By: Michael W Hobach

Blue Eye Group LLC

www.BlueEyeGroup.com

In this report you will find the top 30 questions most business owners have regarding Online Reputation Management.

Online Reputation Management

With the Internet being a major source of information, it is also becoming the go-to place for sharing feedback and reviews about almost anything. Now, more than ever, customers are flocking online to share their latest experiences with businesses whose products and services they have tried.

This can either work for your business or against it, depending on where it stands in the eyes of consumers.

Customer comments such as this can literally cripple a company's ability to generate new customers – especially if there are multiple negative comments and hardly any positive comments…

"Whatever you do, DON'T go there!" or "I will NEVER go back to that place again!"

You obviously don't want to see these comments about your business floating around online. Any prospective customer that hasn't tried your business will run the other way. This is why protecting your online reputation is absolutely critical.

Online Reputation Management has emerged as an effective marketing tactic for businesses to ensure that their online reputations are intact and helping them generate more sales - instead of scaring their potential customers away.

As a small business owner, you've probably wondered if you should be actively monitoring and managing your online reputation – well… the answer is definitely "yes."

Even if you do not currently have a negative online reputation, you should still work towards building your brand and monitoring what is being said about your company; all so you can avoid any future damage.

Let's take a look at 10 of the most common questions most small businesses have about online reputation management:

1. What is Online Reputation Management?

Online reputation management is exactly what the name implies; the ability to manage your online reputation. But what does this really mean?

These days, every single piece of information, every single review, and every single comment written about your business online can be seen by others.

In fact, everything *ever* written about your business online is accessible to *anyone* via what is known as your 'digital footprint.' One thing you have to realize is that, regardless of the size of your business, your customers are talking about you.

Years ago, if a potential customer wanted to use a business, the only way of finding out about its reputation was through word of mouth; they relied solely on the recommendations (or warnings to stay away) from previous customers.

Fast forward to the modern day and social media (think Facebook, Twitter, Google+ Local, Yelp and so forth), allows the world to see instant opinions and experiences regarding every aspect of your business.

No matter how good you are at what you do, it is difficult to please everyone all of the time. For larger scale businesses in particular, keeping a 100% perfect online reputation all of the time is tough, if not near impossible!

However, a 100% squeaky clean online image is not to be expected; every business will have at least one unhappy customer. But your goal should be to have more positive mentions about your company than negative.

People will leave negative comments about even the smallest things that bother them and usually the first place they head to do so will be online. Online reputation management allows you to keep up to date with what is being said about your business online and allows you to take back control to some extent if your reputation is being portrayed wrongly or in a way you would rather it wasn't.

2. Why is Online Reputation Management So Important?

You may be thinking, "Do our potential customers really care about what is being said about us online?"

The simple answer is, of course they do. In life, and especially in business, first impressions mean everything. In particular, if someone is searching Google looking for a product or service, at first glance they are open to all businesses that a Google search presents them with.

However, when they start looking in greater detail, one or more bad reviews could mean an instant rejection off your business, and move them onto looking at others instead. After all, why should they choose to go with a business with negative reviews when there are businesses that have mostly positive ones?

With it being so easy for consumers and past customers to voice their opinions in the form of online reviews and comments, online reputation management has become a critical part of business.

Look, here's the deal. You can invest as much time and money into advertising and creating your brand to be just how you want it; but at the end of the day, nothing beats a fantastic online reputation and if your reputation is less than stellar then all the positive things you are doing to build your business may be in vain.

3. How Do We Monitor What is Being Said about Us Online?

It's all about research. Knowledge is power and the more you know regarding what is being said about your business online the better. Knowing where you stand is the best starting point; as in knowing if there's anything that needs to be improved in order for your online reputation to be the best it can be.

Have you ever Googled your own name? Come on, admit it, we've all done it at some point, just to see what search results come up. Well this is the same; Google your business name and see what comes up in the search results.

If you're looking specifically for people's reviews and opinions on your company then try Googling your company name plus the word 'reviews' or search social media websites the same way.

If you want to stay on top of what is being written about your company online then consider setting up Google Alerts. If you haven't heard of this service before, it's very simple and easy to use.

