

Your Web Reputation

Read these two articles:

Every startup fears that one angry and unfair customer who can jeopardize the business by a SCREAMING post on [Ripoff Report](#), [Yelp](#), or one of the hundreds of other consumer complaint and review sites on the Internet. Most entrepreneurs don't even know how to keep track of what people are saying about them on the web, much less how to respond or remove it.

Web reputation management, both business and personal, has become a top priority requirement. On the personal side, these items can kill your career, as I discussed in a prior article "[Google Yourself to See How Other People See You](#)." Luckily, the basic principles for reputation management are the same for both business and personal environments:

- 1. Your reputation is your responsibility.** The first step is to recognize that you alone are responsible for managing the reputation of your business and your life. Doing nothing, or counting on more laws, is not an answer. Due to First Amendment rights, offensive content, once entered, is often untouchable, and the sources are immune from liability.
- 2. Actively monitor what people are saying about you.** You may assert that monitoring the entire Internet space is an impossible problem. Fortunately, there are already tools out there, like [Google Alerts](#) (free) and [ReputationDefender](#), which can do the work for you, and send you a daily email report of every link where your name or brand appears.
- 3. Proactively build a positive reputation.** Maintaining a good reputation means you have to build one early and maintain it. There is a big difference between no reputation with one negative comment, versus 1000 indications of a positive reputation and one negative. Most people accept that no person or organization is perfect.
- 4. Quickly address every negative.** Many negative customer experiences can actually be turned into positives, if you quickly and unemotionally acknowledge the problem, resolve it, and spread the positive message before the negative one gets amplified. Don't emulate the "[United Breaks Guitar](#)" experience.
- 5. Push negative content out of view.** In reality, most people will never find negative content, unless a link appears on the first page of search engine results. With the right focus on search engine optimization, or the help of companies like [DefendMyName](#), you can usually push negative links out of sight into the swamp of the Internet.
- 6. Remove unwanted content, where possible.** Removing your content from the Web is not as easy as canceling your accounts, nor is it completely impossible. You can easily remove content you own (comments on your site or accounts). Experts, like Reputation Defender, have proprietary techniques to correct or completely remove other unwanted content.

The upside to the difficulty of removing unwanted content is that it does justice to those who have come by their bad reputations legitimately. For curbing bad guys, the speed and visibility of the Internet can be a very useful thing. For all the rest of us, it's nice to know that we can shout back quickly and broadly, when someone starts to whisper about us.

As I have discussed in previous articles, social networking sites like Facebook are now the most frequently used websites on the Internet. Unfortunately, they have also become some of the most abused websites on the Internet, due to the emotions of failed relationships and the immature whims of young users.

So the social networks are the early place to start, in learning the discipline of building and maintaining a positive reputation. If you get that right, the transition to your business will be easy. On the other hand, if you let your reputation slide early to be "cool," it may take a lifetime to recover. It's easier to make Google remember than to forget.

Source: <http://blogs.forbes.com/martinzwilling/2011/05/28/six-keys-to-managing-your-reputation-on-the-web/>

Google Yourself to See How Other People See You



The measure of an entrepreneur used to be the number of real friends claimed, but times have changed. Now the measure is how many hits one has on a Google name search, factored by some formula, like the sum of all positive messages minus 100 for every negative message. If you don't define yourself effectively, the Internet will do it for you in ways you never imagined.

That's the reason every good parent should be coaching their child from birth to avoid posting all the naughty things on social networks that can come back to haunt them later. To illustrate the point, here is a true story posted by [Seth Godin](#) a while back:

"A friend advertised on Craigslist for a housekeeper.

Three interesting resumes came to the top. She googled each person's name.

The first search turned up a MySpace page. There was a picture of the applicant, drinking beer from a funnel. Under hobbies, the first entry was, "binge drinking."

The second search turned up a personal blog (a good one, actually). The most recent entry said something like, "I am applying for some menial jobs that are below me, and I'm annoyed by it. I'll certainly quit the minute I sell a few paintings."

And the third? There were only six matches, and the sixth was from the local police department, indicating that the applicant had been arrested for shoplifting two years earlier.

Three for three.

Google never forgets."

It doesn't take much imagination to extend this example into your own business world, with potential customers and business associates checking you out. Can you imagine how many positives and how many years it will take to offset the impact of three negative posts entered by the entrepreneur herself in some spirited moments?

In reality, it's not just the Internet that captures everything we do – just look around you at the cameras in public buildings, banks, and everyone's cell phone. Remember the news with the videos of the latest celebrity exploits, or the cell phone photos that are snapped of every public and private activity and printed in magazines.

There's still a bit of the "wild west" left in the Internet, especially as it relates to social networking sites, so keep your wits about you as you explore and act. Don't be tempted into thinking that can safely relieve your tensions or aggressions in the anonymous massive numbers on Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn.

In case you think the number of friends is a meaningful measure, remember that social networking has also totally destroyed the meaning of the word "friend." Teenagers have hundreds of friends on Facebook by the time they are sixteen, most of whom they have never met face-to-face, and other people collect thousands on LinkedIn. Many of the top Facebook users boast proudly of their "whale" status (5,000 friends or more).

I'm not here to argue whether it is right or not. Just recognize that it is what it is. So do your business networking and social networking with your eyes wide open. In fact, if you live your business and personal lives that way, you might actually hope that someone is looking over your shoulder, and catches you in a glowing moment. Be known for your strength. Then you can be happy that Google never forgets.

Source: <http://blog.startupprofessionals.com/2011/04/google-yourself-to-see-how-other-people.html>

Click into these two websites and review



their products and services. Determine how much money they charge-if available- for their services.



Write a summary in MS Word about the need for e-Commerce businesses to maintain a good reputation on the web. This summary needs to be one-page, double-spaced, with lots of information. Save to work folder: Reputation_yourname.