

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

Because what others think
of us matters in business!



VLAD BLITS

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Introduction:

Reputation is at times even more important than who you actually are. The way people feel about your business is one of the strongest driving forces which leads to eventual success. You want the public to feel that you are a name that could be trusted and relied upon and that your products and services are worth it.



After all, if they do not express that sentiment, how can you expect to do any sort of business, let alone build any clientele?

perception amongst the public?

Reputation Management is a process by which we figure out what the general public has to say about our products and services and maintaining good customer satisfaction. In other words, what is our reputation and

In this book, we shall be discussing just how reputation management works, and how this process can help your business put its best foot forward and grow in leaps and bounds.

Chapter 1: What Puts Your Reputation at Risk?

What Puts Your Reputation at Risk?

Before we delve into what you can do to save or reinvent your company's reputation, let us have a look at what may actually put the reputation at such a risky place to begin with.



Turns out, there are a number of things which can cause "reputational risk." Some of those things have to do with the actions taken by the company themselves. Also, some of those things are done by the employees of that company that serve as brand ambassadors which can potentially hurt the company's reputations. Other times it could be the result of a bad business transaction on a joint venture that can put the company's reputation at risk.

Situations related to the quality of the products/services, ethics of that company, and security measures of that company can often put a company's reputation in a tough spot.

Nobody is safe from it. It is said that while we all strive to build a good reputation, once it is built, it can become one of the most delicate virtues to maintain. If nobody knows about your products/services and you do something bad, you could easily get away with it. There are no questions to answer because there is no one to ask those questions!

However, when a reputation is built upon delivery of exemplary products/services, and there was a poor judgement in making an executive decision, there would be millions of eyes and ears waiting to receive a solid explanation; a reason justifying why that mishap happened.

And how do you handle that heat can make or break your business' future?

The Toyota Case:

Who doesn't know about Toyota?

The company is regarded as one of the best motor corporations around. The quality of anything manufactured by Toyota was never questioned because there was no need to. The company had built such a



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strong positive reputation of delivering nothing but the best, that there was never a need to question their quality standard.

Until some years back, several incidents involving Toyota manufactured accelerators started to happen. And how did Toyota handle the massive reputation crisis? Not very well we're afraid.



The company first blamed the life-threatening incidents on the drivers of the vehicle. The public responded by saying it is not possible to have that many bad drivers who by the way, all happened to be driving Toyota manufactured vehicles.

The blame from the bad drivers was then shifted to faulty floor mats.

The public was not ready to accept that answer either. Instead of just coming forward and being transparent with their audience, admitting that there indeed was a problem with their accelerators and that they are on their way to fixing it, Toyota kept on shoving its reputation in quick sand itself.

The fact that they did make a mistake and on top of that were not willing to take responsibility for it further spread feelings of distrust amongst their target audience.

How to Fix the Broken Trust:

Still following the Toyota example from the above section, the fact that Toyota had lied not once but twice about whatever was happening raised some serious doubts regarding the integrity of the company. There is no denying that the company had broken the trust of so much of their loyal customer base.

So, how do you fix this broken trust?

Naturally, admitting that you made a mistake is one of the first steps towards mending what you broke, but it is not the only step. Telling the customer that there was a manufacturing fault in their accelerators is not going to build the trust again on its own.

You have to do a lot more than that. In addition to notifying the public on what exactly was causing the problem in the accelerators, Toyota now also



Chapter 1: What Puts Your Reputation at Risk?

needs to tell its people what they are doing about it, and that too in detail in a manner which they can all understand.

When you break the trust of your customers, the best way to fix it is by explaining them what happened and why it happened in the most non-technical way possible. How quickly are you able to get back on track with manufacturing fault-free accelerators is just one side of the success story. The other side obviously deals with how quickly you can win back the trust of your customers again.

The biggest threat that reputational risk poses to any company, no matter how big or small it may be, is that it can literally come out from anywhere. From lost revenues, to going really down in the market, the aftermath of getting your reputation damaged is never pretty.

Like previously mentioned, various situations can result damaging your company's reputation. Sometimes, the fact that your own employees (present or ex) could spill the beans on some of the biggest losses you have faced can also cause reputational risk. Irrespective of whatever may be causing it, one of the first things that needs to be done is taking appropriate damage control measures without delaying anything.



Luckily, we live in a society that is now primarily characterized by social media networks which brings a very important, highly effective damage control tool into the hands of companies.

If you can use it to get the word round and get people to do stuff, why not use it to manage your business and its reputation as well?

A little caution needs to be practiced though, for this too is a double-edged sword! Just like you can use social media to handle the damage, likewise social media could be used to point fingers at what you are doing which you should not be doing, causing

damage to your reputation. The Canadian energy companies who were busy extracting oil from the Alberta tar sands would agree to this. Several activists took to social media platforms and started telling the world (because that's just how powerful social media is) about the oil-extraction activities and the potential damage they were causing to the climate.

Chapter 2 : Building an Effective Reputation Management Strategy:

Building an Effective Reputation Management Strategy:

A good company is one which is proactive.

Why should you wait for a disaster to happen to only then do something about the problem?

It always helps being prepared. Having an effective reputation management strategy already in place can help you spring into action much quicker when and if a problem occurs. And since we are part of such a digitalized world, it can never hurt to monitor what your target audience thinks of you.

You would only know if there's something that needs fixing when you know that there *is* something that needs to be fixed! So it makes all the sense in the world to stay on top of your game.

First of all, it goes without saying that to have a reputation, you need to first have a presence. You would want to be in your audience's span of attention first and then have a strategy in place to build and maintain reputation.

Building a Presence: How do leading companies do it?

So how do you go about building this presence? Fortunately, we have the internet with us which makes it that much easier for businesses and companies today to increase awareness.

Previously, it was hard for businesses and companies who had to make their way to the top without any help from the internet.

Businesses which existed in the pre-internet era relied heavily on advertisements broadcasted on radio and television and ads which were printed in newspapers and magazines. The most they could do was to print a set of flyers and hand them out to people. That is how they were able to reach out to their audience and make themselves known.



The Greatest Tool of All: Social Media:

Then came the internet, but even that was not much of an efficient tool for businesses to build themselves up until the social media era. It was not until various social media platforms took the internet by storm that businesses had something super powerful at the tip of their fingers. Using social media, they were now able to create brand awareness and build their presence like never before.

Chapter 2 : Building an Effective Reputation Management Strategy:

Here is little fun event that happened back in 2013 just to show you what a world of difference social media makes for businesses and brands out there. Super Bowl is undoubtedly one of the most anticipated events in the U.S. When the excitement is at its peak, brands know exactly how to cash in on that excitement.

At least Oreo knew how to!

Here's what happened:

During the Super Bowl '13 just as the San Francisco 49ers and the Baltimore Ravens were up against each other in the Superdome, the power went out. So as everyone was scratching their heads in the dark trying to figure out what happened, Oreo went to their official twitter account and tweeted a short (but super effective) message to their followers: "You can still dunk in the dark."

Everyone on Twitter lost their minds over just how perfectly timed Oreo was with its wit.

In just one hour, the tweet saw more than 10,000 retweets. Marketing strategists speculated that the simple little Oreo tweet actually had a much higher pay-off than the actual Oreo Super Bowl ad which obviously took so much more resources to create.

