoming article, or simply provide background for a story.

It is particularly important to understand the number of unsolicited pitches these individuals encounter daily and articulate clearly why our client is unique.

#MeToo may be an effective public awareness movement, but for public relations, it is a certain way to get your pitch ignored. You need to offer something different from everyone else.

It is also helpful to develop a communications strategy that segments your target market so you can reach out to publications that serve that market. For example, computer programmers will be interested in a certain kind of technology content, but tech angel investors will expect something entirely different. One-size-does NOT fit all.

This is usually a longshot, but if news or reviews about your business is fake, for instance, you might have some chance for internet removal of negative content. This would be the most direct way to suppress that negative result, so if the information is untrue, speak directly to the page's publisher or go through the search engine to ask how to remove false information from the internet.

Negative content about your business can hurt its profits, its reputation, holdings, and more.

But what if that negative content involves you, personally?

Individuals

If your name is impacted by negative online search results, Google might work with you— but usually only if your bank account information, explicit images, medical records, social security number, or signature have been shared. In that case, it can be fairly simple to remove your information from Google.

But what if it's advanced beyond removing information from the Internet, and you have proof that your personal information has been used to steal your identity?

To report identity theft, contact the Federal Trade Commission by filling out an online Identity Theft Report. Close credit card and bank accounts. Report identity theft to credit bureaus. Contact the three main bureaus (Experian, TransUnion, Equifax) and inform them so they can block anyone from opening new accounts in your name. Gather evidence of fraudulent charges, (because that will come in handy if investigations ensue), then contact creditors to let them know which charges are fraudulent.

The best identity theft protection, according to Consumer Reports, is vigilance. No one can protect you against identity theft; they can only report a stolen identity and try to stop the bleeding. They can tell you if your information is being shared on the dark web, and maybe monitor or help you restore your identity. Other than that, the best course of action is attentiveness to your accounts and Googling your name regularly to check for suspicious content.

When the words "no index" are added to the code of a web page, it will not appear in Google's search results. You can ask the page's owner to do this if they won't remove the page altogether.

If the web page's owner refuses to remove the page or add a "no index" tag, you can ask that key-words and phrases related to you or your business be removed. This will prevent the page from appearing in search results when your business name is Googled, for instance.

Mitigate the Damage

If it's not a situation where you can demand the content be removed, then use the Acknowledge, Appreciate, Apologize and Act approach. Address the issue immediately, to stop the bleeding and cut down on the chances of a story going viral. This means solving the problem, whatever that may be, with the content's publisher. Then, analyze exactly what went wrong so you can reduce the chances of it happening again.

Search Engine Suppression

Search engine suppression is different than having negative content deleted. Instead, it's about flooding the internet with positive or neutral information, to push the negative stuff farther down so the first page (or pages) of search results are clear of negative content.

Remember that most people don't look past the first page of Google. The farther down the list you can push negative results, the better; however, getting them off the first page should be your number one priority.

There is a phenomenon known as SEME, or Search Engine Manipulation Effect. It has to do with search engines' power to influence perceptions and preferences. It has been suggested that 20% of internet users' opinions are affected simply by what appears high in search engine results.

That sounds like a big hill to climb, especially if you've got negative content dominating search results for your name or your business; however, the worst thing you could do is nothing.

You are not helpless in this matter. You do have the power to change the search engine results, and create a little SEME of your own.

First, you'll want to identify positive search results that appear lower down than the negative. Each one is a Positive Below Negative, or PBN.

But why are they there, farther down? Search engines wish to deliver what people want, and remember we talked about negative results being more appealing. Maybe the search engine simply doesn't see those positive results as being quite as relevant as the negative. But you can change that.

Make every PBN more attractive to Google. That means making sure you've properly optimized the keywords you've used.

SEO, or Search Engine Optimization, involves making sure that the keyword or keyword phrase appears in the metadata, descriptions, images, headings, text… and that the content contained on that page is highly relevant to its keyword.

Google also loves fresh content, so writing new stuff, like blog posts optimized for your keywords, is a great way to suppress negative pages. However, don't throw it all out there at once. For the most part, Google only wants to see one page from your website optimized for any given keyword or phrase. However, if you keep adding content that optimizes new, applicable keywords, you will boost the overall profile of your entire website.

So, as a primary course of action, work on improving your existing pages, but also maintain a steady flow of new content that is relevant to your business's SEO strategy.

If you're only on one or two social media platforms, look into others that might benefit you. If you add a Twitter account and a LinkedIn profile, for instance, they are likely to outrank all that negativity. Also look into local, regional, national, and international organizations offering memberships that come with online profiles. They, too, are likely to outrank the negative stuff. Just remember to only set up as many profiles as you can maintain. Abandoned accounts are not good for your online reputation.

Also, ensure that you own all domain names related to your name and/or your business name. This will keep others from claiming them, and you might even have reason to set up more than one website. And yes, that would be one more way to add positive, suppressive content.

If you have relationships with affiliates or other businesses, ask them to include links to your website's pages in one or two of their blog articles or social media posts. Offer to trade guest blogs with another business. Keep working on getting more positive reviews and adding more valuable content, to multiply your chances of getting mentions on other sites. This will suppress negativity.

Join social media groups (Facebook, LinkedIn) and get involved in conversations that are relevant to you or your brand. This will help to establish trust in your expertise, but it will also help to propagate your name and increase mentions and links…all of which will enhance the positivity of results with search engine suppression.

We should also address the problem of how to deal with high authority negative search results about you or your business. For instance, what if the Wall Street Journal or New York Times publishes a damaging article?

All you can do in these situations is outperform than negative content. We can't pretend to know the ins and outs of ever-changing algorithms or take a knife to a gunfight with a media giant. Eventually, they will stop promoting that content, and your best practices will result in positive links rising to the top of search results.

So, monitor that negative content, but don't allow it to cripple your ability to keep pumping out the good stuff. Continue getting those reviews, publishing informative content, addressing other, more manageable concerns…and you will win.

Suppression or removal of negative search results isn't easy. If it was, every business would have five-star reviews and every individual would boast a sterling online reputation.

Most high-profile individuals and companies will choose an experienced Online Reputation Management company to help promote positive information and minimize or eliminate the impact of damaging online content.
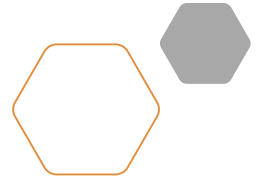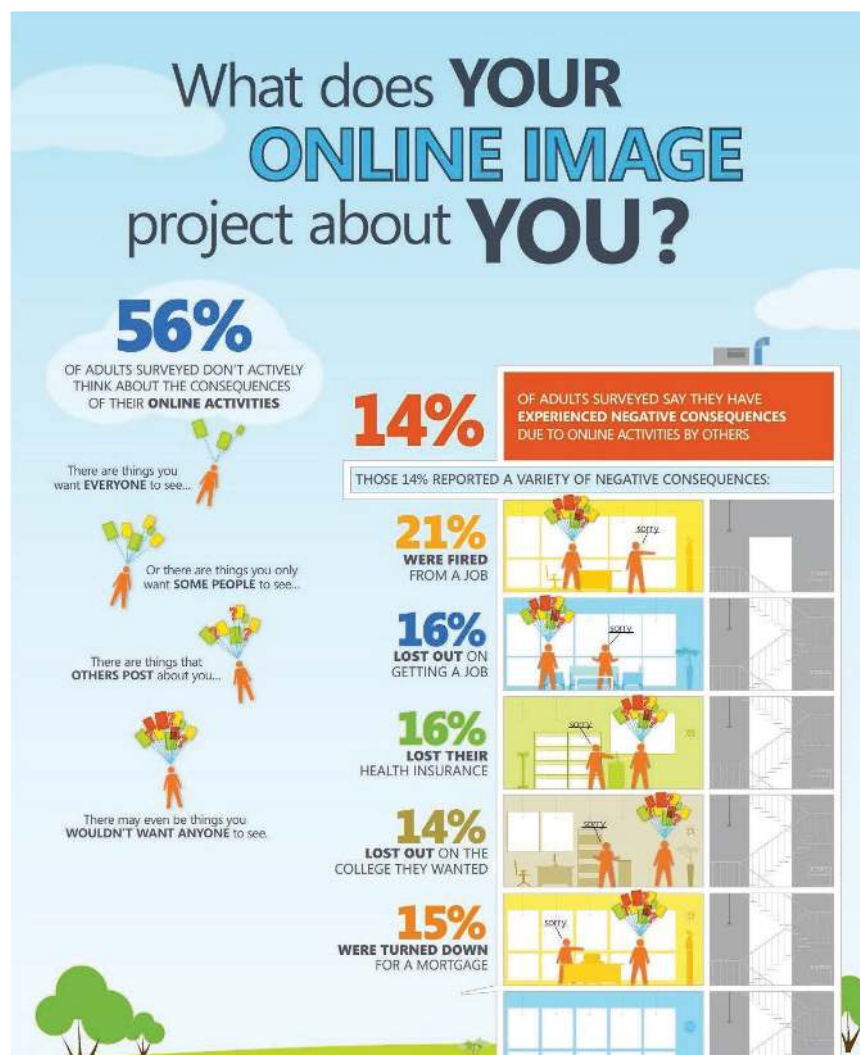
THE IMPORTANCE OF
ONLINE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

It is clear that your online reputation matters. You understand the importance of reputation in building trust and the significance of trust in building your reputation and your business.

