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Succeed with Social Media

Protecting Your Reputation on Social Media

Today, hearing about a large company in trouble over a social media mishap isn't uncommon, and those examples demonstrate the importance of protecting your own company's online reputation. However, it isn't feasible to attempt to control your entire message — in today's highly digital environment, there's no way you can control everything said about your company. Don't let that deter you from joining social media. In fact, it's a compelling reason to get involved: you can contribute a positive voice on your company's behalf and play an active role in handling problems. People will talk about your company regardless of whether you have a presence online—but if there's no way for you to hear what is said, you risk much bigger reputation problems.

Manage your reputation

Manage your online reputation by taking these proactive steps when something negative is said:

- Keep open communications. If someone is complaining publicly about your brand, company or product, respond publicly as well. It can be tempting to move the conversation to a private channel, but publicly addressing the issue will earn your company points for credibility.
- Don't delete negative posts or comments from your social media platforms (unless they violate the site's policies or are inappropriate). Deleting posts will only cause more backlash.
- When one or more of your customers is having an issue and voicing it online, don't wait to respond. The sooner you can address the issue, even just with an apology and a promise that you're working towards a resolution, the more trust you may be able to restore.
- Don't be afraid to admit you made a mistake and even backtrack if necessary. People will appreciate that much more than trying to cover a mistake or shift blame.

- Work proactively to establish a good reputation and be influential in your industry through your social media channels, speaking engagements, etc.
- Don't bring problems on yourself. The smallest joke or comment taken the wrong way can spark a firestorm of criticism. Think about everything you write (and everything you encourage your followers to share in return) to evaluate if it could be damaging to you or backfire.
- Don't be caught unprepared when a crisis hits. Establish a social media crisis response plan now so that you are ready to handle situations that may occur.

Your Social Media Crisis Response Plan

1. Monitor your online presence—there are a variety of tools and resources to 'listen' online.
2. Create policies and plans for the possibility of a crisis, so that you can take action immediately. Assemble a team and ensure everyone is trained on how to respond to a social media crisis.
3. When a crisis occurs, execute a response quickly. Who do you need to share information with? Should your response target one audience or span all your social outlets? What is the message?
4. After a crisis, evaluate your response and the entire process. Identify any weaknesses