From finding out who their target audience is, what their behavior is, what are the best ways to reach out to them etc., knowing all these and much more really gave that business a solid edge.

Whether you put a leading company or a small business under the microscope, it is a safe bet to make that almost everybody in the market acknowledges the importance of social media and has presence on its various platforms.

According to a survey done, four out of five people have received an online recommendation on what product to buy at some point in their lives. So, how can you use this powerful tool to attract more audience and consequently build your business' presence?

Here's a step by step telling you just how you can do that.



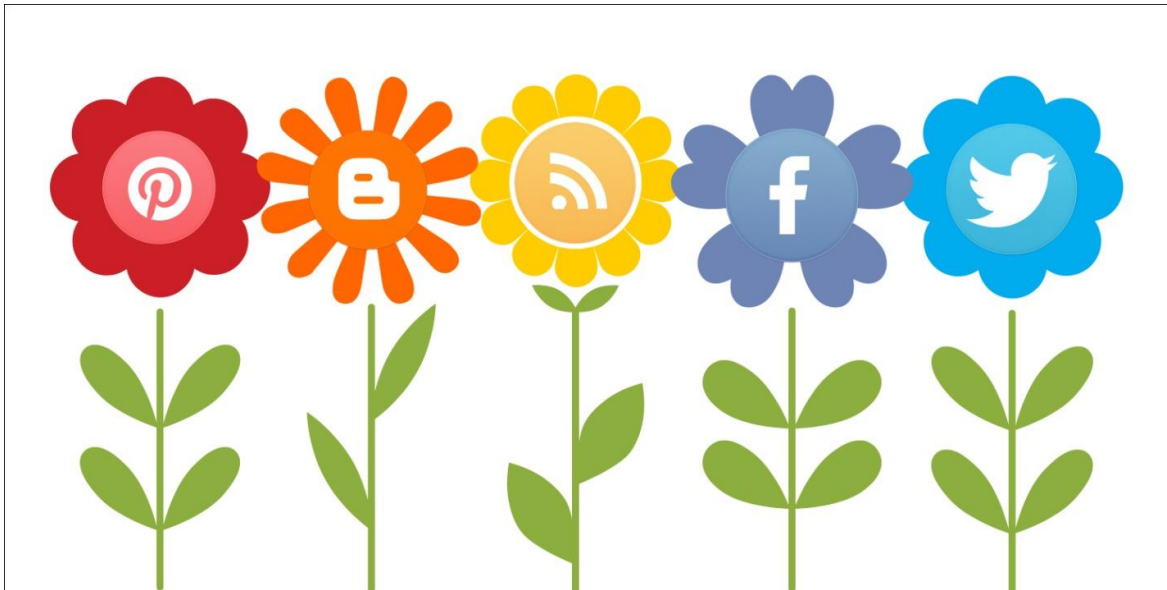
Chapter 2 : Building an Effective Reputation Management Strategy:

Step #1: Plan and Plan Some More:






Rather than shooting for things randomly in the air, it is important for you to sit down and plan what exactly needs to be done. One major mistake business owners make in this phase is that they go overboard and set up a social media page on every social media platform they can lay their hands on.

The end result is just a mess because there is just so much to handle, not to mention how many resources end up going to waste as well. As a business that is just getting started, it is very important for you to research first to find out which social media platform is going to be best for whatever it is that you are dealing in.

While all social media platforms have their pros, they might not be that effective in helping all sorts of businesses grow. For example, if you have a photography business, Instagram would be much more effective than Twitter, even though both are amazing platforms. The reason for this is that Instagram is mostly a photo sharing platform.



As a general tip, start with picking up one or two platforms that you know will suit your product/service best and learn to work your way on those two only. If you don't know already, figure out how to make a page, how to publish content, how to manage analytics etc. Plenty of help material regarding these processes is easily accessible online.

				
Facebook	Twitter	LinkedIn	Pinterest	Google+
3 X per week	5 X per week	2 X per week	5 X per day	3 X per week
10 X per week	none	5 X per week	10 X per day	10 X per week

Your initial efforts should be directed towards growing your audience first in just one place, and then slowly branch out.

Step#2: Schedule it All in:

Building your brand's presence is not something which can be achieved overnight. It requires time and patience. More than patience, you will also

Chapter 2 : Building an Effective Reputation Management Strategy:

have to be consistent with your efforts. If your strategy involves posting content on your business' page once in a blue moon, it is not going to be that effective now, is it?

If you cannot hire a social media manager because you are short on resources, or you just want to do everything yourself, it is best to maintain a calendar where you follow a specific social-media-page-update schedule.

Follow that schedule for creating new content, posting that content, re-sharing old content etc. This way you decrease your chances of neglecting your social media page.

Step#3: Leveraging Your Content:

If you are short on time or short on resources, learning how to leverage your content can really benefit you especially if you have multiple accounts to handle. If you cannot write a blog every day for all three social media accounts that you manage for instance, simply just make one for one account and share its link on your social media pages. That way, you achieve the proverbial "killing two birds with a stone."

Step#4: Get the Tools:

The really cool thing about using social media for whatever purpose you have in mind is getting to have all these tools to help you out. Moreover, since you are doing things on your own, its best to get all the help you can. There are so many tools and apps which can help you manage your social media presence more easily. From automatically posting your social media posts which follow a particular schedule, to help you monitor your interactions with your audience, there's just a lot that you can do with the right social media apps and tools.

Step#5: Get Outside Help:

While there is nothing wrong with wanting to use social media platforms on your own to build an online presence for your brand, there are digital marketing agencies which can help you do the same in a much more effective, less time-consuming manner.



The rationale behind this is just like the one behind why it is better to have a plumber fix a leak, rather than attempting to do it yourself. You know you can do it, but the chances of doing an efficient job compared to that of a professional is rather slim. However, the chances of you ending up making the leak worse is high!

Getting professionals to help you build a stronger more visible social media presence is also recommended with reference to the fact that there is just too much competition out there, and

a lot needs to be done when it comes to making your brand stand out on an online platform as compared to all the rest of them.

Chapter 2 : Building an Effective Reputation Management Strategy:

Again, this is a personal decision, but it is highly recommended to get experts involved as it could prove to be a worthwhile investment. In today's time and age, your social media presence can either make things for you or break things for you. Just consider the following statistical finding alone: More than 65% people consider the internet to be the place to find information about businesses.

You want people to take notice of your products and services (for all the right reasons, of course.) Only then you would actually be able to do business.

Managing the Presence You Just Built:

Finally moving on to what this chapter is actually about!

Fast forwarding a little, let's suppose that you have build quite an audience for your brand. People know about you and your products.

Congratulations, you have a reputation now! Things are going well, the products are great, the clients are happy...until they are not. We have spoken about this earlier that harm to your business'/brand's reputation could literally emerge from nowhere.

The only way you can maintain the good times is to manage things so well that even if something is to go wrong, you immediately are at the top of it.

In other words, you need to have a go-to reputation management strategy. From ensuring that the reviews left by your customers are good ones (and of course, handling the really bad reviews very nicely!) to dealing with a crisis that has got the attention of the entire world (like it happened with Toyota). Reputation management strategy is definitely something all good business organizations need to have.

The slightly sad news is that while 58% of the business executives acknowledge the importance of having a reputation management strategy, only 15% of them actually do something about it.