If you've ever wondered, "Why is it important to manage your online reputation?" you're about to find out.

Source: https://www.microsoft.com/

The Harm a Bad Reputation Can Do

The importance of managing your online reputation is rooted in the need for trust. Yes, you need trust. Without trust, you can't have or keep a customer or grow a business.

A good reputation means you have secured trust—but that security is always at risk. At any moment, you are one crisis away from a bad reputation. And that's the beginning of the end for your business.

The good news is that you are in control of your business's reputation—but only if you stay informed. You should be vigilant before the phone stops ringing. I also want to discourage you from ignoring the reality of online negativity about your business.

You have an online reputation in places you've never heard of. If you've never been on Reddit with 330 million monthly users, you might be surprised to learn that there's probably content on there about you. If you've never asked or answered a question on Quora, which has 300 million monthly users, you might be shocked to find that you're referenced there, too.

It's not only imperative that you're aware of what's going on in places you don't know about, but it's also crucial that you manage your online reputation so the stuff you don't see is overwhelmingly positive.

We've already talked about what online reviews and search engine results mean to consumers. They carry a lot of weight, and if you allow them to speak for themselves, they will take on lives of their own.

So instead of letting random strangers and competitors create your reputation for you, take charge. Don't let an entire conversation begin and end about you or your business before you get there. Daily monitoring and alert-setting will allow you to arrive at (or near) the time the negativity starts— instead of walking into your own funeral, where the eulogy isn't a flattering one.

The importance of managing the online reputation for a business is also about first impressions. We all know how critical they are. If you have a bad first impression, it takes a long time to change your mind, right?

And in the Internet world, there's no time for changing minds. Those people are onto the next result before you can scream, "But it's not true!"

You've heard of the speed of sound, and the speed of light… but the speed of online challenges both. You might think you can just take the perpetrators to court later, but in truth, you will likely have no recourse. And even if you do, thousands of dollars later, that court case will likely find its way to Google and further damage your reputation.
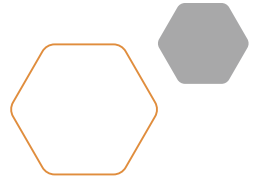
THE BENEFITS OF
ONLINE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

Before you invest in anything—even if that investment is your time—you want to know that you'll be getting more than you're giving. That's an internal calculation that everyone makes before they commit. It is the calculation of the return on investment (ROI) that drives action.

I understand. Before you learn all about ORM before you spend the time creating informative content before you comb the web for negative reviews about you… you want to know that it's going to benefit you or your business.

That's more than fair. I would want to know about all the advantages of online reputation management, too.

Online Reputation Management Advantages

When you make a determined effort to defend your online reputation, you will improve your online reputation—but it doesn't end there. All the things you are doing to build trust will also result in growing your business and expanding your social and professional network. Some are directly related to your efforts, while some could be considered fringe benefits of online business reputation management.

Source: https://yahoo.com/
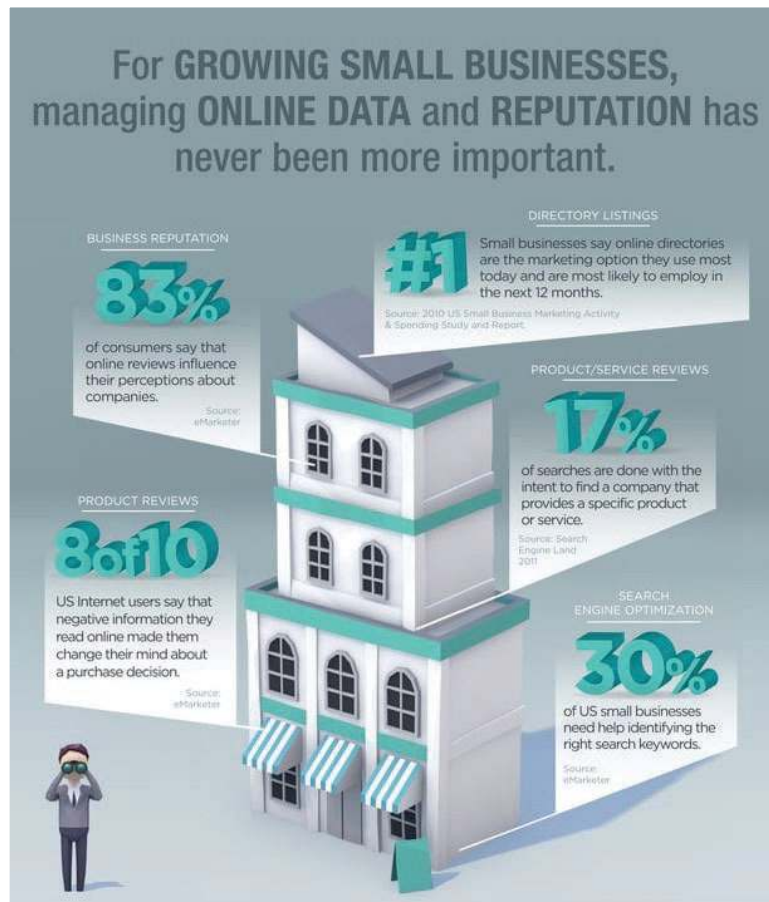
▶ INCREASED PROFITS

This is one advantage of Online Reputation Management that captures the interest of entrepreneurs and investors in all markets. An astute business owner knows how much money is coming in. The best business owners take care of cash flow daily, rather than when sales come to an abrupt halt.

One of the hidden benefits of Online Reputation Management services is that, typically, sales steadily climb. That's because you're out there, making sure customers are happy. You're consistently building trust, and as a result, consumers see that you're active and highly engaged. They notice your attention to detail and they want to learn more about your brand.

What's more, your ratings are high and your reviews are positive because of all the work you've done.

Add all that up, and you've got consumers eager to buy from you. Word spreads and profits increase.

▶ ENHANCED CREDIBILITY

When people comb the web for the right company to purchase from, they're looking for several things. In addition to free or fast shipping and reliable products, they're looking for expert status, customer satisfaction, the alignment of values, a reason to trust… all of which adds up to the perception of credibility.

When we count the benefits of online reputation management, credibility is a big one. When you're a trustworthy online business, you have authority in your industry. People believe what you say and they're willing to vouch for your sincerity by handing over their money. Yes, all that increases profits, but more than that, you have something that can't be bought, trust, and something that your competition will struggle to match.

▶ PERCEPTION CONTROL

You don't have to be a control freak to understand the importance of controlling perceptions about you and your business. You want what YOU say to affect perceptions, instead of what a random selection of strangers is saying.

When you engage in vigilant ORM, you're telling people (directly and indirectly) what you want them to believe about you and your business. That includes investors, lenders, affiliates, influencers, competitors, prospective and current employees, potential customers, existing clients, and more.

▶ HOW TO BE A THOUGHT LEADER

As you monitor online for comments, reviews, and existing content about you or your business, you're going to run into lots of opportunities to answer questions and contribute to conversations. This is thought leadership. According to a recent article in Forbes, 1) A thought leader is an individual or firm that prospects, clients, referral sources, intermediaries and even competitors recognize as one of the foremost authorities in selected areas of specialization, resulting in its being the go-to individual or organization for said expertise. 2) A thought leader is an individual or firm that significantly profits from being recognized as such."

Establishing yourself as a thought leader enhances your reputation in a way unlike any other. When you do this, you will likely be responding before the competition. You will be right there, within 24 hours of an inquiry, with helpful information. That's priceless, and you might have missed it all if it weren't for ORM.

▶ FEEDBACK

You know how high-priced business consultants are always recommending that you get feedback from customers to improve your business?

When you're involved in Online Reputation Management you don't need to always ask for that feedback. You're going to see plenty of it, simply by monitoring mentions on the internet.

Be careful not to take every suggestion or recommendation or insult to heart, though. Not every customer understands your business or has its best interests in mind. Instead, look through all those reviews and mentions for common themes and emerging trends; that's your feedback.

