



IMMEDIATE ACTION YOU **NEED** TO TAKE TO IMPROVE

YOUR ONLINE REPUTATION

# ONLINE REPUTATIONS ARE AS FRAGILE AS EVER



Online reputations are as fragile as ever for big brands and small businesses alike. Social media usage is on the rise and with the popularity growing for customer-generated review sites like Yelp; it's easy for a brand's reputation to be negatively impacted in seconds.

Consumers are aware that there is plenty of competition for their dollar, so they do their research before committing to a new product or service. Sites like PissedConsumer.com, RipoffReport.com, and ComplainsBoard.com must all be monitored. Negative reviews or comments that appear prominently in the search engine rankings can stall sales at best and halt them at

worst.

Studies show that businesses with an average of a one or two-star rating on sites like Yelp fail to convert 90 percent of prospective customers. A BrightLocal study also found that more than half of online consumers say that the star rating of a business on Google Reviews or Yelp is the most important factor in their purchasing decision.

A 2017 study by [Edelman](#) stated that the Internet was not only the most trusted source for information, it was the first place the majority of people went for general news and product research. A Bright Local study found that 91 percent of people in North America read online reviews before considering working with a business. Whether negative information about a company is factual or not, perception is reality online.

For businesses or individuals who are feeling the impact of negative online content, it's vital that a strategic plan is put in place and action is taken immediately. The first step is to get a clear picture of the damage. Putting together a complexion report will give a business a clear understanding of the severity of the issue as well as allow them to examine the pattern – or lack thereof – in the negative results. Complexion reports should not only examine the name of a business or individual but the name of the business or individual connected to common negative keywords. For example, words like scam and reviews will often appear in the autosuggest dropdown feature on search engines when a potential client is conducting their research.



It's important that a business understands how to digest the results of a complexion report. For instance, Google will typically list paid advertisements and then ten organic search results. It's not enough to only examine the first spot or even the first few spots in the organic rankings. Instead, businesses or individuals should be focused on the first page entirely. Roughly, 95% of searchers aren't going to look at page two or beyond. If the first page can be cleared, it can significantly strengthen the online reputation of the business.

The second step is to realize the breadth of the challenge. Every industry offers a unique set of challenges. Of course, social media sites like Facebook are universally important, but some industries will need to consider their brand's presence on social sites like Polyvore and Pinterest. It's vital to have a clear understanding of the types of social sites that are relevant to a particular industry. Also, the same can be said for customer review sites. Yes, Google Reviews and Yelp are universal, but other sites like Angie's List need to be prioritized based on industry.



It's not enough to simply respond to negative comments. A personalized response is critical, but a continued presence across all platforms will demonstrate to current and potential customers that a business is committed to their needs and committed to improving their services. Fresh, authoritative content is what Google rewards the most. With nearly 85% of the search engine market share going to Google, content generation remains amongst the most important elements to search engine optimization.

Content should be generated not only on review sites and social media platforms but on highly authoritative microsites. PR efforts should be utilized in order to position key members of the company as experts in their industry. Domains for the key members of the staff should be purchased and built out. It's also incredibly valuable to have an owner or another member of the business cited in authoritative news pieces or on featured blogs with a link back to the website. When researching potential guest site opportunities, it's not only essential to look at the strength of the website but the size of the social following. If an authoritative blogger is willing to do a feature with a link and promotion on their social channels, it can really raise the value of the published content.

For company's facing the reality of a reputation management issue online, it can feel like an extremely overwhelming challenge. This is especially true when businesses don't have an established presence across all relevant sites. The positive news is that searchers and search engines alike do give more credence to recently published content. Negative reviews may not be taken down, but if they are less recent than positive reviews, it can go a long way towards changing a brand's perception online.

The third step to consider when putting together an immediate course of action to resolve reputation issues online is how a company is set up to spotlight positive content. This starts at the site level. Before a business establishes themselves on the proper social sites, they should eliminate the social share buttons on their site.

Once fresh content is published and comments are responded to, social share buttons should be displayed prominently above the fold on the homepage of the website. The White House Office of Consumer Affairs stated that a person who is dissatisfied with their experience will - without being prompted - tell 9-15 people. The same cannot be said about those who had a positive experience. It's on the business to utilize specific calls-to-action encouraging satisfied customers to leave a review. If prompted, consumers have a much higher likelihood of sharing their positive experience.

Finally, the last step in a reputation management campaign is to take action every single day to promote company strengths and the consumer experience. A reputation can't be built upon promises of getting better in the future. Complaints should be listened to and addressed. Letting current and future clients know that complaints have been taken into consideration and actionable changes have been put in place to fix the issue is critical. Actions will always speak louder than words. It's not enough to tell an unhappy customer or a prospect doing research that things are getting better. Businesses must actively show their customers through their actions that problems are recognized and solutions are put in place.

It's never too late to improve the reputation of a brand online. However, the job is never truly complete. Outlets for negative or positive feedback online are increasing - not decreasing. Reputation strategies can't be complacent. They must be ongoing and they must be ever vigilant. Reputation monitoring is crucial to the bottom line of a business.

Does your company have the proper setup?

Is it willing to take on the burden of proactively placing content on all of the necessary sites?

Do you have the right strategic partner?

**Call WebiMax Today!**

Call WebiMax today at [1-888-932-4629](tel:1-888-932-4629) or email [sales@webimax.com](mailto:sales@webimax.com) to learn more about what it takes to improve your company's online reputation.