Don't be one of those 43%!

Build an effective reputation management strategy today. It is a little hard work, but if you are to stay in business you will have to take the punches too. And land some of your own.



Chapter 2 : Building an Effective Reputation Management Strategy:

Get Reviews and More Reviews:

Just focus on the following statistics for a while:

- 71% of the consumers feel more confident in dealing with a business when they have read positive reviews about it.
- 79% of the consumers give these reviews the same amount of consideration as they give to personal recommendations.
- 65% of the consumers feel that their preference for a brand is primarily defined by how many good reviews it has gotten from its previous customers.

Have a look at this chart to further understand just how important reviews are:



Chapter 2 : Building an Effective Reputation Management Strategy:



"Jeff is a go-to-guy! Anything that needs representation, marketing, and just pure enthusiasm, I know I can rely on him to make it happen. At a moment's notice he jumps up and takes charge with whatever task he is given. Jeff is indispensable and an amazing person to have on any team. His leadership shines through his work and ability to build relationships with others. He is truly an asset to have and a valuable source to depend on"

- Yanyn San Luis, Career Development Coordinator at FIU

15 Reasons Why You Should Hire Jeff Zelaya

Reason #10
"Indispensable and an amazing person to have on any team"

LinkedIn Trainer, Social Selling Speaker, #1 Ranked LinkedIn Speaker www.jeffzelaya.com/mjzpcn

there.

Yet another example is of that time you know you want to order pizza but you also want to try it out from some place you have never placed an order with before. What do you do? Go straight to the reviews previous customers may have left on their social media pages etc.

So clearly, the kinds of reviews you get not only help you in building a reputation, they also help you in maintaining one. And it works in both the conditions; positive and negative. If that new bar near your place continuously receives positive reviews from its customers, it will slowly build a positive reputation for itself which can be maintained till it keeps on receiving more positive reviews.

What if the bar is doing a really bad job and the customers are not happy? The bar decides to do some damage control and makes promises to amend its mistakes. But has the bar kept their word? The review section will let you know. The bar has really poor service, it gets bad reviews, and the bar now has a bad reputation for itself which it wants to fix. So, it announces some discount on its drinks, but does not actually follow through with that claim. What happens? angry customers pile on some more bad reviews which will help in maintaining the negative reputation which the bar, quite frankly, has built on its own.

This was just one tiny example demonstrating how reviews can help you grow your business or literally just put you out of it. So do your best to get as many positive reviews you can from your clients. Not all customers may leave a review. Let's say on your Facebook page perhaps, you could choose to make it interactive so you can always ask them politely to leave a review for how they found your products and services.

Be Super Awesome at Handling Criticism:

It is not humanly possible to always receive good reviews simply because some customers could be difficult to please. Still, as a business owner trying to manage their reputation, another really important

And even if we did not have all these statistics to tell us exactly how important reviews have become for all of us, business owners and consumers both, we can turn to our daily lives where we will find plenty of practical examples showcasing the importance of reviews.

What is the first thing you do when you hear about a neat new bar that has opened up nearby? Even before going to that bar physically, you are more likely to pull out your phone, go to Yelp, type that bar's name and look for any reviews that that place may have gotten from the people who have already been

Chapter 2 : Building an Effective Reputation Management Strategy:

reputation management strategy that you need to work on is to be good at handling the bad reviews, or in other words the criticism that you get.

In fact, getting some criticism for your products may not entirely be such a bad thing. Criticisms can help your business build some credibility. It's just all about how you handle it. So the next time you receive a bad review from a customer, do your best to respectfully respond to their criticism, apologizing that their experience with you was not a very nice one. Maybe ask them for suggestions on how to improve too.

What did you just do?

You completely turned the tables!

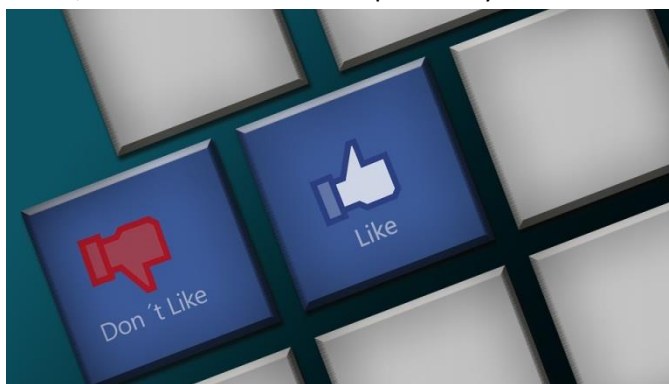
Most people when they are criticizing someone, they hardly expect any civility from the other side. If you want a practical demonstration of this, just go to any Yelp page and check out some of the bad reviews a particular business has received. Look at how those business owners are aggressively arguing with their customers.

You do not have to be that defensive, bitter business owner. Next time you receive a bad review, ask the customers what you can do about it. By asking the customers on suggestions about how you can improve your service/products for them, you are making them feel not only important, but also included in the process.

How you handle the criticism will honestly work wonders for your reputation. If you have a couple of members on your team, make sure that all of them know how to handle negative feedback from customers.

Know What is Being Said About You:

As a part of your reputation management strategy, you should also focus some attention on what is actually being said about your business/brand online. Not just on your social media pages, but generally online, how does the audience perceive your brand?



Knowing what is said about your brand and products will further help you figure out if there might be a need to introduce some changes in your marketing strategies. Better yet, if all is going well, then you can just carry on with whatever it is that you are currently doing.

Know How to Recover:

If in an unprecedented outcome, your brand's reputation is severely damaged, first of all do not panic that much for as the sage saying goes "where there's a will, there's a way".

Chapter 2 : Building an Effective Reputation Management Strategy:

Your focus now should be turned towards delivering some excellent marketing. You need to launch your product in a better way now to make an impact on your audience. When good marketing is coupled with self-promotion, businesses can greatly recover their reputation.

Reputation Management Tools:

Just like we have tools for managing social media, we have tools for helping you manage your company's reputation as well. While reputation management is still more of a manual process, it can be automated to some extent. There are apps and tools available that help you manage feedback generation. Also, there are some tools that can also help you convert the feedback that you get into online reviews.

What *Not* to Do When Managing Your Business' Reputation:

No strategy is complete without having a section telling you about the things you are *not* to do.

1. Avoid Paid Positive Reviews Like the Plague:

While several reputation management companies (more on them later!) have an option where you can get them to create positive reviews for your products in exchange for some money, we do not particularly recommend this one.

And also, because Google does not respond too well to websites with false positive reviews. Websites that get paid for positive reviews posted on their pages on the regular get pushed down in the Google search results.

Nobody wants that. Positive reviews are important much as they are genuine ones. So when a client tells you that they liked your product/service, request them to leave you a review for it.



2. Do Not Argue; Know Your Worth:

Know your worth and whatever you do, do not let it be determined by the Troll Army.



Every social media platform has them and it is virtually impossible to never cross paths with them. If you don't know what they are, trolls are basically people with a lot of time on their hands which they use to defame your reputation by posting super negative comment on your social media pages. Several business managers get into arguments with them and end up ruining their reputation themselves.

Chapter 2 : Building an Effective Reputation Management Strategy:

Your only strategy for dealing with any negative comment coming from a troll or anybody else for that matter, should be to respond to it as politely as you can. Don't lose your cool. Even if you do, don't display it online.