▶ PREPARATION

If you've ever been blindsided by a sudden industry development or crisis, you know how it can turn operations upside down.

However, ORM provides a great channel for feeling the earthquake before the tidal wave forms. Take the Coronavirus pandemic, for instance. Those business owners who took notice from the beginning and started to make contingency plans for work from home or quarantine measures when news first broke in China, were far better prepared than those who stuck their heads in the sand… surprised by mandatory closures and closed borders once it hit other countries.

Again, the benefits of Online Reputation Management reach far beyond reputation, but yet seem to circle and come to the rescue of those who take their reputations seriously.

▶ BRAND BUILDING

When you're building a brand for your business, you need creative ways to spread the word about your values, vision, and mission. What better way to accomplish that than through the publishing of content, and engagement with online reviewers and potential customers?

Brand building involves making your brand recognizable and memorable. All of the activities included in ORM will help to accomplish that.

▶ MARKET RESEARCH

I know, it's the part of building a business that causes entrepreneurs to sigh and roll their eyes. Who wants to sit at their computer for days on end finding out what the competition is doing, what potential customers are saying, what the market is allowing...unless you're already doing all that, by default, while engaging in Online Reputation Management?

When you work to improve your business's reputation, you will absorb a lot of the information necessary for market research by osmosis. You will gain a better understanding of what's going on in your industry, as well as how to deliver exactly what your ideal clients are looking for.

▶ TRUST, BUT VERIFY

Today's consumer wants to know who they're dealing with. A logo and a business name are rarely enough anymore. They're looking for trust and personal engagement, and that's largely due to widespread distrust of corporations.

ORM breaks through this distrust because, regularly, you'll be engaging with people, as a fellow human. You will inject a personal touch, by default, and the loyalty of your customers will be a testament to that.

▶ A HIGHER QUALITY TEAM

When the very best talent is looking for a new place to work, they care about businesses' reputations. Have you ever noticed that companies who treat customers badly also have disgruntled employees? That's because happy team members treat customers well, and employees who are dissatisfied pass that feeling down the line to everyone.

Companies that want to have their pick of top talent understand the importance of ORM, because they want the best-of-the-best in their offices, interviewing for pivotal roles.

▶ BUSINESS EVOLUTION

The business that refuses to change will fail. We saw it with Blockbuster and Kodak. Compare Blockbuster's stubborn refusal to see the future of in-store video rentals, with the dramatic transformation of Netflix, which began as a video rental by mail service and transformed itself into a direct to consumer digital media delivery service with 158 million paid memberships in over 190 countries.

We also know that changes can't happen overnight. There's lots of research, forecasting and risk-taking involved.

But guess what? When you're deeply embedded in your industry and your target market (because you're always in there managing your reputation), you're going to pick up on emerging trends and indicators of change.

You can then use that information to shift how you do business, to stay ahead of the curve (and the competition).

▶ HERD MENTALITY

It's pretty common to think of "herd mentality" in a negative light. After all, we do reference it when talking about people following negative reviews online. But there is a benefit associated with herd mentality. When a business has a positive online reputation, and people start talking about it because they want to be connected to that. Others will follow, en masse.

If you want viral positivity for your business, count it among the benefits of Online Reputation Management.

▶ HIGHER NEGATIVE-POSITIVE REVIEW RATIOS

This point cannot be stressed enough. If you have 100 positive reviews, one negative review will have less of an impact than 10 negative reviews. ORM cannot make negativity magically disappear, but it can weaken its effect.

▶ LOYAL RELATIONSHIPS

If I didn't see it over and over again with my own eyes, I might not believe it. The most loyal customers are the ones that were not abandoned when they were angry.

There's something about giving an upset customer Acknowledgement, Appreciation, Apology, and Action that makes them want to stick around. Maybe some of them put businesses through the wringer to see who will step up. Or maybe they just don't forget the empathy that some businesses show.

No matter what the reason, the opportunity to turn around a negative online review can be counted as one of Online Reputation Management's top benefits.

▶ PR AND MARKETING

The marketing allowance is one of the first to go, especially if you're operating on a shoestring budget. However, it can be comforting to know that Online Reputation Management does a lot of the same things that marketing and public relations do.

I'm not suggesting that your business can get by with no marketing or PR; I am saying that good Online Reputation Management results in the same type of positive word-of-mouth advertising that PR and marketing aim for. It is complementary, not competitive to everything else you are doing to promote your brand.

▶ QUICKER RECOVERY

Let's say you've been engaging in Online Reputation Management for years. You can list the 10 Online Reputation Management Tips for business off the top of your head. You have advice to give to other entrepreneurs, and you look forward to monitoring reviews and adding valuable content online. You have a good reputation, people trust you…and you deserve it.

And then a mistake happens. A customer is unhappy and they've taken to the Internet to talk about it.

Here's a benefit you may not have considered: That customer's words are going to be far less damaging if you're engaging in Online Reputation Management. You will have a positive reputation, and a tribe of loyal followers, to lean on. The firestorm will be extinguished far more quickly than if you had a poor (or even an average) reputation.
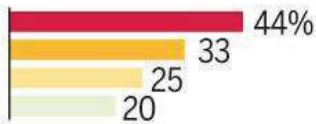
Managing online reputation

Reputation management has become a priority for many Internet users, especially the young, according to a new study.

Monitoring identities among social networking users
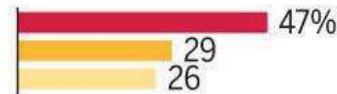
▮ 18-29 year olds   ▮ 30-49   ▮ 50-64   ▮ 65+

Limit amount of personal information about them online:

- 44%
- 33
- 25
- 20

Delete unwanted comments others have made on their profile:

- 47%
- 29
- 26

Change privacy settings to limit what is shared:

- 71%
- 55

Remove their name from photos that were tagged to identify them:

- 41%
- 24
- 18

Source: Pew Research Center

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Source: Source: https://www.mercurynews.com/
and https://www.pewresearch.org/

As you learn more about how Online Reputation Management works, you will uncover even more benefits that are unique to your circumstance. Ask anyone with a longstanding, positive reputation, "Do Online Reputation Management services work?" and the answer will be a resounding YES! That's because they're using the best online business reputation management practices, and focused on expanding or improving a thriving, growing business.

I have been asked if there's a disadvantage of Online Reputation Management. I can't think of a single one. Even the investment of time doesn't qualify as a disadvantage because every minute is spent learning more about your target market, finding new gaps or opportunities in your industry or making valuable connections that will teach you more about your business and the people it serves.

REPUTATION REPAIR FOR INDIVIDUALS

The damaging of an individual's reputation, online, is no joke. A viral rumor, photo or story can cause you to lose employment opportunities, scholarships, military appointments, college acceptances, your job, recruitments…and even friends.

If your personal reputation has been damaged online, it's important to understand that you could make it worse by overreacting, or even by contracting with a company that claims they can do away with it immediately.

There are industry standards in place that govern procedures for removing damaging personal information, but they take some time. Even then, expecting a complete lack of negative search results attached to your name is not realistic. To confuse matters, personal reputation management can be complicated because most information is coming from sites that are not controlled by the victim.
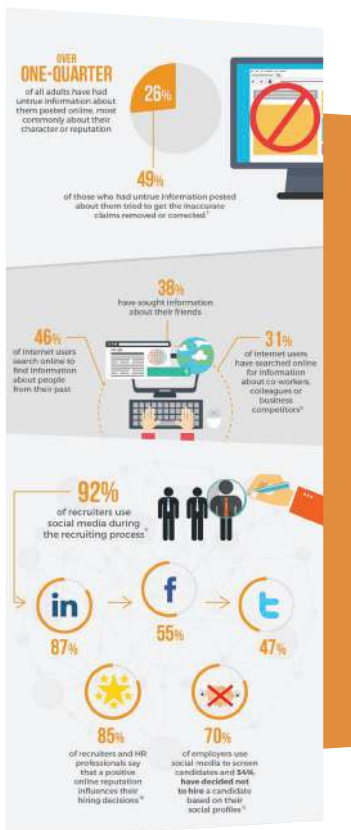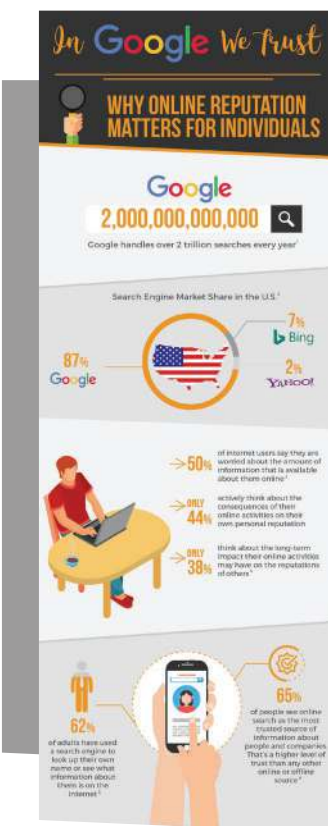
Reputation Repair Strategies

Online reputation repair for individuals will not delete your past. However, it can quickly eliminate the impact of damaging news articles, reviews, blog posts, forum comments, and other negative content and promote a positive online image to anyone looking for you or your company online.