You can set up updates to be sent to your email address every time a new result appears that matches your query (in this case your company name). This is all in the name of research and is the very starting point of being able to manage your online reputation effectively.

While managing your online reputation on social networks is becoming increasingly difficult, social media sites also allow you as the business owner, the opportunity to interact on a personal level with customers, giving them a chance to ask questions or run ideas and suggestions by you.

Transparency in the business world is often a good thing, as it builds trust with customers and makes you accessible to them, giving them as the customer a feeling of importance.

4. What if We Already Have Some Negative Comments or Reviews?

If you know there are already some negative comments or reviews out there, to be honest, there isn't much you can do about the reviews themselves. You can't necessarily change anything that was written about your business in the past but there is A LOT that you can change regarding how you want your online reputation to be seen in the future.

You should be working towards a reputation in which the positive far outweighs the negative. If you have 99% excellent reviews and only 1% negative reviews, which do you think people are going to take more notice of?

Work on producing more positive content on the web and this will not only go towards improving your Google rankings, but it will also create a positive reputation that is backed up by an equal amount of positive reviews.

Concentrate on creating published content that is useful and sends out a positive message about you and your business. Blog posts, helpful videos, and content that people find valuable will all go towards pushing your business name up Google search rankings and getting you noticed in a positive way.

5. Is Online Reputation Management Only About Negativity?

Not at all. Online reputation management is also about taking a proactive approach to how your business is viewed by others, namely potential customers. It's also about spreading the word about your brand, thereby resulting in creating an excellent reputation amongst your customers and growing your existing customer base.

How your business is viewed, is really up to you. Hard work and an excellent product or service will create a buzz about your business in the local area and online.

There is nothing better for your reputation than great reviews online. Any company can advertise how great it is, how great its products are, but the things that potential customers trust more than anything are reviews from past customers.

Reading about someone else's experience with your company can determine whether or not someone will give you a call or place an order with your company. Great reviews or comments on review websites or social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, are essentially free advertising for your company, which is great!

6. How Do We Take Control and Protect Our Online Reputation?

If you don't take control and protect your online reputation, then you're letting other people do it for you. Remember, this is your business and you need to take a proactive approach so potential customers or clients find more of what you want them to read about your company and less of what you don't.

If you aren't actively promoting the positive points about your business and pushing away the negative, then you are essentially letting other people's comments and reviews control the way that new potential customers are viewing your business.

Ideally, you need to a Reputation Management expert on your team when it comes to effective online reputation; to research all of your directory listings, such as Google+ Local, Yelp, CitySearch, Yahoo Local, Super Pages, etc. and let nothing be written about your business without making sure that you're immediately aware of it if and when it does happen.

7. What Will Happen if We Ignore Our Online Reputation?

These days, competition between businesses for new customers is more intense than ever. Ignoring your online reputation would be a critical mistake and basically handing your competitors the lead.

If you are ploughing all of your time and money into advertising, promoting your business, networking, etc. but are ignoring your business' online presence then all your positive efforts could very possibly go to waste.

If your business is being falsely portrayed online, you could be unknowingly cultivating a negative online reputation. You could be losing out on potential customers and you might not even realize it's because of your bad online reputation.

You have to take control and know when to get help for improving your online reputation so that you can make sure your business is being accurately and fairly represented by the content that's floating around online.

Ignoring your online image could eventually lead to your competitors getting more leads, customers, and sales.

8. What if Negative Comments About Our Company Are False or Mistaken Identity?

Honestly, you can't make bad-hearted customers and competitors looking to slander your reputation take down these reviews. But you *can* fight back!

False negative reviews and comments can really hurt your business and result in your losing potential customers. Sadly, intense rival competition from other businesses may result in them leaving false negative comments about your business; the goal is usually to steer potential customers away from your business and into theirs. If you are confident that a negative review has been falsely written by a business competitor, you are well within your rights to contact the review site's administrator and ask for it to be removed, provided you can prove it is a false review. Again, you can try this but there is no *guarantee* that it will be taken down.

Regardless, whether the negative review was from a past customer or from a rival business, it is all about how you act in the face of negative comments that matters.

Often, it is useful to potential customers if you leave feedback for a negative review. This shows that you're involved and attentive to the customer experience. It lets the potential customer see a balanced perspective from both sides. In other words, it's your chance to stand trial for your "wrongdoings."

