

Reputation management

A guide to growing your reputation



How do your clients and customers decide whether to go to your event or not?

- ✓ They look for reviews
- ✓ They ask a friend
- ✓ They request recommendations on Facebook

What they are looking for is a company with a good reputation.



It is inevitable, not everyone is going to like your business. Not every customer interaction with your business is going to be 100% positive; and dissatisfied customers are much more likely to talk about your business than the satisfied ones. There's no getting around that, but what can really make a difference to how everyone else views your business is your approach to reputation management.

What is reputation management?

Reputation management is anything that you do to shape public perception about your brand or business. From responding to online negative reviews to sponsoring and partaking in charity events, reputation management shows that you are making a conscious effort to better yourself and your business, therefore improving your reputation to the public.

Why you need to know about reputation management



Loss of Trust

When an organisation fails to follow through on promises, their customers, employees and partners are more likely to question the reliability of the organisation in the future. Regaining trust can be time consuming and difficult at times. Mistrust expressed by word of mouth on the internet can take years to repair and can often only be resolved by the number of supporters eventually outnumbering the critics.



Damaged Brand Association

Brand association refers to the deeply embedded attitudes and feelings a customer has towards a company. When the association promotes a negative attitude, the customer is more likely to associate the company with negative connotations.



Competitive Industries

You can almost be certain that your competitors are waiting to seize the opportunity to poach your client base. Therefore, maintaining a good reputation will ensure you don't lose out to the competition.



Act Before It's Too Late

The cost of repairing a damaged reputation and hiring reputation management specialists far outweighs the cost of maintaining your reputation in advance. Be sure to resolve any disputes instantly and behave in a professional manner at all times.

Reputation management and the law

Your customers and clients legally have the freedom of speech to complain about your company, and they will use that freedom if they feel the need to. As a business owner it is important to understand how and when your clients and customers have crossed the line and are breaking the law in their efforts to destroy your reputation.

Customers cannot use insulting, abusive or threatening words or behaviour intending, or likely to cause, harassment, alarm, distress or cause a breach of the peace. They also cannot report false information.

There are Reputation Management lawyers who specialise in defamation, confidentiality and privacy laws. If you are ever in doubt about the legality of the person defaming you, your brand or your business, you have the opportunity to contact a reputation management lawyer.



Reputation management at your events

One of the most crucial times to ensure you have a reputation management strategy in place is when your business or brand is hosting an event. You're in the public eye, with representatives of your business interacting with people and you can't predict what might happen. With that being said, events are the ideal place to proactively build up a good reputation by displaying your brands vision and values to a captive audience. In order to make the most of the opportunity, you should try to incorporate all of the following into your event:

- ✔ Sponsorship or promotion of a relevant charity
- ✔ Attractive branded materials in perfect condition (look the part)
- ✔ Give the audience the opportunity to provide feedback (surveys etc.)
- ✔ Keep your communication consistent with everything your brand stands for
- ✔ Do all you can to help others achieve their goals at your event
- ✔ Film the event so you can edit together the best bits to share online



What could possibly go wrong?

Even when you cover all the bases and do your very best to secure your reputation, unexpected issues can always occur. It might not be that your event fails to attract any attendees, but it in fact attracts too many!

This was the case for the Brighton based 'Cheesefest' in 2017. In an unbelievable twist of fate, Cheesefest failed to order enough cheese for the hungry cheese lovers in attendance.

The backlash on social media hit Cheesefest with incredible force, with disappointed attendees venting their frustrations and poking fun at the festival organisers. When the newspapers and online publications picked up the story, they dubbed it 'Cheddarmageddon'.

After the event Cheesefest released a statement admitting "The demand for the cheese on offer wasn't anticipated." What did it all mean for Cheesefest in the end? A damaged reputation for sure!



Insure your event, insure your reputation

The first rule of reputation management is that any issues you may have with your customers, clients or the general public need to be resolved in a timely and professional manner. The risk of your event being cancelled due to adverse weather conditions or entertainment failing to attend is something that should not be ignored. There is also the threat of someone at the event getting injured, or equipment getting damaged. Any of these scenarios can cause real damage to your reputation.