When the negative content is older (a few years old, for instance), it can be easier to suppress. That's because Google gives precedence to newer content.

If the offending site doesn't have high domain authority (recognized social media, respected news sites, etc.), it can be easier to suppress the content. And the fewer high-authority links leading to that content, the more suppressible it will be. If the negative content is lengthy and in-depth, the positive content that suppresses it should also be significant in length, quality, and value… and be search engine optimized for the individual's name.

Results are not immediate, but you'll likely start to see some improvement in a few months, depending on the quality and clout of the negative content. The more authority the negative content has, the harder it will be to suppress it.

Even experts can't predict how long fixing your online reputation will take—it's highly subjective and dependent on many factors. But in most cases, it can be done!

Types of Personal Reputation Repair

Online reputation repair services recommend a reputation management strategy, in order to make sure you're using proven and tested methods to get the best results in the shortest amount of time.

▶ DELETE NEGATIVE CONTENT

In many cases, you will not have control over the negative content that's been published about you. But in cases where you can control or influence the content on other sites, such as images or posts on your social media pages or comments you may have posted on others' sites, do not hesitate to remove comments, reviews, etc. that you can control. This is the most direct way to enhance individual reputation management, so do it if you can.

▶ GENERATE NEW ONLINE REAL ESTATE

Create more online places that you can control. Build a website. Start a blog. Create a YouTube channel, a Twitter account, a LinkedIn profile… or whatever you feel you can c ommit to contributing to and monitoring on a daily basis.

Each one will produce an additional search result, increasing the likelihood of suppressing negativity. And the longer those pages are active, the more likely they will be able to help you manage your online reputation.

▶ INCREASE POSITIVE ACTIVITY

What links appear when you search your name? Most likely, you'll see your social media profiles and other sites you have control over. Increase activity on these pages. Make more valuable connections and ramp up engagement in groups and on other pages within those platforms.

▶ CREATE POSITIVE CONTENT

When high-value content is associated with your name (when you're the author or the publisher, or when you're mentioned in the text), it can help to suppress undesirable search results. WordPress has made a blog accessible to anyone with an Internet connection. Medium is a great tool that has high Google visibility to help an individual establish a presence online without the effort involved in managing a Website or updating a blog several times weekly. Twitter and LinkedIn also don't require a lot of work and can also be helpful for networking and to engage others.

So, start a blog, write a press release or an article. Contribute. Get your name out there—for all the right reasons.

▶ ASSEMBLE A TRIBE

The more people who follow you on social media subscribe to your channel and blog, comment on your content… the more Internet authority your online pages will have, and they can help outrank negative content.

Engage with people online, remembering that quality of content is more important than quantity of content. The community will not only help to advance your personal reputation, they will be available, if needed, to help combat any damaging content others' may say about you.

▶ ACCEPT HELP

From the moment you realize your personal online reputation has been damaged, feelings of anger, frustration, and helplessness can creep in. You may want to hire an online reputation management company. Let the experts help you promote your name and business online while you focus on your business. A reputation management company can help you take to create a positive online profile through social media, local directory listings and authoritative local news sites.

There's no reason to feel alone in this. There are loads of tools to monitor online reputation, and online reputation management companies that can help.

When we take on a reputation management project, we go to work immediately to create high authority positive content, such as news articles, blog posts, etc. and promote existing and newly created content via link building so positive content will achieve maximum search engine visibility and push down or replace negative content on Page 1 and beyond.

▶ REVENGE PORN

What is revenge porn? It's that intimate photo or video you or your partner took of you (with or without your permission) that has now ended up on the Internet for anyone to see. Whoever posted the image or video did not have your consent, and they shared it with the intent of embarrassing and shaming you.

1 in 8

social media users have been targets of
nonconsensual pornography (NCP)

15.8% of all women reported
having been victimized **or**
threatened.

9.3% of all men reported
having been victimized **or**
threatened.

Women are

1.7 times

more likely to be targeted with NCP than
men.

Revenge Porn is illegal in the UK and in many states (with the current exception of Wyoming, Massachusetts, South Carolina and Mississippi) and has long lasting psychological and socio-logical effects.

We can talk about avoiding the situation altogether by never consenting to have these types of photos or videos taken, but that does not account for anything that may have been re-corded without your consent.

If you find revenge porn online, there are some things you can do to have it removed, and even to press charges against the responsible party.

Revenge Porn Removal

If you discover the distribution of intimate images or videos without your consent, do not contact the person you believe is responsible. It's best to go about resolving the problem without their awareness.

First, take screenshots of the photos or videos, as well as any friend requests or comments related to them. This will become helpful when you file a report, and if you have to prove that your reputation has been damaged. These screenshots may not prove central to your case, but can be used as supporting evidence.

Next, read the terms of service for the platform where they were published. If you find that a photo or video goes against the site's guidelines, you'll have a much easier time getting it removed. Then contact the platform. It might be social media, a website, a forum… anywhere, really. When you communicate with them, reference the specific portion of their guidelines that has been violated. You might be directed to a form for filing a report.

Revenge Porn on Tumblr

In 2018, Tumblr changed its terms of service, banning adult content (which includes revenge videos and photos on Tumblr). So, if you do find anything there, know that their updated guidelines prohibit that. How to report someone on Tumblr? Simply click on the Share icon and then Report.

Revenge Porn on Reddit

Reddit is different than Tumblr, in that Reddit revenge porn is still a problem. Much of the attraction for revenge porn on Reddit is that the site requires no personal information to create an account. So, troublemakers can hide there…to a point. Their IP address is used, so law enforcement, or a motivated super sleuth, can find them. Even if a Reddit post is deleted, it's still on the Reddit server, and if an entire account is deleted, the IP address associated with it will be retained by Reddit. So, even though it seems like the perfect place for revenge porn posters to hide, they can be found, and they can be prosecuted.

If an image or video violates Facebook's Community Standards, they will remove it, and in most cases also disable an account for sharing intimate content without permission. There is an appeals process in the event Facebook has made a mistake.

Facebook has also launched an innovative pilot program jointly run with victim advocate organizations that provides an emergency option to securely and proactively submit a photo to Facebook, whereby Facebook will create a digital fingerprint of that image and stop it from ever being shared on its platform in the first place.

Revenge Porn on Instagram

Like all examples of revenge porn, you should take a screenshot of the post for reporting purposes.

You can anonymously report photos, videos or messages that go against Instagram Community Guidelines. If you don't have an Instagram account, you can report content using a special form designed for this purpose.

Specially trained representatives from Instagram's Community Operations team will then review the image and remove it if it goes against Instagram's Community Guidelines. Like Facebook, Instagram is able to use photo-matching technology to help stop future attempts to share the image.

Twitter will immediately and permanently suspend any account that is identified as the original poster of intimate media that was created or shared without consent. Because Twitter allows adult content, including in some cases, nudity, they will need to review reported content to determine if there has been a violation of Twitter's Rules.

You can report this content for review in-app or via Desktop, or if you do not have a Twitter account, you can report this content via a private information report form, by selecting the An unauthorized photo or video option, that is available on Twitter.

If revenge porn isn't illegal in your state, still file a police report. A paper trail will prove essential, and even if you can't pursue criminal charges where you live, a civil case may still be a possibility. Plus, interactions could escalate to the point where you wished you would have filed that initial report.

Then it's time to address the issue of sharing. Even if you can get the original site to remove the breakup revenge photos or videos, there's no telling how many times they were shared across the internet. There's no telling how many times particular images were shared from another website of the photo-sharing platform.

You can investigate on your own, and contact each site, or hire a takedown service. I would also suggest searching for lawyers or online reputation management companies who represent victims pro bono or for minimal cost—they are out there, and you have the law on your side. So, if your question is "Can you go to jail for exposing someone?" the answer is NO.

How to Build a Reputation with Social Media

Ignore privacy controls that are available at your peril – everyone must learn and adopt the latest privacy controls on popular social networks like Facebook and audit their Twitter and Instagram profile pages to remove posts that may be defamatory or hostile to others or reveal immaturity that would lead your current or future employer to question your judgment.