And if the trolls do not stop, be smart and tell them to get in touch with you privately. Ask them to write you an e-mail or even call you up. Or if they are up for it, they can come and meet you in person.

3: Say No to Astroturfing:

Kind of similar to paid positive reviews is the act of astroturfing. It's when you make anonymous accounts and use them to leave positive reviews, even argue with trolls, or speak up against negative reviews for a company.

It could be difficult to find out if any company is making use of this tactic. However, if the word does get out that all the positive reputation you enjoy online is because of fake accounts, it can do your business' reputation a lot of damage.

What's more is that if the word does get out, even the positive reviews that are genuine would be looked upon skeptically.

4: Your Customer is Important, Don't Ignore Them:

Another common mistake that business managers make which can put their company's reputation at risk is that they ignore their customers' demands especially when they are angry or upset.

Ignoring them is hardly going to help with things. You are in business because of your customers so, turning them away does not seem like the smartest move. Instead, if you do come across an angry customer, try to address the issue at hand, come up with a solution, offer them a discount and try to work it out with them rather than turning a deaf ear.



When the customer sees how seriously you are taking them, they are likely to view you more positively and this will help your business in enjoying a better reputation.

5: Don't Disrespect the Ethical Guidelines:

Running a business efficiently requires you to not just set ethical guidelines in place, but also respecting them. There are so many businesses out there that lie about their products and services to their customers. There is no point in guessing that they are very much sabotaging their business' reputation on their own.

Chapter 3 : Reputation Management vs. Reputation Marketing: What's the difference?

Reputation Management vs. Reputation Marketing: What's the difference?

Trust is an important factor in establishing any company's or business' reputation.

Would you want to spend time with somebody you don't trust?

Similarly, your customers wouldn't want to do business with you if they feel like they cannot trust you. 84% of the marketers feel that building trust is what managers need to focus on if they wish to build their company's reputation.



So far into the book, we have shown you some ways you can build your company's reputation. In this section we will be addressing one very common misconception that several people have regarding what exactly reputation management is.

Reputation Management and Crisis Management:

Plenty of business owners think of reputation management and crisis management as the same thing. Think of them as two opposite ends of the

same spectrum.

And nobody blames them, because one perspective of looking at the content presented, even in this book, makes reputation management look like some sort of a tactic that is put into action only when something goes wrong.

Your customers think ill of you. You are in trouble. Enter: Reputation Management

While managing your company's reputation can definitely save you from entering into a crisis mode and having a good crisis management policy in place can save your company's reputation, to mistake reputation management for crisis management is wrong.

To demonstrate the very minute difference between the two, we'll give you two examples which will help clear things. Let's go back to the Toyota example we presented earlier. If the company had admitted their mistake, they could have saved their reputation. We all make mistakes, and they made one too. But they did not accept their mistake and blamed the drivers for the accidents, instead of their faulty accelerators.

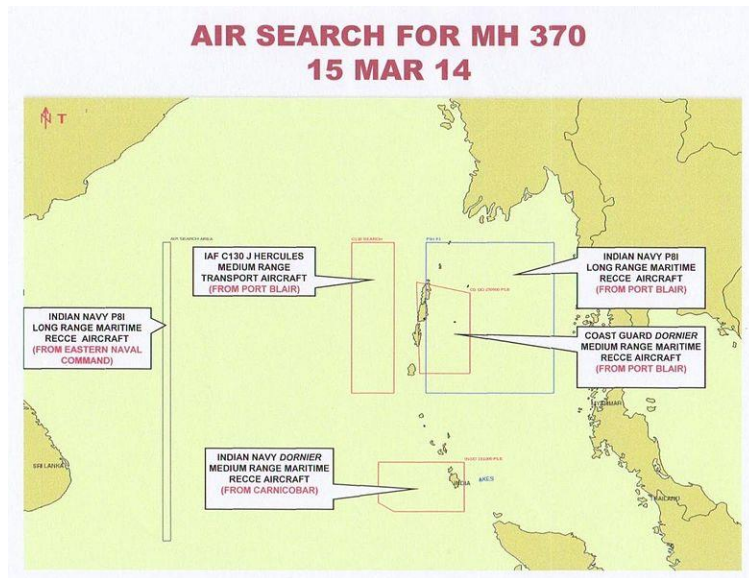
Their reputation is now damaged, but it cannot be considered as a crisis.

Chapter 3 : Reputation Management vs. Reputation Marketing: What's the difference?

A crisis is a sudden emergency situation which nobody saw coming but now occurred. The classic example of a crisis is what happened with the Malaysian Airlines in 2014. With not one but two planes gone completely missing, without leaving any trace whatsoever, we can hardly think of a better example which captures what a crisis is perfectly than this example.

So what did the Malaysian Airlines do to handle this crisis?

They were quick on their feet to get a “crisis communication home base” set up as quickly as possible through their website. Any news regarding the missing MH370 would be first uploaded there. What's more is that they took to social media platforms and set an excellent example of how one should communicate with their audience. With just the right amount of compassion and sincerity when one is struck with such a crisis, a reputation is maintained even in the face of disaster.



While our book is about reputation management and how to go about it, if anyone wants to be schooled in crisis management 101, they should look further into how the Malaysian Airlines handled the crisis.

In fact, the way they handled the crisis actually ended up saving their reputation to some extent, if not a lot!



Should You Market it or Should You Manage It?

Ideally, you should be doing both.

Business analysts and marketing strategists of today present another interesting take on reputation management. They feel that since the reputation of a business is something which is a relatively constant factor in a business' growth, perhaps it would do business owners even better if they thought about marketing

their reputation rather than managing it.

Just exactly how do you market a reputation?

Chapter 3 : Reputation Management vs. Reputation Marketing: What's the difference?

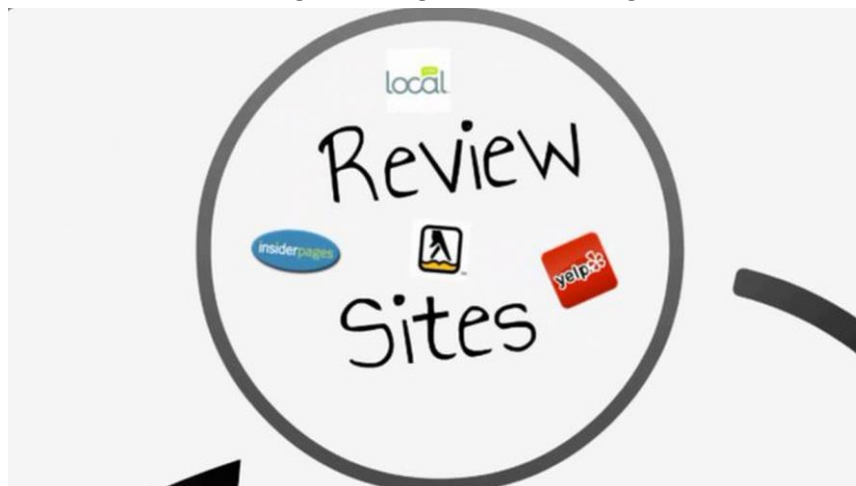
Your reputation is controlled by what your target audience or consumers think of you. How can you market that?