You may be very hurt or disgruntled about a negative review or a disparaging comment left online about your company but it's how you react (or don't) to the negativity that matters. Sometimes a reaction or reply to such comments isn't really necessary and would only result in more negative feelings towards your company.

If there are several reviews complaining about the same thing, then it would be wise to address these issues to a wider online audience. It can be difficult knowing when and how to react, but whatever you do, do *not* take things personally; always remain professional at all times.

9. What Should We Look for in an Online Reputation Management Company?

Before you look for an online reputation management company, you first need to decide what areas you need help in and what it is you want the company to do for you. Ideally, you want a company to first look at where you currently stand and do an analysis of your current online reputation.

Following that, you'll want them to:

- Identify any keyword searches that result in negative feedback and push these down the rankings, while at the same time pushing the positive results to the forefront of search engine results.
- Publish positive online content and reviews that will replace, or at least outweigh, any negative comments. Then, distribute this content

amongst blogs, news sites, social media sites and others where it will be noticed by potential customers.

- Use social media and search engine optimization techniques to help the newly created positive content rank highly in search engine results, ultimately pushing down any harmful negative content.

10. Is Online Reputation Management Costly?

In short, it depends. But ask yourself this:

How much will it cost your business to continue to have a bad reputation that turns away customers?

The cost could depend on how damaged your online reputation is and how much negative content needs to be 'fixed.' It may depend on the size of your company and how many reviews need to be screened and researched.

Obviously, if you are a new start-up business there may not be much talk online about your business just yet; whereas if you have been in business for ten plus years, then there will be a lot of older content that needs screening.

MORE ON CUSTOMER REVIEWS

"Social Proof..." It's a concept psychologists have used for a number of years to explain social interactions. The general idea is that people tend to look to the actions of others when deciding how to act in a certain situation.

So, when people around you are shaking hands as a greeting during a business meeting, you might be disinclined to kiss them on the cheek.

However, if you're in a culture where kissing on the cheek is a proper greeting, and you see people doing it, then kissing on the cheek has been "proven" to be the correct action.

You're probably thinking…

"Social proof, psychological mumbo jumbo.. What does this have to do with *my* business?"

Well, to put it bluntly, social proof underlies much of the way that marketing for businesses works; especially the way they work in the internet world.

Let's think of your business as a person at a party; and let's say everyone at the party is bad-mouthing you, behind your back. If someone walks into the

party without knowing who you are, everyone will tell them all these bad things.

What will these people think of you (i.e. your business)? No matter how nice you act towards them, or how good your products and/or services appear to be, these people will probably believe you're bad. Their perception was manipulated by the social proof in the room.

The good thing about this is that you can use your understanding of social proof to positively influence what your potential customers will think about your business; and you can do this by spreading the "good" about your business by influencing customer reviews on the internet.

As a small business owner, you may be wondering just how much an impact customer reviews can have on your ability to generate new customers. Or, maybe you're not even aware that customer reviews exist online.

Here are ten common questions many business owners ask about customer review marketing:

1. What is an Online Customer Review?

Customer reviews have existed for practically as long as print media has been around. Everything from *Consumer Reports* to the book reviews in the Sunday Newspapers; these are all forms of customer reviews.

However, customer reviews weren't viewed as their own marketing force until the Internet came along. On the web, it's easier than ever for a customer to write a review that will reach a wide audience.

This is basically the same power of having a mass-distributed newspaper at your fingertips (perhaps even more powerful). For many local businesses, such as restaurants, day spas, hair salons, and others, consumers use sites such as Yelp.com, Google+ Local, and Citysearch to leave feedback for businesses. For books, there is Amazon.com… and there are a slew of other forms of reviews that can be found online.

These days, if a customer wants his or her voice heard, all it takes is a few strokes of the keyboard and a couple of clicks of the mouse. This can be good or bad depending on their experience with the company.