Facebook allows you to choose the appropriate audience for every post and we usually recommend defaulting to "Friends" so you limit the potential damage of a thoughtless comment or inappropriate image. Today, companies expect employees and business partners to have an active online social life, they also expect people to understand how to use technology effectively and responsibly.

Social media has tremendous potential as a tool for professional networking and learning about new opportunities. We all have social networks. In fact, we have a lot more friends online than we ever did in "real" life. If you are unemployed or new to the job market you need to reach out to your network and let them know you are looking for. Explain what you have done and what you want to do and see if anyone can help. You also need to make the most of your social media profile. Highlight your professional accomplishments, academic awards, and achievements, sales successes, etc.

On LinkedIn, you can actually try and connect with current and former employees at the places you would most like to work. Instead of asking for a job online (not going to happen), try asking about what it is like to work there, what they like best about the company, what is the key to success. Social networking is about building relationships. When it is time for your interview or call-back get your social network to help by offering a referral or recommendation or simply forwarding on your resume to the right person.

We often see senior executives and older professionals, especially Baby Boomers who did not come of age with computers and smartphones, missing out on social media altogether as a highly effective and free communications tool. Some are unfamiliar with the technology and how to use it, others are afraid of saying anything wrong, so they say nothing at all. We have seen Elon Musk, Mark Cuban and President Trump rewrite the rules on social media discourse, offering both a cautionary tale and wide latitude for what you can say online.

Most successful executives have already mastered the art of effective communication, social media is a great way to amplify and expand their circle of influence. Senior executives should not be afraid or insecure to ask a younger colleague for tips and tricks to use social media to its full potential – it's reverse mentorship and a healthy development for an organization.

One of the significant changes that take place when one moves into an executive role, is he or she becomes a role model and a representative and with this great power comes great responsibility. Today, social media savvy is an asset, not a liability and an individual's effective use of social media can improve visibility and distinguish him or herself in a professional context, demonstrating industry knowledge, communications skills, and maturity.

How to Succeed on LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the most important professional networking site with 260 million users in the United States. But most people don't use this social media platform effectively. People forget that to make an impact on LinkedIn, it is better to give than receive. Shameless self-promotion and solicitation of business is a huge turnoff on LinkedIn. Participate actively in Groups offering advice, suggestions, referrals and recommendations without the expectation of reward or generation of new business for yourself.

You will quickly earn the trust and recognition of peers and colleagues in your field and be a "go-to" source when the time is right, but it all starts with a little less "self" and a little more substance, this is LinkedIn networking at its best.

Online Reputation Repair and Management Tools for Individuals

One of the most available tools for reputation management is the search engine itself. As stated before, if you want to know what kind of content others are seeing, just search your name. Explore all the search engines, since their algorithms vary. Only then can you know what you're up against.

Next, set up a Google Alert for your name. Then you'll know whenever something new is published.

With mention.com, you can see how many times your name has been mentioned online, label each one neutral, negative or positive, and share them if appropriate.

If you want to know if your online pages are being linked to on Twitter, check out Backtweets.

Hootsuite is great, too. It even offers analytics so you can keep your finger on the pulse of your reputation. Be careful with this app, though. Its automatic cross-platform posting feature can promote a hands-off social media attitude—and we all know by now that ORM is a hands-on endeavor.

Complaint Search Box searches dozens of complaint sites for your name.

Spokeo is designed so anyone can look up information about others confidentially; however, there's no reason you can't use it to look for your own information on the web.

To help you keep an eye on what's being said about you on social media, check out Ranker.

You can even sweep the Internet and find photos of yourself, using the facial recognition software of ImageRaider.

These are some examples of ways you can take personal reputation management into your own hands. If you need help immediately, research the best reputation repair companies and work with an expert.
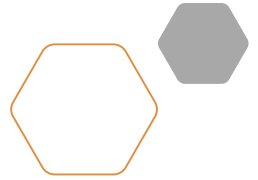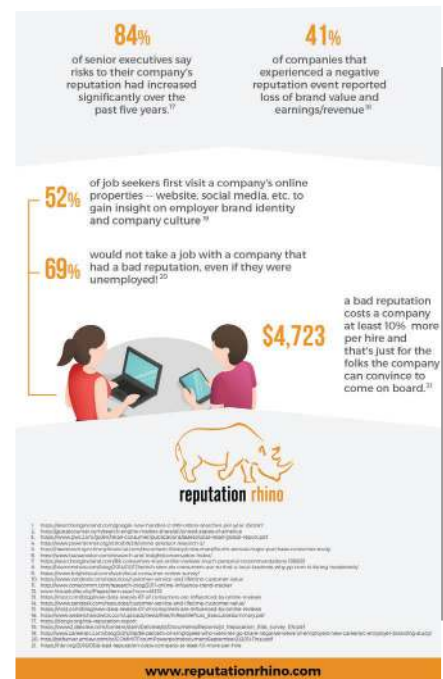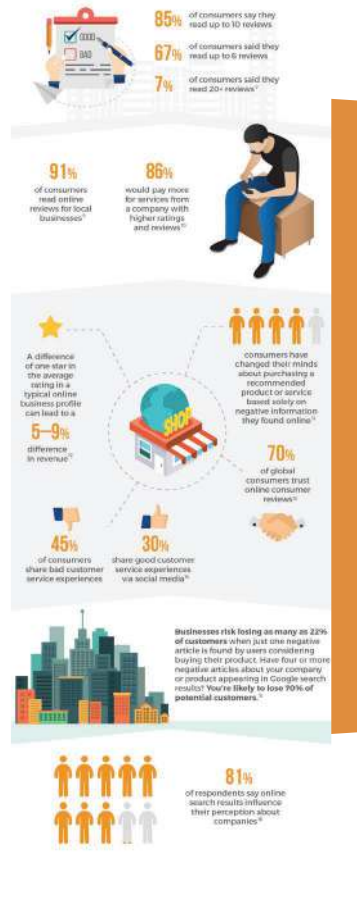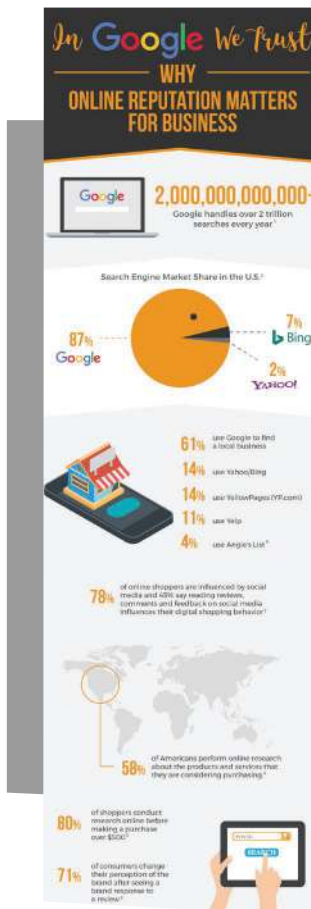
REPUTATION MANAGEMENT FOR
BUSINESS

25% of your company's market value is directly impacted by your reputation. If you want to survive in today's rough and tumble digital world, the importance of managing the online reputation for a business cannot be overstated. The need for Online Reputation Management is greater now more than ever, particularly when you consider that nearly half of all businesses will not survive a reputation crisis.

Business reputation management involves a number of key strategies, all designed to restore (and even improve) your company's reputation.

According to the SBA, the United States is home to 30.2 million small businesses, which make up 99.9% of the country's commerce. That makes small business reputation management a big deal.

Small Business Reputation Management

Reputation management is a big deal for the small business. It's true that a bad reputation might spread faster for a huge multinational; however, we can't overlook the fact that 50% of small businesses fail by their fifth year (Fundera). That's significant, and most small business owners would agree: they can't afford any additional risk.

The transaction landscape is different for small businesses, too. They are apt to deal directly with the same customers over and over, and more likely to conduct business in one city or town. That means business reputation management services for small business is critical. Word spreads fast online. It spreads like wildfire in local communities, too. And when the owners and entrepreneurs who run small businesses are known within their neighborhoods, their reputations take on new significance.

But what does business reputation management online have to do with a small business that's conducting its business offline? If you're a small business owner, why do you need Online Reputation Management?

Whether or not your small business has a social media following, people will talk about it there. Whether you realize it or not, your business has ratings online, and 92% of consumers are looking at those ratings (Vendasta). Even if you don't have a website, your business is ranked in search engine results—and if all you have are some lackluster reviews, that's what people are going to see. If you stick your head in the sand and ignore the online side of your small business's reputation, that 50% chance of survival will shift… and it won't be in your favor.

That's why small businesses need to manage their online reputation, even if all their sales are made offline.

