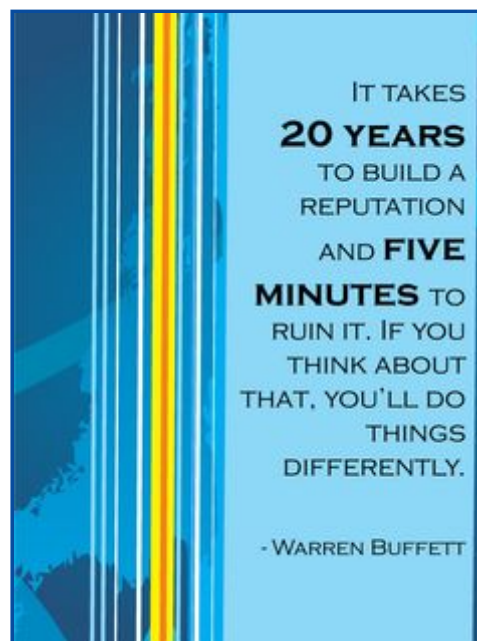


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## Is Your Reputation at Risk?

Customers and employees have always talked about their experiences with your company; but, in today's tech-enabled environment, what they have to say is now amplified and can quickly and significantly impact your company's reputation and bottom line. One or two negative reviews on the first page of search results will cost your organization new business and steer potential clients, business partners and highly-qualified job candidates away from your door.



Many businesses only consider reputation risk management as part of a crisis response plan; but, in a market where much of value comes from hard-to-assess intangible assets such as brand equity, intellectual capital, and goodwill, this leaves organizations especially vulnerable to anything that damages their reputations.

Don't risk your organization's reputation by waiting for a crisis to strike. Reputation management is an ongoing effort that should be assigned to a

existing responsibilities won't pose a potential conflict.

Whoever takes on the mantel of *Reputation Risk Manager* must assess your company's current reputation and continually monitor changing beliefs and expectations via surveys, focus groups and in-depth interviews with your stakeholders. Are there reputation-reality gaps that pose significant risks? Where can you improve reality to match your good reputation? How can you promote your accomplishments to strengthen your weak reputation?

### **The Best Defense is a Good Offense**

No matter what you do, you will never please everyone. Building a strong, positive online presence can help mitigate damage to your business if/when you are unfairly maligned. If you're not sure where to start, here are a few suggestions:

#### Your Website

- Provide unique information not available on hundreds of other sites and add new information regularly
- Do your homework to identify the best keywords and phrases to incorporate into your content
- Use quotes from top-management, or data generated by your organization, in news releases and articles
- Provide sites like Better Business Bureaus and Chambers of Commerce with useful content and ask them to link back to your website
- Consider purchasing additional domain names that closely resemble your business name and direct all traffic to your website

#### Online Directories and Review Sites

- Claim your online directory listings and provide accurate contact information
- Regularly search your organization, board members and management team members on HealthGrades.com, Vitals.com, Yelp.com, YP.com, RevolutionHealth.com, RateMD.com, Angieslist.com, Glassdoor.com, Indeed.com, etc.
- Ask for reviews - a lot of positive reviews will help mitigate a few bad ones; so, give clients a card with urls for customer rating sites, add a link

## Social Media

- Open social profiles on sites with high authority, like Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter and Google+, and cross link these to your website (listing of high-authority sites: <http://moz.com/top500>)
- Monitor social media with tools like Google Alerts, Social Mention, Hootsuite, Trackur, IceRocket, etc.
- Engage in online conversations:
  - Don't pretend people aren't talking - publicly acknowledge both compliments and complaints, own your mistakes and offer solutions
  - Always be polite - defensive/aggressive behavior may feel good in the moment, but will only add fuel to the fire and you will be get burned in the end
  - You can ask site administrators to remove negative content - you have a greater chance of success if the content is illegal (contains defamatory language or false information); but, consider allowing negative comments to remain to allow you the opportunity to respond publicly in a positive manner
  - Avoid litigation at all costs – you will most likely lose and it will cost you significant legal fees
  - Seek professional help if necessary – avoid “black hat” entities who write fake reviews and employ other dishonest and inappropriate methods



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