2. Why are Online Customer Reviews to Important?

Customer reviews are important because people trust them to an insane degree…

Did you know:

- 76% of people read online reviews before choosing a restaurant to eat at, a dentist to go to etc. That means that they will be led by social proof in whichever decision they make regarding your business: to go or not to go.
- 72% of people trust customer reviews just as much as the recommendations of their friends. For a long time, marketing theorists considered word of mouth -- when you hear something positive about a product from a friend - to be the holy grail of promotion. It was free to have someone else recommend a product, and unlike an advertisement, people were more likely to believe it if a friend said it. Customer reviews on the Internet have flipped the script a little. The Internet and customer reviews have *become* word of mouth.

All the evidence here makes it a no-brainer of a conclusion - for a business to compete in this marketplace, it needs to be in control of the way people are talking about it on the Internet. This control is the difference between profitability and failure.

3. Which Customer Review Sites Should We Be Most Concerned About?

The websites that host consumer reviews are almost too numerous to name.

Here are a few of the biggest ones with the most reach for local businesses:

- **Yelp** - It's the king of restaurant reviews. In recent years, Yelp has become a juggernaut force in the food industry. Most people, before going out to eat at a nice restaurant, will check Yelp first. And the reviews can easily sway these people's opinions: to go or not to go. Remember what we mentioned about social proof at the party: A restaurant will need good buzz - good reviews on Yelp - to build its social proof.

- **Google+ Local** - This is a relative newcomer on the customer review scene, yet in the few years it has been around, Google+ has grown into a powerful force for customer reviews. Any business wishing to build its social proof needs to have good reviews on Google+ in order

to be successful. The site's power comes from its connection with Google search, the most popular search engine in the world. Whenever someone does a Google search, or uses Google maps, they are automatically connected to a Google+ page for that business.

● **Local** - This site is another one of the big customer review sites. It's pretty standard in its layout - a description of the business, with hours of operation and prices and menus, along with space for reviews from users. Again, this is an invaluable tool for reminding your customers of your social proof in the marketplace.

There many others, such as Merchant Circle, Citysearch, Angie's List, Yahoo Local, Bing Local, and more…

4. How Do We Find Out What is Being Said About Us on These Review Sites?

The first thing that any business should do is to Google its own business name. Click through the first few links that pop up about your business, just to get a feel for the type of things being said about your company.
Note if it's good or bad, what kinds of things people are saying and where they are saying them. Don't panic! No matter how good or bad things seem; everything is repairable.

While you're doing this, consider what a potential customer would think about your company if he or she was learning about you for the first time on the web. Are these links giving you positive social proof? Or are they like the people badmouthing you at the party?

The next thing you should do is check out the review sites listed above to get into the nitty-gritty of customer reviews. But first; brace yourself!

Some customer reviews on sites like Yelp are notoriously harsh. Even the best businesses in the world are bound to have at least one negative review.

A certain amount of negative customer reviews are fine - to be expected, even - so long as they are balanced out by some good ones. A potential customer will need to see some good reviews if he or she is to take a chance on your company.

5. Should We Actively Ask My Customers for Reviews? If So, How?

Absolutely. If you have legitimately satisfied your customers, then why *shouldn't* you ask them to write a customer review for your business?

As long as you're doing your job, satisfying customers, giving them a positive experience with your business, then your customers would probably have no problem writing about it on Yelp.

The important thing to remember with this stuff is to ask for customer reviews *tactfully*. Don't just ask every single person who walks into your establishment to write you up.

To return to the party metaphor, this would be like if a new person at a party walked up to every guest and said, "Please like me, please like me, tell all your friends how good I am!"

This would be desperate. This party guest would be laughed out of the room, with everyone pointing and saying, "What's wrong with that guy?"

Asking for a customer review should come about naturally... Talk to your staff about recognizing opportunities to suggest that customers write a review. If your staff has the right touch, and you train them correctly, the positive reviews should start streaming in.

6. We Do Have Some Positive Reviews... How Do We Let People Know About Them?

There are numerous places where you can share your positive reviews. You can try posting them in your establishment. A printed out customer review shows potential customers that you value your relationships with your customers, and that you are committed to providing them with a great product.

It shows that you *care* about your customer's experience. Just remember to be careful with this type of thing. Print out too many customer reviews, and you might come across to your customers as gloating.

You can also link to these reviews on your social media pages, like Facebook and Twitter. With the interconnectedness of our Web 2.0 digital environment, posting and sharing reviews is easier than ever. All you have to do is perform a couple of clicks, and your beaming reviews will be there for all your customers to see.