Go back in time a little. Word of mouth is one advertising tactic that has been in play for a long time now. While in the past, when we didn't have any digital means of communication this easily available to us, word of mouth may not have had been that effective of an advertising tactic.

But now, in this super digitalized age when we hear somebody say something good or bad about a particular business we are so much more likely to take their word seriously.

Consumers are now trusting other consumers more than ever. If they like what you serve, they are more likely to try it out for themselves too and vice versa.

In other words, we are again talking about something which we have talked quite a lot about in this



book: **reviews.**

16% of the people who have access to the internet claim that they have even looked up the person they were dating just to get a better idea of their reputation. Anything which the Google search engine can tell them about this person in question is going to help them make a better impression of them.

So, whether it is a possible love interest or a possible service provider, the bottom line is the same. What the Internet has to say about you will definitely be playing a part in determining your reputation.

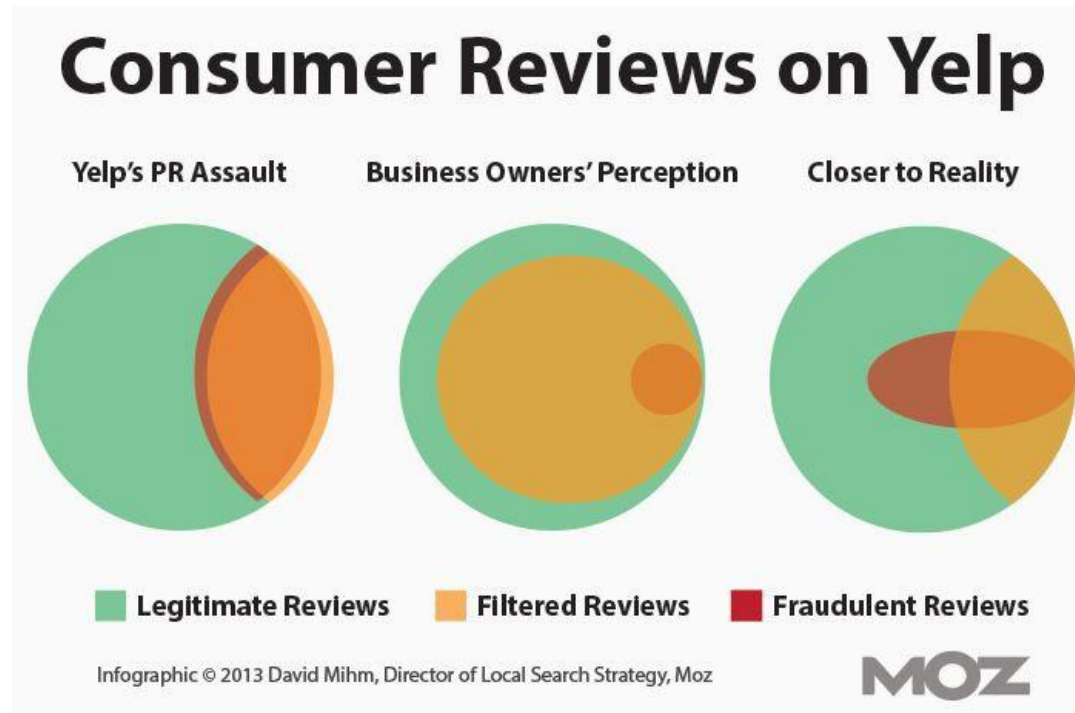
How to Market Your Reputation?

Customer reviews seem like the best way to market your reputation. Think of it as a step by step process. First, what you need to do is to know what is being said about you generally on the various review sites available. Once you know what is exactly being said about your business in these reviews, you know where you stand with the public and can have a self-evaluation of the company's prospect. Several big companies have become aware of the importance of monitoring reviews to a point where they actually have people that are appointed solely for this purpose.

Not only does it help companies understand where they are, monitoring customer reviews also allows them an opportunity to make up for the mistakes. For example, you own a restaurant and some customer was particularly let down by your restaurant's service. They go to Yelp and type how "they were made to wait so long for their meal to arrive".

Chapter 3 : Reputation Management vs. Reputation Marketing: What's the difference?

Side note: If you are trying to figure out how authentic Yelp is, have a look at this chart:



Nobody likes waiting extra long for their order to arrive, but that review is already up on the site, you haven't seen it so you can't respond to it. However, the review has probably already crossed the eyes of at least a dozen (if not more) potential customers who were considering heading to your restaurant for dinner. But with this late service, they could consider other options.

You already lost potential customers just because you were not quick enough to respond to that negative review.

See, what we meant when we said word of mouth being so much more effective in the digital age?

This is why monitoring reviews is highly important for marketing your reputation. It gives you a great opportunity to see what's happening and take immediate action. If you as a restaurant owner had intervened on Yelp sooner, you could ask for suggestions on how to improve the service you offer. That could stop any potential damage in an instant.

It seems like we can't stay away too long without talking about it, but marketing your reputation would be impossible without getting reviews. Every business owner would like positive reviews about their products and services to pour in but the real world doesn't work like that.

In the real world, people are always stingy with leaving reviews for a product/service they tried even if they really liked it. But why?

Chapter 3 : Reputation Management vs. Reputation Marketing: What's the difference?

Why Are Customers Stingy with Reviews?

Luckily some nice and smart people decided to ask happy customers if they really liked a product then why are they not so willing to leave a positive review for it. The happy customer's responses gave marketing researchers plenty of insight to narrow down the seemingly odd behavior to just 3 answers.

Customers who tried a product/service and were satisfied with it did not leave a positive review because it did not occur to them.

Customers who tried a product/service and were satisfied with it did not leave a positive review because they just forgot to.

Customers who tried a product/service and were satisfied with it did not leave a positive review, because the process of leaving a positive review was too difficult/they didn't know how to go about the process.

These responses make it abundantly clear that if your business wants positive reviews that are genuine



and not paid for, you have to do the following things:

Ask the satisfied customers to leave a review.

Remind the satisfied customers to leave a review.

Guide them through the process of leaving a review.

So, if you struggle with getting positive reviews despite delivering great quality products/services, you should try giving the above steps a try.

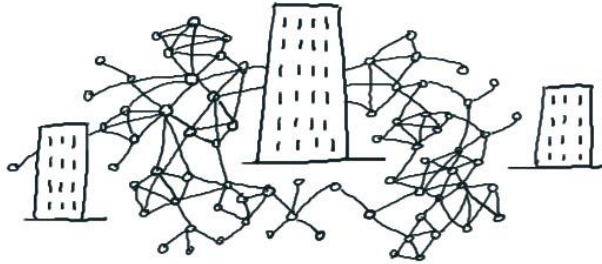
To increase your odds of getting a positive review for your business, it has also been observed that customers feel more encouraged to leave a positive review when they feel some sort of a personal connection to that particular business.

So how do you build a personal connection with a customer just to get them to leave you a review?

Chapter 3 : Reputation Management vs. Reputation Marketing: What's the difference?

Connecting with the Customers:

Advertising agencies make use of this tactic like nobody else. If you have ever seen a campaign for any



Customers are connecting. Are you?

brand or business that makes you feel something good, like a tear-jerking advert for a Mother's Day campaign, you are likely to have a better impression of that brand and are even likely to boost their sales by buying something from them and of course, leave them a sparkling review for it later too.

But are advertisements the only way of connecting with your customers and building somewhat of a more personal connection with them? Not at all.