The Importance of a Reputation Management Strategy for Small Business

Many small businesses rely on day-to-day profit. They tend to be shortsighted because keeping the doors open is something that could change from one month to the next. And all of that tends to affect small businesses' views on reputation management.

An Online Reputation Management strategy might fail because it doesn't seem crucial to making it through the day, the week or the month.

But here's the truth: reputation management, with a review management system in place, will help small businesses look forward to years of successful commerce.

So, what does a reputation management strategy look like for a small business? Let's examine a standard crisis plan for preserving a small business's reputation. That crisis might be one from outside, or one from within.

▶ COMMUNICATIONS

When a crisis threatens your small business's reputation, there's no time for devising a communications strategy. It should already be in place. Work ahead, to plan for all possible scenarios and developments. Know who will communicate with whom. Know who's responsible for each mode of communication. Know what words your small business's representatives will use, and what the tone of the messages will be.

▶ SUPPORT

Where will your small business go for support during a crisis? That includes financial backing, positive press, and the rallying of your tribe or community. Knowing who will have your small business's back during any type of crisis is essential to your reputation strategy.

▶ MEDIA

Every small business should have a designated spokesperson—someone who is qualified to speak to media outlets, should a crisis occur. The confidence of the speaker, the words that are used—even the tone of their voice—will either contribute to or detract from your busi - ness's reputation during a crisis.

▶ MONITOR

During and after a crisis, it is imperative that your small business's reputation be guarded online, and reviews addressed in a timely manner. After the crisis has passed, reviews should be monitored regularly.

At a minimum, every business should be closely monitoring BBB Reviews; Citysearch; Consumer Affairs; Customer Lobby; Facebook Reviews; Foursquare; Google My Business / Google Maps; Indeed.com; Insider Pages; MerchantCircle; PissedConsumer; SuperPages; Trustpi lot; Yahoo! Local; Yellow Pages, Yelp and niche sites that may also be relevant to a particular industry or vertical.

If you are a small business owner, your personal reputation matters. People want to know whom they're doing business with; a business name and logo are rarely enough to build trust.

In your quest to learn how to maintain a good reputation in business, you will learn that your own reputation greatly contributes to the market standing of your small business. So, as you build up a reputation for your restaurant, shop or boutique, strengthen your own reputation, too.

Since you now understand that your reputation is built offline and online, let's talk about some ways you can strengthen that reputation (and therefore the reputation of your business) in all types of situations.

▶ HAVE INTEGRITY

Think about the last time someone broke a promise they made to you. How did that impact your opinion of them? Did it affect your level of trust? Remember this whenever you're dealing with people in personal and professional settings. Under-promise and over-deliver. At the very least, do what you said you would, or renegotiate the terms of your promise before it's broken.

And in all circumstances, choose honesty. Transparency is a big checkbox for people, and if they feel you're trying to hide something, your reputation will take a hit.

▶ TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

Always take responsibility for those things you can control. Avoid blaming others. Instead, be more accountable than you need to be. Your sparkling reputation, and your business, will thank you.

▶ PUT OTHERS FIRST

One of the most impactful things you can do to build a good reputation for yourself is to help people, particularly in areas where you specialize and have expertise. This will show those people, and the community as a whole, that you care about others' well-being and that you're willing to put them first. This is great for your reputation, and will be even better for business.

▶ DO MORE

You know the smile that crosses your face when someone goes that extra mile and does more for you than they have to? Or when you're pleasantly surprised by how much effort someone puts into a task? That's the same reaction people will have when they see you going above and beyond. Always strive to do more than is expected, and your reputation will reap the benefits.

▶ LOOK GOOD

The amount of effort you put into the clothes you wear and personal grooming directly equates to the perceptions people will have about you. Put no effort into your appearance, and it will be assumed you put no effort into anything you do. Dress like you put some thought into it, and people will notice and assume that conscientiousness is part of all you do.

▶ BE CONSISTENT

In everything you do and say, online and offline, be consistent. The messages you send via online exchanges, in-person interactions, body language and more aren't always verbal, but they're always perceptible. Be conscious of what you're saying… and what you're not saying. It all matters and it all contributes to the reputation you will build for yourself and your business.

How a Reputation Management Company Can Help

Reputation Rhino helps businesses create sparkling reputations for coworkers, customers and clients to see. Busy small business owners often don't have the time or the resources to commit to managing their reputations, and so there are solutions available to them.

As a reputation defender and reputation builder, we optimize profiles so they're highly visible to search engines, develop and market positive content, manage online reviews, publish news releases to the press, monitor individual and business reputations online, reach out and respond to negativity, offer detailed metrics and reporting, and develop crisis strategies.

It's important to understand that a trustworthy Online Reputation Management agency will NOT guarantee the removal of bad reviews or negative content online. Instead, it will work to suppress those negative results with positive content, monitor online conversation about you and your business, raise your visibility online, develop a strategy to monitor reviews, obtain positive reviews, and respond to reviews.

NEGATIVE BUSINESS
REVIEWS

By now, you know that people are talking about you or your business online. You can hope it's all glowing positive accolades, or you can face the fact that every business will get bad re views.

More than 4 bad reviews for your business can reduce sales by 70% (Martech Zone). That's the real impact of negative reviews. Even the best businesses get negative reviews, but the ones that survive will be the companies that know how to deal with bad reviews.

Studies have consistently shown that online reviews influence purchasing decisions. A recent BrightLocal survey showed that 84% of people trust online reviews as much as a personal recommendation and 54% of people will visit a company website after reading positive reviews. In other words, online reviews are not just feedback about your business, but an advertisement for your business – or a warning to stay far, far away.

Business Transparency and Negative Online Reviews

In the quest to be known for their transparency, businesses are opening themselves up to more criticism. This level of open communication, in public forums, is intended to give future customers the impression that they can trust the business—and current customers the comfort of believing they know all there is to know.

The risk that comes along with this communication strategy is that negative reviews may surge, espe cially in the beginning. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, as long as those reviews are addressed and not allowed to take on lives of their own.

When a business takes the transparency route, it will inevitably run into employees who aren't happy and want to talk about it publicly, often on sites like Glassdoor, or customers and critics who have an issue with the industry as a whole and want to tear everything down, and people are more likely to talk about dissatisfaction than delight.

It sounds like a pretty big risk to take; however, a lack of transparency can be far riskier.

So, what to do with those negative reviews?

You can make them work to improve your reputation, and even grow your business when you know how to deal with negative business reviews online.

Why do People Write Reviews?

It's common sense to think that people write reviews to share their experiences, or to tell others how much they liked or disliked your product or service.

In truth, most people don't bother with reviews. They either return to buy more or they never come back — ever.

Just as we know that purchases are rooted in emotion, writing reviews is also an emotional undertaking. The reviewer is motivated by emotions like anger or frustration to write a negative review. Or, they must be motivated with joy or satisfaction to write a positive review. The really surprising thing? That anger, frustration or joy doesn't necessarily have anything to do with your business!

Since negative reviews concern us the most, let's talk about why someone might post a negative review.

There are people in this world who will look up to your success and want to emulate that. Then there are the ones who will try to bring you down.

They might have low self-esteem, and want you to feel the same way. They might see your pride in your product, envy that and try to disrupt it.

Others feel a lack of control, and so they attempt to control you and your business by posting negative reviews.

Responding to negative reviews online is the foundation of business reputation management. When those reviews are legitimately from a dissatisfied person, is one thing. Dealing with psychologically unstable people is an entirely different undertaking.
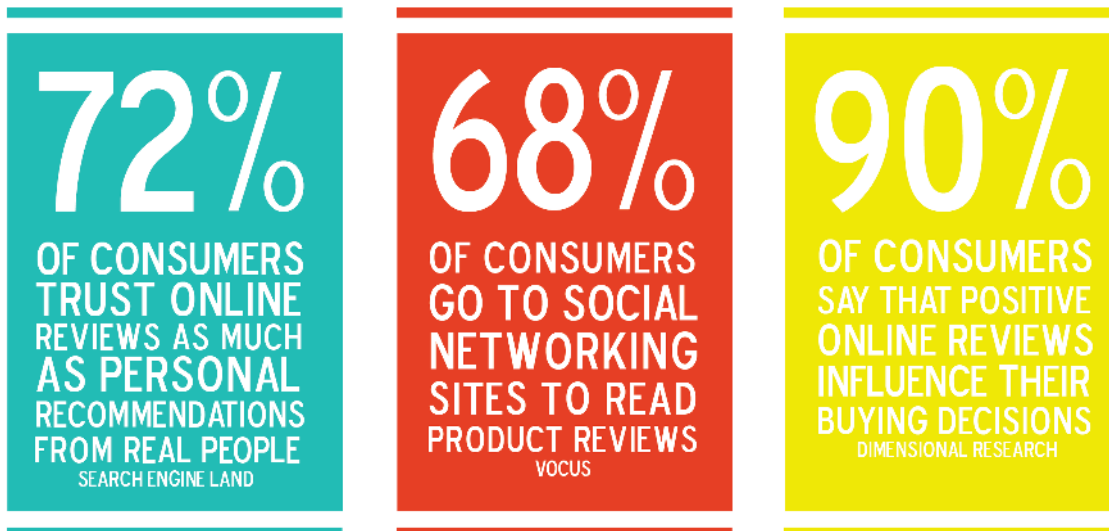
"Know when to respond immediately and when to remain silent. What you say online can and will be used against you."