However, with the right insurance policy in place, you will have the financial help to quickly resolve any issues and compensate those who have been let down, disappointed or even injured at your event. The responsible business owner will always be protected by a bespoke event insurance policy to protect themselves against not only unexpected financial disasters, but reputational destruction too. At Event Insurance Services, we can offer a wide variety of specialist cover such as:

- ✔ Public liability
- ✔ Event equipment cover
- ✔ Cancellation/abandonment
- ✔ Employer liability
- ✔ Adverse weather extensions
- ✔ Non-appearance extensions

There are four steps towards good reputation management:

Dispute resolution

Sometimes, situations will occur where a customer becomes disgruntled and a dispute starts between your customer and your business. This is something you should always be prepared for, as these disputes can snowball and get much worse for your business. Whether the customer is in the right or not, you should make every effort to resolve the dispute in a professional and timely matter.

What can you do about it?

- ✓ Create a dispute resolution policy, outlining the process
- ✓ Take the customer seriously and use the correct tone and language
- ✓ Offer to compensate your disgruntled customer



Staff training

Business owners who employ staff to represent their brand have a responsibility to ensure that those employees know what is expected of them in terms of professionalism, customer service and appropriate behaviour online. It only takes one rude employee, an inappropriate comment on Facebook or a video of an employee acting irresponsibly or unprofessionally to completely ruin your businesses' reputation.

What can you do about it?

- ✓ Provide thorough customer service training
- ✓ Include a social media policy in employee contracts
- ✓ Restrict access to harmful websites on work computers



Public relations

Every business wants to create an image of themselves; whether that image portrays the courageous hero or the humble hard worker, but what strategies can be used to promote these images and therefore build the desired reputation? What if your business already has a reputation for being negative towards the environment or the local community? The answer? Public relations.

What can you do about it?

- ✓ Be proactive in your approach to public relations
- ✓ Decide on activities which best reflect the reputational issue you want to tackle
- ✓ Sponsor charities, host charitable events, partner with 'green' companies



Online reviews

Perhaps the most feared and misunderstood aspect of reputation management is the dreaded 'online review'. Whilst you can and do see many positive 5-star reviews, it's the 1-star, negative ones that get the most attention and cause real damage to a businesses' reputation. According to research conducted by ADWEEK⁷, **81% of shoppers conduct online research before buying**, so if there's negative information about your business online, they're going to find it. Combine that with the fact that **businesses lose 70% of customers when 4 negative reviews are found online** (Moz¹) and you've got a recipe for disaster.






Social media

Imagine you're looking for a kitchen fitter in your local area. You find a company with a website you like the look of, but you decide to click through to their Facebook page, only to find several 1-star reviews by infuriated customers, all complaining about a lack of customer service, professionalism and quality of work. It's not likely you're going to choose that company to fit your kitchen, is it?

With the real-time nature of social media, disgruntled customers can vent their feelings instantly in the reviews section of your Facebook or Google+ page, but their attack doesn't have to stop there as they can post their opinions on their own page for all to see.



What can you do about it?

-  Use Google Alerts or Mention.com to monitor mentions of your business
-  Monitor and update your page – show the great work you do every day
-  Respond to all of your reviews, good and bad, to show proactivity
-  Ask happy customers if they are willing to review you on social media
-  Do not get involved in any argument online, take the conversation offline
-  If you receive fake or abusive reviews, report them to Facebook
-  Set email notifications for all reviews so that you can reply instantly
-  If negative Facebook reviews are a real problem, turn them off as a last resort