And why stop there? Positive customer experiences should be milked for all they're worth, so link to them on your business's website.
This way, if anyone goes to your website looking for more information, they will see your positive reviews there as well.

If you're really happy about a customer review, you can post it on the front page of your website, or publish videos on your YouTube page informing people about them.

7. We Only Have a Few Negative Reviews. Can That Really Hurt Us?

Like we said earlier, negative reviews can seriously hurt your business. Heck, they might even sink your whole ship...

That is, unless you have positive reviews to counterbalance them. Positive reviews are the real key to the whole customer review world. Consider a negative review like lead, a very dense substance, and positive reviews as cotton. You will need a whole bunch of positive reviews to outweigh one or two negative ones.

Don't despair over a few negative reviews. Everyone expects negative reviews when they read customer review sites - they're just a reality. A few bitter people will always write nasty things about companies, regardless of their actual experience. All you can do is focus on getting as many positive reviews as you possible.

8. Should We Only Respond to Negative Customer Reviews?

No, you should respond to the positive as well. Always respond to your negative reviews. You want to show your customers that you care about them. And if they had a bad experience at your establishment, then you should ask them what you can do to do better next time. Maybe it's a simple fix - a simple fix that could save you customers in the future.

As far as positive reviews, shoot for responding to approximately 50% of them. Save your time on the other 50%, but even happy customers like to be acknowledged from time to time.

9. How Should We Respond to Negative Customer Reviews?

Pay attention, because the following advice is important. First, read the review carefully, and try to glean why they were upset in the first place. If they mentioned a specific problem, then make that problem the subject of your response.

Keep your response short and upbeat. You want to stay positive in the face of their negativity. Tell them that you are actively working toward fixing their stated problem. List some steps as to how you plan on addressing the problem.

Lastly, invite them to communicate with you offline to fix the problem. Consider bringing them in to help guide you in the process. Remember to keep it offline, though. You don't need any more negative publicity on the internet.

10. Can Social Media Help Us With More Positive Customer Reviews?

Of course! That's what social media is there for. Unlike review sites, which sometimes seems to be the stomping grounds for consumers to tear down stuff they don't like, social media is effective for getting people to talk about the things they like and are passionate about.

We've progressed a lot from the time when word of mouth was the only way for people to get information from their friends. Now word of mouth has expanded into the vast world of social media. If your business isn't taking advantage of this world, and your competitors are, you're going to have a tough time keeping up.

Online customer reviews are a good thing for your business. However, they could be a bad thing if you do not stay on top of what is being said about your company on these sites.

Not only that, but responding to these reviews will give your business a positive image, as well as help you get to the bottom of customer service issues you may not have been aware of.

Letting your competitors grab your share of the local market could end up being a huge and costly mistake; one way to avoid this is to ensure that your overall image online is a positive one that truly builds trust in your brand.

FIXING A NEGATIVE ONLINE REPUTATION

As a business owner who is constantly looking for more customers to come through the door, your online reputation has never mattered more.

Unprecedented amounts of commerce is happening on the Internet, which means companies that have poor online reputations will be completely looked past by discerning consumers.

Repairing and suppressing negative comments and reviews should be an ongoing process at your company. Never let it get so bad that you have a bad reputation in the first place.

However, if that ship has already sailed, there are some questions you are likely to have about repairing your online reputation.

Here are 10 common questions regarding how to fix a negative online reputation:

1. What is the First Step in Fixing Our Online Reputation?

The first step in fixing your online reputation is to assess the damage. You can't begin to fix your reputation if you don't know where your reputation currently stands.

Almost every business will have something negative said about them online, it is inevitable. You can never please everyone. That being said, you shouldn't have a mostly negative reputation; and if you do you should start to consider the best way to make it more positive.

Finding out what people are saying about you is one of the things you should almost constantly be doing. The reason why that is true, as you'll read in the questions that follow, is that you need to be there to counteract those negative words with positive ones. Prevention is always the best step in addressing these kinds of issues.

2. How Do We Find Out Exactly What is Being Said About Us Online?

The obvious answer to this question is to go search for your business name on major search engines like Google, Yahoo! and Bing. This is always a great first step. Simple as it seems, the most important things being said about you are the ones that rank highest in the search results.

