



Social Media *and managing your*

ONLINE REPUTATION

What happens online stays online so organisations need to be proactive in keeping track of what occurs in the online environment. ANNA CAIRO reveals how you can protect your online reputation in three steps by simply being sensible, attentive and responsive.

Despite the positive aspects social media brings, the nature of the platform means that someone airing their bad experience online does so instantly and potentially to a massive audience.

As the online environment becomes more crucial to business and as more people comment on their experiences online with friends via Facebook, blogs, Twitter and so on, the risks for business increases. Whether a business is selling a product, looking for an investor or considering employing someone, a positive online reputation is now vital. For businesses, managing these potential negative comments and experiences is crucial, and means being prepared for them instead of reacting when unconstructive comments appear online.

Here are three steps to manage your business online reputation.

Build your online reputation

It's not enough to have a social media presence, business needs to be actively involved and build their credibility. Through developing professional and personal networks, get involved in conversations, answer questions, ask questions and share information. Use client or customer testimonials and engage your community. The more a business interacts

the more they position themselves as an authority in their space, building reputation and credibility.

Track and monitor

One of the key ways to track and monitor your online reputation is to consider some key words or phrases that you believe symbolise you, your company, and your brand. These can be typed into a search engine to see what comes up. This, however, is a time consuming process to do regularly. What is more efficient is to set up 'alerts' (i.e. Google or Yahoo Alerts among others) with your key words so that you are notified each time your key words are mentioned. From this you can track and manage important conversations that are occurring around your brand and identify opportunities to become involved before issues get out of control.

Respond to criticism

One of the key mistakes most businesses make when confronted with negative comments is to ignore them hoping they will go away, which they never do. Businesses need to own their negative comments and respond quickly and effectively. This means being polite, apologising



and not arguing as you will lose the argument and what started as an unhappy customer will turn into a PR backlash. The trick is separating the genuine complaint from the troll.

An effective social media presence requires more than an existence; it involves a strategic and practical approach to make it work for your business. Most negative comments can be turned into positive experiences so it pays for business to remember this and have a confident frame of mind. ■

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