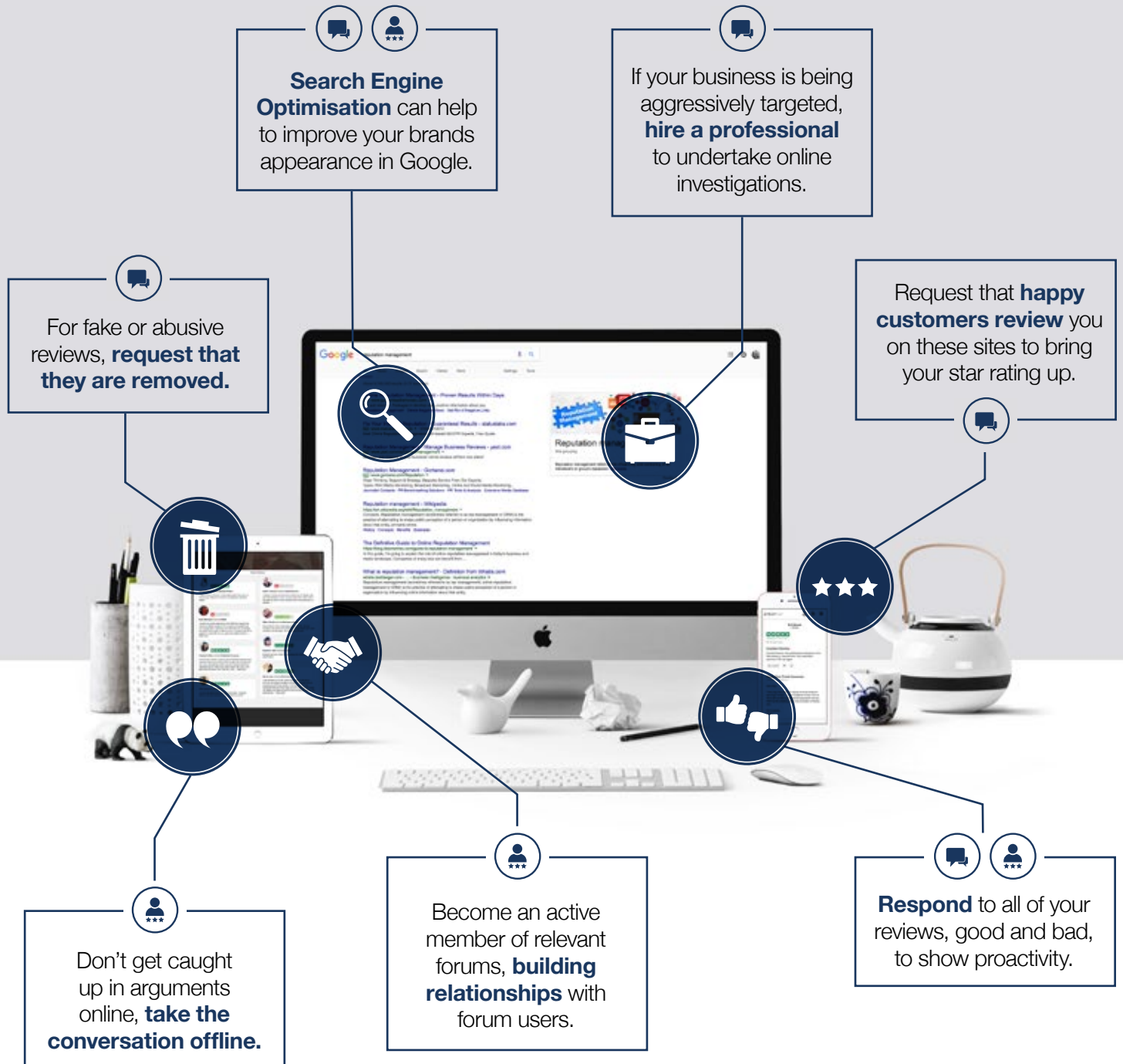
How to remove reviews from Facebook altogether

1. Click **Settings** at the top of your Facebook Business Profile
2. Click **Edit Page** in the left-hand column
3. Click the **Settings button** next to Reviews
4. Click to turn reviews **Off**
5. Click **Save**