There are often two extremes when responding to negative online reviews. Some business owners respond very defensively to online complaints, either attacking the customer personally or making excuses. The other extreme is acting too deferentially, publicly accepting full responsibility when it is best shared or accepting the blame for something that is an aberration or a rare occurrence, like a hair that might fall into a bowl of soup or an order mix-up, with an over-the-top apology that is best suited for international diplomacy rather than a Google review forum.

Generally, the best approach for a business is to have a conversation offline to discuss the issue. The best response is when the owner or manager reaches out to the individual who posted the complaint in near real-time, expresses an interest in resolving the issue, and provides contact information so this resolution can take place.

Business Transparency and Negative Online Reviews

We've talked about the benefits of reputation management, but now let's look at it from another angle. Let's cover some examples of what negative reviews can do to a business.

72% OF CONSUMERS TRUST ONLINE REVIEWS AS MUCH AS PERSONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FROM REAL PEOPLE
SEARCH ENGINE LAND

68% OF CONSUMERS GO TO SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES TO READ PRODUCT REVIEWS
VOCUS

90% OF CONSUMERS SAY THAT POSITIVE ONLINE REVIEWS INFLUENCE THEIR BUYING DECISIONS
DIMENSIONAL RESEARCH

Source: https://neilpatel.com/

It seems that all types of online reviews can cause damage, but bad reviews on Google have proven to carry the most weight—So much that a Google-reviewed business with a rating of 1.5 or fewer stars brought in 1/3 less revenue than average (Womply).

We know that more than 4 poor reviews can turn potential customers away, but does it end there? Or are they talking to their friends and family about how they would never do business with you because of your online reputation and bad ratings?

Did you know that bad reviews can affect your search engine rankings? Search engines want to give users the best experience possible, so they're going to rank highly regarded companies first, especially local businesses featured on Google.

And negative reviews cost you money. Not only will your revenue take a hit, you'll have to spend lots of time, money, and effort repairing that reputation.

You know what to do: respond to negative reviews with Acknowledgement, Appreciation, Apology, and Action. But is there anything else?

Yes, there is. You can learn how to prevent negative reviews before they even happen.

Create a trend of resolution for everyone to see.

This means fortifying your customer service department so it's top-notch. This will decrease the chances of negative reviews appearing in public forums. Instead, grievances are more likely to be resolved privately.

Make it easy for people to get in contact with you.

That way, they're more likely to reach out to you directly. Don't go the way of PayPal. They make it so difficult for anyone to contact them, people get frustrated and air their grievances in online reviews. Do what you can to keep people on the phone, on your website contact form, or in your inbox. Respond quickly, so they don't have the chance to take it public.

If it's offline, keep it there.

If you are contacted offline, by phone, email or text, resolve the issue there, before that person's dissatisfaction escalates and they take it online. Better to deal with the issue "at home" than have everyone see and hear it!

Follow-up with new customers.

Immediately following a sale, contact your customer to ask if they're satisfied with their purchase. If they are not satisfied, fix the problem. If they are, ask them to write a review. This will go a long way in keeping their opinions offline.

Be visible.

Understand that keyboard courage is even greater when the person ranting thinks there's no one from your company listening. If you're actively engaging with them, watch how quickly they calm down.

Working to maintain your good reputation online and offline is a great strategy for avoiding bad reviews.

Know when to ignore reviews.

If you're wondering how to respond to fake negative reviews, don't respond at all. You can recognize the fake ones because they'll be out of context, atypically venomous or one of your competitors will be recommended. You can flag those reviews to Google, Yelp, Tripadvisor, and most other responsible review sites.

Dealing with negative online reviews can be unnerving, but there are situations in which you can ask for reviews to be taken down. When something includes slander (a falsehood) or manufactured evidence, and is created with the intent of ruining your reputation, then you may be able to have it removed. Contact the platform on which the review was published with your evidence.

Your reputation is less dependent on the bad reviews you receive than on the way you re spond. If you commit to turning each legitimate negative review around, with demonstra tions of sincerity and superb customer service, then you can harness the power of negative reviews for good.

Social Media and Your Reputation

Some business owners already know how social media can ruin your business because they've experienced it firsthand. The danger comes in not knowing what's possible, so let's talk about how social media can ruin your online reputation.

▶ IT WAS ALL IN FUN

What seems fun, or hilarious, in the moment may not seem so funny later. Red Solo cups visible in college applicants' photos, girls in bikinis in a cop car, dirty dancing at the office holiday party… all may be a joke at the moment, but a potential nightmare in the future.

▶ SOCIAL MEDIA FOR BUSINESS

Many businesses came online with completely unrealistic expectations about how Facebook or Twitter would revolutionize their business. In reality, social media can only produce a measurable ROI for a few companies and brands. It is next to impossible for a psychologist to attract hundreds of followers and cultivate an active and engaged community on Facebook, an accountant is not going to win a client engagement via Pinterest and an alarm technician is not going to generate customer leads from Twitter.

That does not mean that these businesses should ignore social networking. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, Google My Business, and LinkedIn are free platforms for sharing promotions and upcoming events, featuring new hires and other notable employees, highlighting business news and other valuable PR and marketing activities. Some social sites are ideal for helping a founder or executive demonstrate thought leadership on a host of relevant topics. Social media is also a valuable place for a company's employees, clients, customers, and vendors to engage and interact. But don't kid yourself, a bad restaurant with a Facebook page is still a bad restaurant and given all the challenges faced by small businesses today, the decision whether, when, and how often to engage in social media is not as simple as some marketing professionals would have you believe.

▶ CURRENT EVENTS

Many businesses and individuals comment about current events. It's a great way to increase traffic to their social media pages. However, be aware of how what you're saying might sound after the event has passed, or to people who have been directly or profoundly affected by the event. You could wipe out your online reputation with one post that just won't go away.

▶ OFFLINE GOES ONLINE

Even if what you're saying or doing isn't intended for social media, it could easily end up there. Take a look around at any public event and you'll see cell phones ready to record and take pictures.

If you're caught on camera, it may never go away. Whoever has the image or video could hold onto it until the worst possible moment.

▶ MIXING PLEASURE WITH BUSINESS

Most business owners have both personal pages and business pages on social media. The danger in this is that the two could be associated with each other, and anything you do in your free time could be twisted around to hurt your business's reputation. So be mindful of that.

Repairing your Reputation on Social Media

You do have the option to delete or hide comments on social media pages you manage. However, I would recommend only doing this in extreme cases, where resolution is not possible, or when reviews have been posted for venomous reasons.

Otherwise, work to resolve issues right there on the social media page, in the comments. Or, if the problem is private, take it to private messaging.

As with all reputation management, positives can bury negatives on social media. So, get in there with valuable content, helpful information, and constructive engagement.

How to Deal with Negative Reviews Online

When you're managing an online business, what you say and do matters. Knowing how to respond to a bad review is critical because 89% of people read through to see businesses' responses (BrightLocal). Also, how you respond will determine the type of impression you make on everyone who sees it.

Online reviews' best practices, and rules for responding to negative online reviews, including knowing how to answer bad reviews, for sure, but success requires knowing when to respond and what to say when you respond.

Respond ASAP. We've covered several times before, but it's so important. If you don't respond promptly, there's no telling how many people will see it, share it, take it to heart… without your response to help shape their opinions.

Always be professional, courteous, and polite. If you start spouting off in anger or get the least bit defensive, you might be proving that the reviewer was right about you.

Avoid long monologues that could be interpreted as excuses. Keep it short and to-the-point.

Ask the reviewer to continue the conversation offline, with a phone call or email exchange. Then, you can talk at length and get to the root of the problem.

Avoid interacting with fake negative online reviews. Report them instead.

If you're still asking, "How can a business offset a negative review online?' maybe you'd like to see some examples of responses to negative online reviews.

Negative Online Review Response #1

Review: I can't believe I wasted $12 on this product. It did not work. Total waste of my time.

