



MODULE 2

Online Reputation Management



"The sheer number of voices involved, and the diffuse nature of comments, complaints and negative feedback make damage control much more difficult than it ever used to be."

- Jayson DeMers, Forbes.com



Overview

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Introduction



According to Wikipedia, "Online Reputation Management (ORM) is the practice of monitoring the Internet reputation of a person, brand, or business with the goal of suppressing negative mentions entirely or pushing them lower down the search engine results pages to decrease visibility." I agree with Wikipedia's definition of ORM except for the fact that ORM can also be about monitoring the good. Hyper focusing on a good online reputation way outweighs dealing with the negative.

It is my experience that ORM can be fun, exciting, and honest. It is the place where your hard work pays off, where your happy clients gush about your business. More often, this is the case if your business intention is right. If your core values focus on extreme customer service, not in words but in actions, then ORM is an exciting experience. If on the other hand, you don't take the Internet, reviews, or your customers seriously then your ORM can become a very dark and ugly place.

I have experienced both in my work with clients. Clients who refuse to embrace the new online communication process with their customers and their online reviews have really affected their bottom lines. In management meetings the conversations are about the bad people rather than focusing on ways to build good relationships and push the bad reviews down on Google search pages. Again, in my experience, once it hurts enough then the intention shifts and a business miraculously becomes focused on putting processes in place to gain better positioning in their dark ORM demise.

The challenge is if you don't control your brand, someone else will. ORM begins with a strong social media presence. Start by Googling your name or your business's name. Look for the Google+ local page graphics on the right of your monitor. This is a very important directory of information created by Google to track your business contact information, images, and reviews. This small bit of information is very important to your ORM. Online Reputation Management is linked closely with search engines, and Google is the largest search engine in the world.

Online Reputation Management is a matter of priority in business. Being proactive is much better than reactive in business. Building a strong social media presence (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, SlideShare, Pinterest, and LinkedIn) all take up positive space on your Google Search page. This is why having these social media accounts benefit your business.

Introduction *(continued)*



Having a process in place to encourage customers, clients, or guests to write a review is another important element to success. Many happy clients want to help your business- they even ask what they can do. This is where training at a front counter, check out stand, or even through email can encourage this response. Asking for a customer to write a review if they are happy with your service should be nothing more than a reminder of its value. TripAdvisor, Yelp, and Google are all valuable sources for posting reviews. Don't underestimate the value of each review. In today's business world, a good review is priceless. Training your staff to encourage review writing, having a well designed reminder at check-out, or even a mention in an email are all acceptable best practices. What is not acceptable is to have an iPad, smartphone, or desktop computer that is on site for customers to use while they are at your place of business. The IP address is monitored by Google and your review will not be posted as it is looked upon as a manipulation tactic.

Building a good reputation takes time. This has not changed. What has changed is that your customers are online and vocalizing about you and your business in this new environment. This is not to be feared, but rather embraced. Now you know when someone is unhappy, and many times you can correct their concern and repair the relationship. Yes, there is that small percent that love having the platform to blast an organization. It is my experience that the public is smart and they know when it's a disgruntled employee or vengeance minded individual. This type of interaction is often taken care of by your fans without you ever having to say a word.

Your business's "intention" plays a vital role in ORM. Intention is a mental state that represents a commitment to carrying out an action. Being cognizant of the value of your reputation helps in the development of organizational best practices that often dilute the impact of negative posts. "Where intention goes, energy flows" is a great statement from Dr. Wayne Dyer. This statement in relation to ORM is applicable because when your intention is to do your best in business, your online reputation will reflect that intention.

This Module will teach you ORM best practices and help you create an ORM strategy for yourself or a future business.