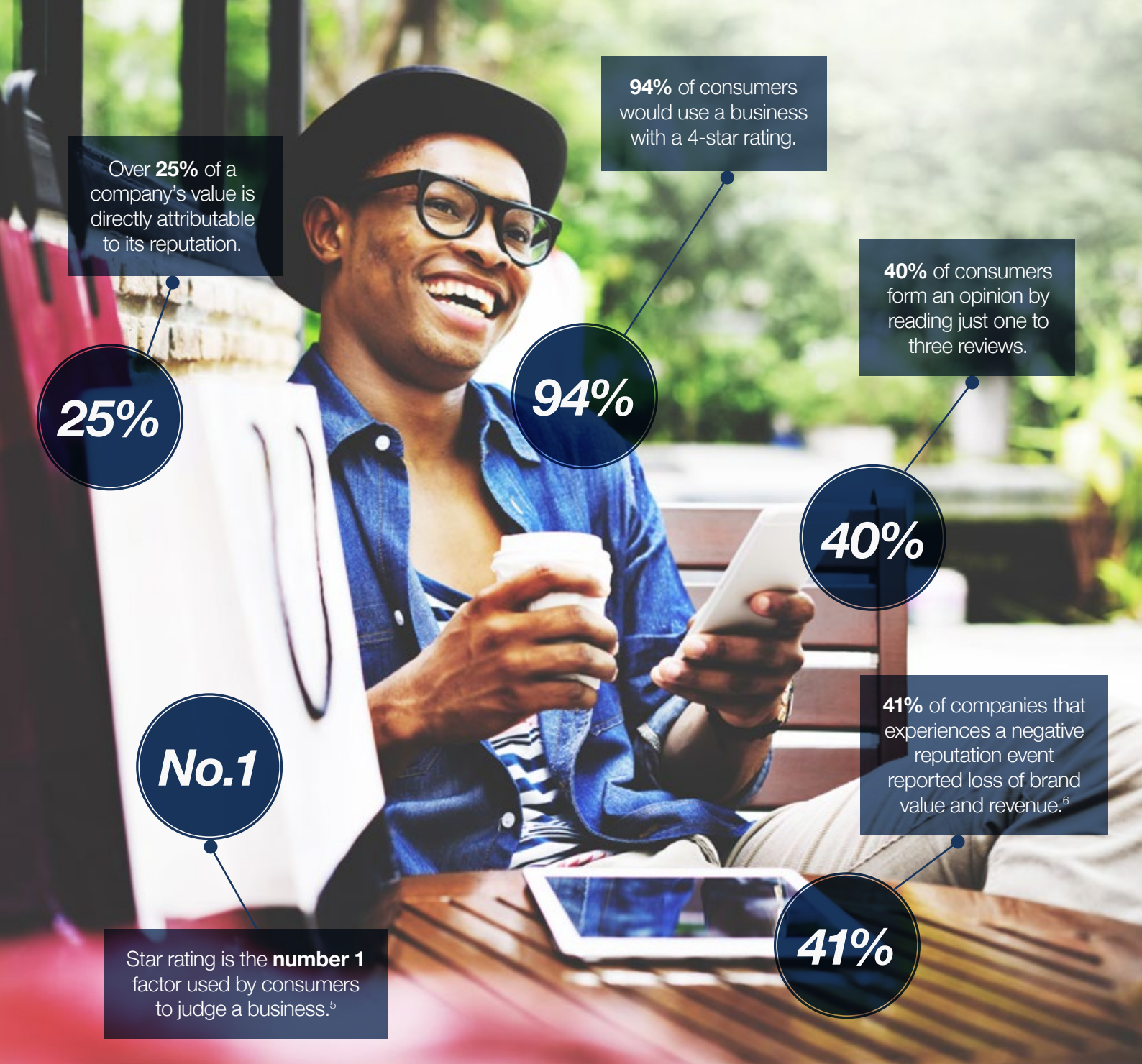
Review sites

Whether it's Yelp, Trustpilot, TripAdvisor or Checktrade, the reviews that go on these sites can hold a lot of weight, especially in the search engines. If someone has left a scathing review about your company, a simple search for your brand name in Google can lead directly to that review, meaning the first thing people see regarding your business is a complaint. Every negative review you receive will also bring your star rating down, and we all want to have a 5-star rating, don't we?



Forums

Forums are the place people gather online to ask for advice, have in depth discussions and, of course, recommend or complain about businesses. These online communities can become very influential, with forums such as Mumsnet having an unbelievably active audience. Again, these discussions can make their way onto page 1 of Google, which could hurt your business.



Over **25%** of a company's value is directly attributable to its reputation.

25%

94% of consumers would use a business with a 4-star rating.

94%

40% of consumers form an opinion by reading just one to three reviews.

40%

No.1

Star rating is the **number 1** factor used by consumers to judge a business.⁵

41% of companies that experiences a negative reputation event reported loss of brand value and revenue.⁶

41%

Next steps

It's time to start taking reputation management seriously, and to do so you need to cover all the bases: training your staff appropriately, putting together a policy for dispute resolution, taking a proactive approach to public relations and monitoring online reviews. Reputation management isn't about hiding the negative press and incidents that occur, it's about taking steps to ensure they don't happen in the first place and that if they do, ensuring your business is being proactive in resolving the issues.

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