This means that the first few items that show up in the search results will also be the first thing all of your potential customers see when they look up your business as well.

Obviously, websites aren't the only place people could be talking about you. There's social media to think about as well. The good news is that both Twitter and Facebook, the largest social networks, have excellent searching capabilities. You can do a search on Twitter not only for your Twitter handle, but for people mentioning your business name, too.

A great way to monitor this is to create a Twitter search for your company, and make that search your primary Twitter feed; this will give you real-time knowledge of what is being said about you on Twitter.

On Facebook, the searching is a little more difficult. Most times people will probably leave their negative comments on your Facebook page. If they don't, however, searching for mentions of you on Facebook can only be done through searching the regular search engines; these mentions will come up in the results.

3. We Have a Lot of Negative Online Mentions – Are We Doomed?

Fixing your online reputation can be done, although it can be difficult to do without help. If you find yourself in the situation where your reputation is on the line, you should know that it does not have to be permanent and can be repaired.

The question you may be asking yourself is "why does it matter?" It matters because negative online mentions can significantly harm your business.

Even if your business isn't based online, people use the Internet to find out about everything they buy – and this includes scoping out local businesses before they choose to use their products and/or services.

If you are based on the Internet, a negative reputation could spell disaster for your business if you don't do something about it.

The most important thing is that you do not expect things to change overnight. Fixing a damaged online reputation takes a lot of time and work; but it will be worth it in the end.

4. What Can We Do To Get Rid of Negative Online Comments and Reviews?

There is no apparatus available for you to remove negative comments published elsewhere on the web. If the comments are made on your Facebook account or directly on your website, you can remove those.

The best way to start the process of repairing your online reputation is to start publishing and promoting more positive content. This will help drive down the flood of negative comments you may be getting in the search engine results.

You can begin to get yourself back in shape by focusing your efforts to get your new content higher in the search engines by using white hat SEO practices. Hire a firm to help you get your SEO up to scratch so your content will be higher ranked than sites that contain the negativity.

When it comes to negative information floating around online about your company, one of the best forms of defense is to respond to it in a positive way so your potential customers can see that you care.

5. We Think One of Our Competitors Is Slamming Us Online – What Can We Do About it?

If you really think a competitor is the main source of the negative comments online, chances are you have little recourse unless you can prove it. If you do have evidence, you might have a case for slander or libel. If you can't prove it, then you're stuck with combating the negative comments with more positive comments that are higher ranked.

Throw your resources behind the SEO and marketing campaigns. The one thing you don't want to do is get into a back and forth battle with your competitors. Don't sink to their level, especially if you don't have proof that they are the culprits of the bad things being said about you.

6. How Can We Prevent Further Negative Remarks from Customers?

Everyone is going to have a bad review crop up about them once in a while. There is little you can do about this. You can't impress or please everyone all of the time. What you can do is provide a way for your customers to vent their frustration in a non-public way.

Things like surveys, polls, direct comment forms, and toll-free voicemail lines are great ways for your customers to let you know how you're doing without taking their grievances elsewhere. If you show that you're open to receive criticism, your customers are less likely to feel the need to let others know about the problems they had.

Granted, these methods won't stop all public negative comments. Some people, especially those who think they've had a really bad experience, will take their negativity and post about it publicly. There is little you can do about this.

7. Should We Try to Reach Out to Negative Reviewers – or Leave Them Alone?

This is a definite yes. The best way to get a former customer to stop spreading their negative views is to try to fix whatever went wrong. Not only does this show that you care about their situation and experience, but it allows you to fix whatever went wrong so it doesn't happen again.

Since your first impression wasn't the greatest, apparently, you need to ensure that the impression you leave them with is a positive one. It might not bring them back as a customer, but it might keep them from spreading more negativity about your business online. It might even cause them to leave a follow up review telling about how you came to their aid, and fixed their problem.

How can you do this?

If you find a review left in a forum or on a blog post, reach out to the author via comments or directly in the thread. Private message them if you can to see how you can make the situation better. Ask how you can improve, this will let them know that their experience wasn't ignored.

Also ask them what the response to their solution meant to them. This will let you know if you've made enough of a difference to make them happy. If all they want to do is scream and type in caps lock, chances are nothing you do will make a difference.