Turns out you can do plenty to make a more meaningful connection with your customers.

And most of them do not require you to spend crazy amounts of money. The easiest way you can start on the journey of winning your customer's hearts is by making them a priority. Business owners who do not treat their customers right should not be complaining about their poor sales either. Competition in business has always been fierce and it will only get fiercer. If there is an entrepreneur out there who thinks that the main focus of their business is themselves and not their customers/clients, they would surely be doing themselves a really big disservice in all senses of the word.

Treating your customers as a priority means addressing (with genuine concern) the problems that they found in your business.

Some business owners tend to go a step further and really hit the nail on the head. If you have ever been down to Hermosa Beach in California you may have spotted the immensely famous coffee shop Java Man. The owner of that shop really knows how to treat the customers like they matter. The owner noticed that most of the regular customers of Java Man are patrons who stop for a cuppa with their dogs in tow.

Making the most of this opportunity, he thought it would be a good idea if they also started providing fresh water in bowls for the dogs, who may be tired from all the walking around they had to do at the Hermosa.

So what just happened here? Not only did Java Man quench the thirst of the dogs, but they also made the owners of the dogs (their customers) feel as if Java Man really cares about them. That has got to earn them some major positive points for Java Man.

You will find tons of examples like the Java Man where entrepreneurs can be spotted doing the heavy-lifting to really please their customers by creating an emotional bond with them.

Chapter 3 : Reputation Management vs. Reputation Marketing: What's the difference?

At times, all we want is a listening ear. We want someone to listen to us whine and complain, and if they can even do something about it then that would be just great. Another simple way of getting professionally personal with the customers is to interact with them. Asking questions will let you know what the customers really feel about your business/brand, and if there are any problems that they find with your business and what you can do about them. The best part is that there are so many online survey tools available like Mail Chimp or Constant Contact etc. that allow you to interact with the customers and really get to the bottom of things.

Using social media is something which can also come to your rescue. From using it to building your brand's image to connecting with the customers, and hopefully impressing them to a point where they feel like leaving a positive review for your business, a lot can be accomplished by using the various social media platforms that you have.

Going back to the topic of marketing your reputation, once you have your positive reviews in place use them as much as you can. From having them embedded on your conversion pages or turning them into social media posts or even have them on white papers, it is clearly up to you how you wish to use them.

Your business' reputation is invaluable. Instead of spending time deciding whether you should manage it or market it, it will only do you good that you do both of the things. Manage it and market it!

Chapter 4 : Online Reputation Management (ORM)

Online Reputation Management (ORM)



You know what reputation management is.

Online reputation management or ORM is the same. The only difference is that it's done to manage your online reputation. As the number of people taking internet as the prime source for finding out information about businesses, it makes sense why ORM is fast becoming a process that cannot be ignored.

A basic ORM procedure would involve having all the positive, noteworthy things of a business to come up to the top of the search results, whilst simultaneously pushing down the unwanted things.

Why anyone would want to get an online reputation management company on board is pretty simple actually. Think of it as a filter that company uses to promote all the good about them, while blurring the not-so-good things.

Do you know that about 45% of people wouldn't want to do business with a service provider if they come across something bad about them on Google? 45% of people is a very significant number and cannot be taken lightly.

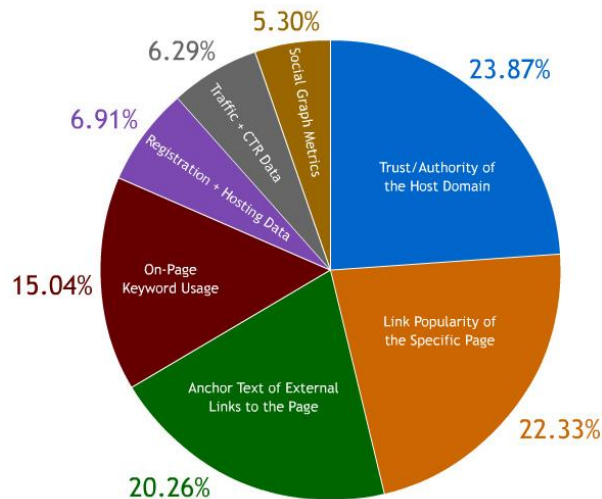
Hence, as an entrepreneur, it is one of the most important things you need to pay attention to. You need Google to present such results about your company which would put it in the most favorable light possible. And if you are wondering how to do it, we shall tell it all in this chapter!

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Your Current Google Ranking:

Components of Google's Ranking Algorithm

(According to 72 SEOs Surveyed for SEOMoz's Biennial Search Ranking Factors)



We have talked about this before too that knowing what your reputation is is ultimately going to be the first place from where you will start managing it. The rule applies to ORM too. Before anything else, you need to know what Google reports actually say about you when a potential customer types in your name.

Naturally, the results that you see will help you decide what your plan of action should be.

This is perhaps the simplest step of all. All you have to do is just Google your business' name and see what the search results have to say. One very important tip is to make sure not to have your

Google account logged in otherwise the search results displayed will be irrelevant based on just your location. Your consumers may not necessarily be from your area. In order to get more comprehensive results, make sure Google has no information about you or your location.

Once you have the search results displayed in front of you, it is time to check out your ranking. You do this by looking at the kind of results Google has displayed. The convenient part here is that you don't have to go beyond the first page of the Google search results. The first page alone will give you a clear picture of your ranking.

Fun fact: When using a search engine, 93% of the people never go beyond the first page and usually just take the first 10 results displayed into consideration only.

If you spot one or more than one Google result displayed on the first page which is not in your business' favor, your ranking is negative. On the opposite end, if the results displayed are in your business' favor, it means the ranking is positive. Sometimes, you may even come across search results which are not this black and white. Simply put, they can neither be classified as positive or negative; they are neither saying anything good for your business nor saying anything bad about it. To describe such results we will use the term "irrelevant".

Some entrepreneurs may even find themselves confronting another interesting but somewhat distressing situation too. When they run a Google search on their business, they tend to see results of another business that shares their name so the displayed search results are not for your business, but for someone else's. For example, you have a carpet cleaning business, but there is one with the same name who cleans water tanks. A potential customer of your carpet cleaning service may Google your name to come across a service with the same name but they don't clean carpets. Matters can become worse if there is a lot of negative content floating around about the water tank cleaning company.

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Their negative reputation may be mistaken as yours.

Once you have run a Google search on your business, you will find yourself confronting one or even two of the following situations:

The positive content that you saw on Google was impressive and you would like it to be pushed up further. There is good content about your products but it is not coming up on the first page of Google. Fortunately, there is a lot that you can do in terms of pushing the positive content further and make it more accessible to your potential customers.

The negative content that you see on Google about your business, or of a business that shares your name and you want that to be “buried.” You cannot afford any negative content messing up with your business’ reputation. You need the negative content to be buried by having positive content taking the lead.

A third possibility would be having no content at all! Your business has no or very little web presence. So, when you run a Google search on your business, forget positive or negative, there is no content that is displayed.

SEO and its Importance:

It goes without saying that a successful ORM strategy would always include a solid search engine optimization (SEO) strategy. Whether you wish to get rid of the negative content, push the positive content further or create search friendly content for your business, SEO does it all.