Answer: Thank you for your feedback. We are sorry to hear that you don't feel you received the value you expected. We'd like to learn more about your experience so we can improve our product. Please contact us here.

Don't ask for details in your public response; do that in an offline conversation with the customer.

Negative Online Review Response #2

Review: I ordered a size large and got a medium. I called customer service, but was put on hold.

Answer: Thank you for your order. We regret that this mistake was made, and we want to correct it. Please call 777-555-5555 so we can resolve this issue immediately.

Never make excuses for inadequacies (for the order fulfillment or customer service departments in this case). Instead, focus on getting the issue resolved in record speed.

Negative Online Review Response #3

Review: The owner of this company is a pig. Buy from Acme instead.

Answer:

This review warrants no answer at all. It's fake, and probably from a competitor. Report it and do not engage online or offline.

Reviewers #1 and #2 may remove their negative online reviews after the situations are re solved. And #3... well the platform may help you to remove that since it appears to be from someone other than a legitimate customer. Which brings us to our final segment on negative business reviews—how to remove fake reviews online when those reviews appear to be fake.

Removing Negative Online Reviews and Removing Fake Reviews

Since Google reviews seem to be the most impactful on a business's reputation, let's focus on how to respond to negative reviews on Google, how to change a bad Google review, how to remove bad reviews from Google, how to remove fake Google reviews, how to delete Google reviews posted by others and manage reviews on Google.

First, is the review a fake? There are some ways to tell.

If your database doesn't show that they're a customer… probably a fake review.

If the product they're complaining about doesn't match their purchase… could be a fake review.

If they have not yet contacted customer service… maybe a fake review.

If they don't have key details, like who sold the product to them… most likely a fake review.

If this review is one of many bad reviews that have been streaming in… could be a fake review.

If the reviewer has a connection to your competition… probably a fake review.

If a competitor is recommended in the review… very likely a fake review.

How to Handle a Bad Google Review

If one of these suspected fakes is a Google review, you do have options. But make sure you're confident that the review is fake or a violation of Google's Terms of Service before moving forward; if you report too many Google reviews as fakes, you may be flagged.

And before moving forward with reporting a fake review, check it against Google's guidelines. If it is spam, unrelated to your business, hate speech, explicit, or demonstrates a conflict of interest, you may have a relatively easy time getting it removed.

How to remove negative reviews on Google:

1. Find your business on Google Maps.
2. Go to Reviews.
3. Open the menu at the top right and choose Flag as Inappropriate.
4. Go to Google My Business and find your profile.
5. Go to the bottom left and select Support.
6. Select Need More Help.
7. Select Customer Reviews and Photos.
8. Select Manage Customer Reviews.
9. Select Email Support.
10. Submit all your evidence.
11. Complete the Legal Removal Request Form if the review qualifies as slander.
12. If it's still showing up in results after some time has passed, despite being deleted, go to the Google Search Console and submit the link.

If none of that works, you can Tweet straight to @GoogleSmallBiz and explain what's happening (with evidence to substantiate your claim).

Certain Websites are more susceptible to fake reviews than others. Anonymous review sites are more easily manipulated. Among popular review sites, Google requires only an active Gmail account to leave a review, which is easy to obtain and not tied to any identity verification.

Yelp has a proprietary algorithm tends to favor long-form, negative reviews, but allows anonymous reviews and has a weak process for contesting fake reviews. Among review sites that are harder to "game", the Better Business Bureau (BBB) does not allow anonymous reviews. Trustpilot has a "Verified Order" tag and Amazon has a "Verified Purchase" tag applied to certain reviews that can help distinguish paid or incentive-based fake reviews.

The Truth about Review Removal

We have helped thousands of people learn how to remove negative reviews from some of the most popular review sites in the world. If you want the best possible chance of a review being removed, familiarize yourself with the guidelines put forth by the site. If there's an outright violation of their rules, that may be all that's necessary. But, if there are no blatant violations, you'll have to gather lots of evidence to prove why you believe the review is fake.

Many websites have published statements saying they are not responsible for what people post there—and that could make it more difficult to have that review removed.

But don't give up if you can't delete a Google review. There are always new positive reviews and suppression of the negative.

Which brings me back to the customer. What if you find a resolution in response to a negative review, and the customer would like to remove that review from Google, but they're not sure how? Now you can answer the question, "How do I remove a review I left on Google?" for them.

They should:

1. Find your business on Google Maps.
2. Go to Reviews.
3. Open the menu at the top right.
4. Select Your Contributions.
5. Find the review in question.
6. Open the menu.
7. Edit or delete the review.

If the review is not fake, removal by the reviewer is a great option. But you'll have to resolve the issue first.

If you are wondering whether it is legal to leave a false review intended to damage the reputation of a person or business. The answer is NO. There is no legislation in place against fake positive reviews; however, if a negative review qualifies as cyber libel or online defamation, you may have an actionable legal claim for damages, and the person tied to that review could be in some serious trouble.

Another question we get a lot is, "Can I turn off Google reviews for my business?" The answer is NO. That's the entire point of GMB (Google My Business) reviews. It's customer-centered, and customers want to know whether to trust your business. There are some situations in which Google may disable reviews for particular categories of business, or they may help you if you're being attacked with numerous fake reviews. Other than that, your best course of action is Online Reputation Management.

Now that you know how to deal with bad online reviews, professionally and proactively, let's wrap up with some additional tips for improving your online reputation.

TIPS TO IMPROVE
REPUTATION ONLINE

When you know how to protect your digital reputation, it can mean the difference between the Internet being a networking, business-building utopia or a prison of harassment and defamation. When you know how to protect your reputation you can get the job you want, make new friends and connections, and run the business of your dreams. It all hinges on your reputation, and your reputation relies on Online Reputation Management.

You can have a plan in place for what you'll do if reputation damage strikes, but without continually working to build a good reputation as a foundation, your efforts may be in vain.

So what steps can you take to clean up and protect your online reputation?

Five Ways to Control Your Online Reputation

Online reputation vandals can sneak up on you. The effects can taint your business for years, and it could even affect your personal life. But you don't have to take it lying down. You don't have to take it at all.

Keep these five Online Reputation Management tips in mind at all times, and you can't go wrong.

▶ BUILD YOUR REPUTATION

Right now, you can begin building a fortress around your business. Start that blog. Strengthen that web content. Get your SEO in order. Amass positive reviews. Engage with people on social media. Start building something that even the most determined competitor can't damage. Make it so strong that others won't even try.

This is the number one thing you can do to save your brand from future reputation saboteurs, but that's not all. Here are four more steps you can take to protect your digital reputation.

▶ TURN THE NEGATIVE TO A POSITIVE

Once you build that fortress, the few negative reviews, comments, or bad press you might receive will be manageable. I encourage you to see each one as an opportunity to gain a new loyal client. Follow the recommendations for responding to bad reviews outlined throughout this book, and you will learn to view every negative review or obnoxious comment online as a chance to figure out how to improve your online reputation.

▶ BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

As you learn how to improve your online reputation, or that of your business, or both, know that your tribe will be your best online friends. Seek out those people on social media who share your values and who are interested in the same things you're interested in, or who have the same problems that your business solves. Build alliances with your team members, so they know how to defend your business. Have integrity, and the people around you will have it too.

Be as helpful and generous as you can. Demonstrate your values. Put all the things that you want people to say about you into action.

These will be the people who come to your defense should anyone attack your reputation—and what they say will have more influence than anything you could ever say to defend yourself.

▶ BE THE BEST

To win at Online Reputation Management, you've got to be the fastest, the most prepared… the most enthusiastic. You've got to be ahead of the competition and the naysayers. The best way to accomplish all of this is to want it the most.

When Online Reputation Management is done right, when you're passionate about shaping perceptions, you will realize that reputation management will magnify the success of every thing you do – online and offline. When you care about your reputation, it doesn't feel like work. It feels like success.

▶ HAVE A LONG-TERM ONLINE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

You know how to improve online ratings now, but how will that carry into the future? When business picks up (thanks to your dazzling reputation), what's your plan for maintaining that reputation amid hectic workdays? How will you respond in a crisis? And who will respond? Who's going to have your back and who will be your eyes and ears?

Knowing the answers to these questions before you proceed is essential if you want a reputation that will win friends and influence people and turbocharge your business.

An Online Reputation Management agency can do all of that for you, so as you move forward, know that Reputation Rhino is here to support you, with powerful online reputation management services and internet marketing solutions for any size company.

We have an outstanding team of experienced legal, public relations, reputation management, marketing and technology experts who have worked with some of the largest brands in the world.

Reputation Rhino has been featured on Bloomberg Businessweek, Forbes, Fox Business, New York Post, Time Magazine, U.S. News, Hollywood Reporter, and WABC Radio.