8. How Can We Get Our Happy Customers to Leave Reviews For Us?

The best way to encourage your happy customers to leave positive reviews for you is to simply ask. You should also make it as easy as possible to do so. Ask for testimonials and display them in a prominent place on your website. This will make new customers think more about the positive attributes of your business.

The problem with testimonials on your website is that people don't often believe they are genuine, even if they in fact are. Since that's the case, you should ask for reviews of your site on Twitter and Facebook. These usually come across as more trustworthy to potential new customers.

You can encourage people to give positive tweets and Facebook posts by making it easy to leave those types of posts. Tweet buttons prominently displayed by products and on the order completed page. Access to a 'like' button and links to your Facebook page can make it easier and more probable that someone who has had a good experience will share those feelings on these popular social platforms where they can be seen by others.

9. How Much Time and Effort Goes Into Repairing Our Reputation?

A lot of times, no matter how you do it, the best way is to not face a poor reputation on your own. All of the steps that are necessary to begin to repair your reputation can take months to propagate across the Internet, and that's if you do them all properly.

The one thing that is true about the Internet is that it never forgets. You can't erase your reputation from the Internet, so don't even try.

The thing to do is to start a fresh campaign to increase your positives and reduce your negatives. Also try to get your positive content to rank higher on the search engines so people come to your sites instead of the bad reviews first.

Finally, don't do it on your own. While technically possible, it can lead to more heartache than reward, in addition to countless hours of lost time that you could have spent running your business and making your customers happy. This leads us on to the final question, which we've already practically answered:

10. Fixing Our Online Image Seems Like a Daunting Task – Should We Hire An Expert?

The answer to this is depends. Do you already have what it takes to repair your online reputation? Do you know all of the steps involved in making sure that your positive reviews aren't erased by review sites because they are all new? Are you prepared to invest the hours, days and weeks learning and understanding how to properly restore your online reputation?

If you have the spare time and nothing more important to do, then by all means go for it! But doing a reputation repair on your own is dicey, since it requires several steps that need to be done exactly right in order for it to succeed. Hiring someone who does these things professionally can shave months off of the process; it will also ensure that the job is going to be done efficiently.

Do your homework. Make sure that the company you hire has a great reputation themselves. You don't want to be caught doing business with someone who has negative information floating around about them; this will only leave you with a reputation no better than where you started – if not worse.

Remember, anyone can make claims that they are "the best in the industry." Check out their *reputation* for yourself.

The amount of money that Internet users spend online has increased 14% in the last year alone. A poor reputation can keep your business from benefiting from this online commerce boom.

You need to ensure that you have taken the proper steps to mitigate any negative comments or reviews you have found online surrounding your business, while constantly monitoring for any new negativity surrounding your brand.

In the end, your reputation is all you have. You need to protect it. The best way to do this is to be vigilant and proactive when it comes to situations regarding unhappy customers.

Give them a way to vent that frustration to you in a non-public manner. If they do take their grievance and promote it publicly, do your best to contact them and make the situation better. Ask them questions, and do whatever it takes to make it right in their eyes (within reason, of course).

Learn from your mistakes. If you have a bad review that was really warranted, take it to heart and never let it happen again. Let that customer know that their experience has been taken seriously and that you'll take measures to improve. Never make promises you can't keep, however. Know your limits, and do your best to meet your customer's expectations.

If your reputation needs a cleanup, hire a respectable company to help you. Don't do it on your own. Not only does this take too long, but there's a chance you might do something that only makes your online reputation worse. Hiring someone at the outset of your problems could also save you time and money in the long run, since you'll be nipping some of those potential problems in the bud before they get any bigger and harder to handle.

I hope you've found this report useful in your quest to understand just how important your online image is to your success…

Being that the internet is usually the first point of contact for potential customers, it crucial now more than ever that you stay on top of your company's image – as well as implement strategies to build your brand in a positive light. In other words, having a good reputation can "make" your business, and having a bad reputation can "break" it.

Contact me at 414-731-0450 for a free no-obligation consultation if you would like more information or would like to get started.

Michael W Hobach

414-731-0450

mhobach@blueeyegroup.com

www.blueeyegroup.com