And that’s just scratching the surface with what SEO can do for your business. There are so many entrepreneurs who complain of having a website but still search engines like Google or even Bing don’t pick them up. The reason why that happens is because the website has been designed in a manner in which the search engines do not

understand. SEO can help you structure your page in the most search-engine friendly possible manner.

From creating content that is easily and quickly found by Google, to linking it with reliable databases to increase your business content’s credibility, SEO strategies can help you a lot in managing your online reputation.

There is literally a SEO strategy for everything. Therefore, naturally mastering them and learning how they work will take time. To make the process more effective it is best to get help from a SEO specialist who already knows what strategy to make use of to get you to your goal faster.

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Whatever your goal for your ORM may be, to promote content, bury it or generate it, you can discuss it with SEO specialists and get started.

Social Media Presence:

A large part of ORM is also determined by social media profiles. With so many different social media platforms out there if you are confused which ones to choose, ORM strategists mostly just focus on 4 of them:

1: Facebook

2: Twitter

3: Google +

4: LinkedIn

Aka the Big 4!

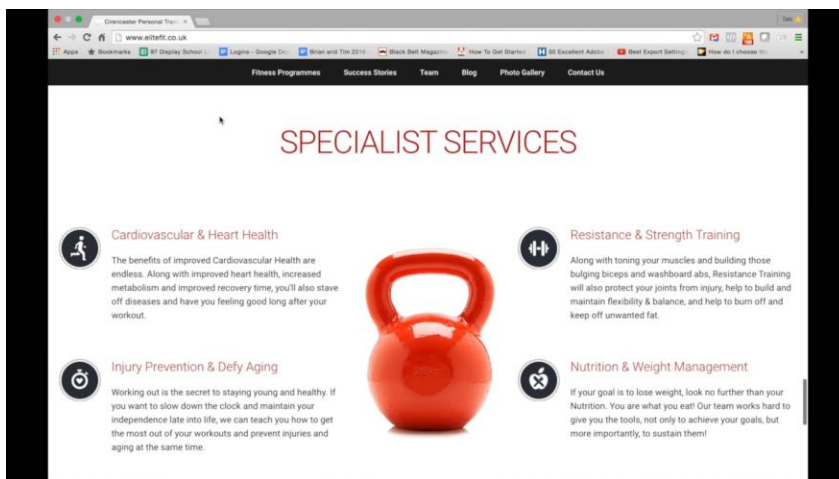
The reason why these four (4) are mostly focused on is again linked back to SEO. Facebook, Twitter, Google + and LinkedIn tend to rank up the highest on search engines. Hence, it makes complete sense why you should at least be active on at least one of these four social media platforms, if not all of them.

The fact that the social media pages of your business will be private, you need to be a little careful with what content goes there. You need to use the big 4 to promote that content of your business which puts it in the most favorable light possible. A good rule here is to remember that nothing is private, hence keep your social media profiles very professional.

If you want to post political comments on Facebook for example, you might as well create another personal profile specifically for that purpose.

Your Website is the Most Important Page in ORM:

Whether you take the time to learn and implement SEO tactics yourself or get help from outside, your



website needs to be the most credible, most comprehensive online source that has all the information about your business. SEO strategists will help you create a good webpage, but if you want to do it again you are more than welcome to try and do so.

Make sure that whatever information goes on your

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website is extremely relevant. Whatever information that you would want a potential customer to know about you or your business should be up there on the website.

We consider websites to be the most important part in ORM, because this place alone can really help boost your Google ranking. From adding links, to other online sources that have to say something important about you and/or your business, to using it to adding a social stream feed, your website is a one stop place for anyone who wants to know who you are.

ORM and Dealing with Negative Search Results:

The internet is a weird place. Even if you are doing everything right, sometimes, a negative review may still find its way on the first page of Google's search engine.

And we cannot have it.

So what do you do about it? If you are wondering if you can just simply ask Google to take it down, the short answer is yes you can. The long answer is: yes, you can but it is situational and a very lengthy process.

It's very unlikely that a negative review about your business also contains some personal information about you like your credit card details or social security number. But if it does, then you can totally ask Google to intervene and take legal action the person who is responsible

If the negative content is not coming from a person, but another website then you can even file a complaint against the website. Just check their Terms of Service Agreement first and if the negative content written about you seems not to be in accordance with those terms, you can easily file a complaint.

Other than taking forever, getting the negative content taken down via filing complaints can also be frustrating and expensive. What's more to this is that if by chance that person or website does remove the negative content it still might show up in search results because search engines tend to archive content.

Are there any other options for you to try?

Yes!

You can try to bury the negative content by having the positive content show up first on search engines. So basically, what you are doing is that you would not be removing the content completely. But by burying it down by piling up the positive content over it, you will be making the negative content difficult to reach.

We already mentioned that hardly anybody ever goes beyond the first page of the search engine. 93% of the people just stick to the first page. So if the first pages of the search engine display nothing but positive content about you or your business/brand while having the negative content on the later pages, it's a good enough strategy.

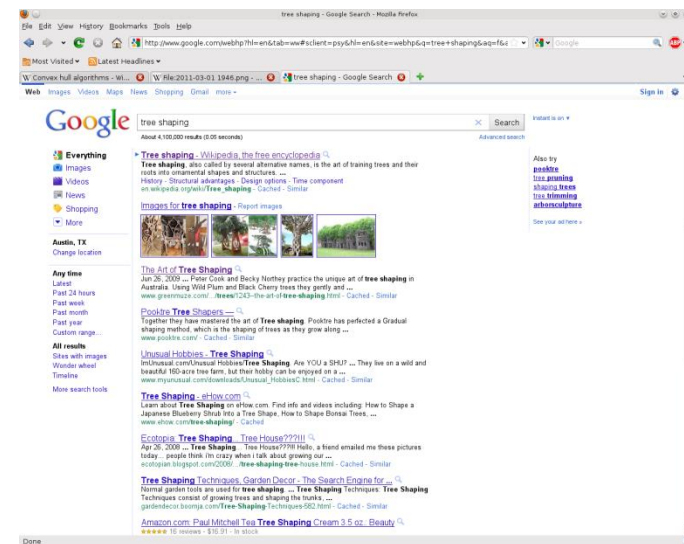
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The only thing you need to consider with this tactic is that you need to have a lot of great (high ranking) content which should be enough to take up the space on the first page of the search engine. Having one or two positive results will hardly do the job of burying the negative content.

It would be a good idea for you to look into ways to create high ranking content. You will find yourself with plenty of tips to follow on how to create some excellent content that will help you bury the negative content.

While we are still on the topic of negative content about your business showing up on Google and

damaging your reputation, we might as well talk a little about the results you might come across on Google Image.



You do not want a bad image for your business; both literally and figuratively. So obviously, you need to do something about the bad pictures related to your business/brand that may show up in Google Image results.

Your best bet is to join a leverage photo-oriented social media platform. Flickr, Tumblr, Photobucket, Instagram etc. are all good options of such social media platforms. Just to be on the safe side, take at least 3 photo-oriented social media platforms and set up your business' profile on them.

And then get busy posting good images online!

If you don't have any photographs that seem to be promoting your business in a positive light, then you might need to think a little about that too. Start taking good pictures of your products, employees, workplace etc. yourself or hire someone professional to do so. Have at least a dozen good pictures that you can post on your accounts.

But since we want those good pictures to show up on Google Images, we want Google to pick them up as well.

How do we do that?

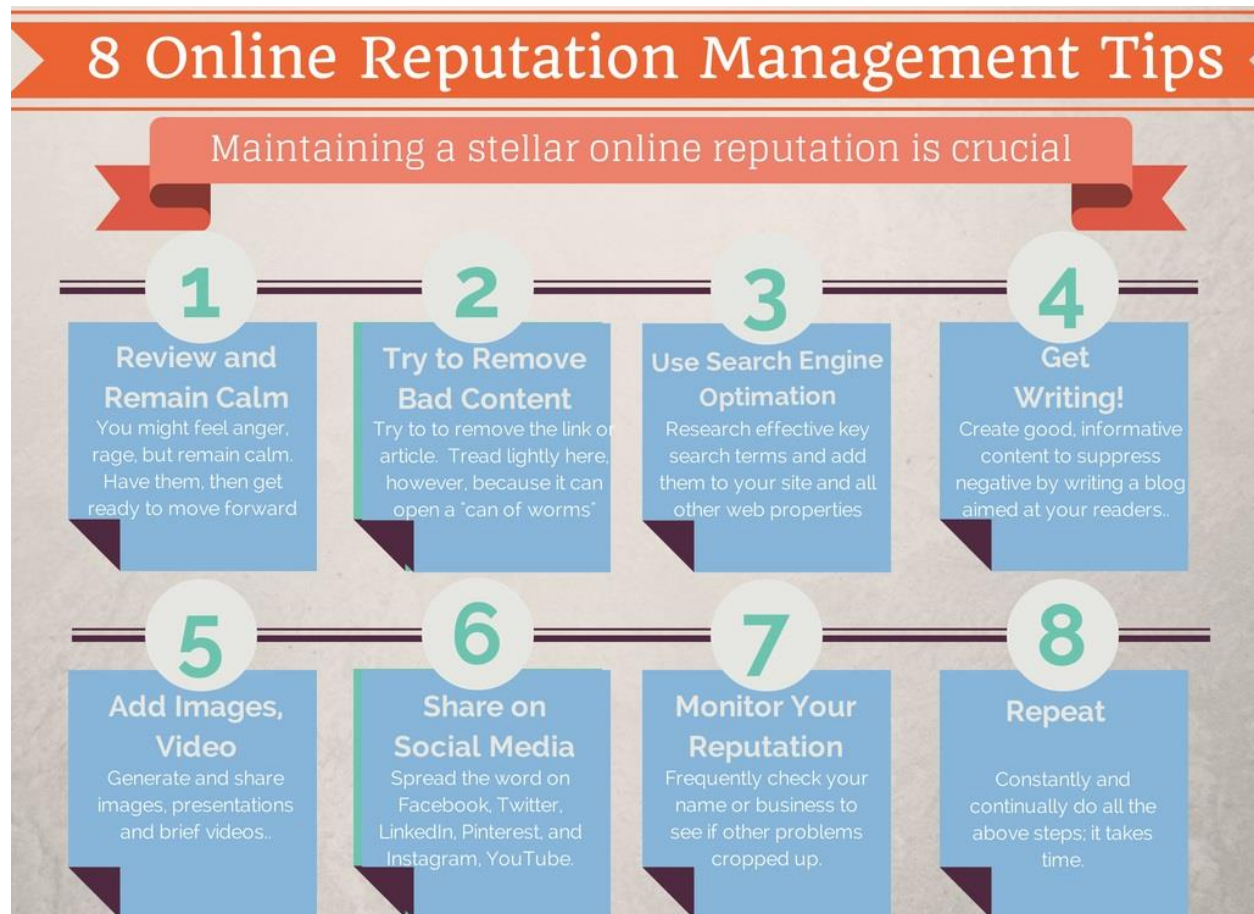
By describing the photo!

Photo descriptions will let Google know that the image is about you or your business. So mention your name or your business' name in the descriptions.

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To further make the positive pictures search engine friendly, you can create a post with the image in it and share it on social networks. What you are basically doing is creating more links that lead up to the good photos. The more the good links, the more you increase your chances of having that picture show up on search engines rather than the bad or negative ones.

Before we move on further with this chapter, you might want to check out these amazing tips to work on your online reputation management:



ORM and Your Business:

By now you must have some idea of what ORM is and what it does for your business.

Whether you want to just protect your brand or raise up the revenue or even have something done which boosts up the sales, or all three of these things, it is clear that Online Reputation Management is something you need to pay extra attention to.

The businesses of today are more in need of ORM than the businesses of yester year. The reason is simple: more and more consumers are relying on the internet to look for things and consequently buying them.

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So, what the internet has to say about your reputation will automatically be influencing your business in more ways than one. The more positive content you have about your business floating about the internet, the more your business is likely to grow.

And the opposite will act as a very big block for your business. So the importance of having an extremely effective ORM strategy is pretty much evident.

The Big Question: Should You Do Your Business's ORM on Your Own?

You might be thinking that if it's your online reputation, shouldn't you be better able to manage it?



There's no right answer to that. The only thing we can add to this is that an expert on something is going to be better at doing that something. This is by no means to come across as condescending or to seem as if we have no faith in your skills.

We're sure if push comes to shove you will be able to

manage your business' online reputation. But hiring an ORM service provider that has the right training and experience of helping businesses get rid of the negative publicity online might be a better idea.

From helping you evaluate your current standing online with your customers, to providing solutions that are going to work, and not some trial and error-based thing, all this can be done more professionally with hiring a reliable ORM service provider.

Think about all the time and energy you will be saving by having a team of ORM professionals working to improve or maintain the online reputation of your business. We mentioned it in this chapter how SEO is such an important part of ORM. And if you have ever even simply just Google-d SEO Strategies and were not overwhelmed by the search results that popped up, you're probably lying.

There is just so much that goes into rolling out a successful SEO campaign. And the fact that not all strategies might work for every type of business makes it even more important for you to consult a team of experts.

When it comes to managing your reputation online, we cannot stress this enough just how valuable time is for you. The longer something negative about your brand remains online, the more your brand will suffer. You need to take action and fast.

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Your reputation, whether it's online or offline is not a once in a lifetime kind of a thing; it's not the exam that you just have to sit for once and never look at it again. It's called reputation *management* which means that the work never stops. Even after you have built a successful reputation for your brand, you will need to continue with the efforts to maintain it.

Why not have ORM experts take over this aspect of your business for you?

A problem that may have you stumped and have your scratching your head, the nice guys at the ORM firm might be able to solve it. From improving your business's visibility, to helping you build and/or maintain a positive image of your brand, all of these can be better achieved and in less time with an ORM service provider as compared to you trying to attempt it on your own.



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Conclusion:

It's important for you to have a business which your audience can trust.

Your reputation is what is either going to make your audience find your business reliable or the opposite of that.

As an entrepreneur, you cannot afford to have a "I don't care what others think about me, I will do what I want" attitude. The most important part about your business is your customer. Therefore, you need to work on an approach which centers around that. You have to care about what they think about you and your business because, that is what is going to make them either want to do business with you or turn around and never look back in your direction.

And with the power that social media places in their hands, they (your customers) might tell other potential customers to do the same too.

And if you still like to disagree, we leave this quote by Warren Buffet which might help you change your mind.

