

Dealing with FINDABILITY DISASTER



As Business owners, it is rare to completely satisfy every client, every time.

However, these days if one customer gets upset they have myriad Internet sites to express their discontent. One of the worst cases I have seen was a disgruntled former employee who blasted a company after they were fired. Imagine searching for your company name and finding a scathing Yelp review from an employee you just let go. Your next thought might be, where else?

Now with some free time, that ex-employee makes it their life's work to "stick it to the man." I can tell you, you have not experienced panic until your website is ranking next to RipOffReport.com or a similar site loaded with brutal reviews. I have spent my entire career helping people be found on the Internet, and now I want to address the topic of how not to be found. The question is, When ugly content is posted, what can you do as a business owner?

My response is to strike back, but with an attack of "goodness" and happy customers! Yes, use sugar, not vinegar to push them off the page. (My mom would be so proud.)

Problem:

Someone on the Internet does not like your company. You are seeing a rise in negative reviews on Yelp, Google Local and RipoffReport.com. How do you plan a counter attack to push them off the search results page?

Action Plan:

Start by looking rationally at this problem with a plan of attack that does not include calling in a "favor" or hiring an expensive lawyer who specializes in lawsuits. There is a much faster and safer way to address the problem.

Displace the disgruntled with positive, happy customers — therefore knocking the naysayers off the results page. Most companies have tons of happy customers; it's always the one percent of unhappy customers on which we tend to focus.

As the old adage goes, "A happy customer tells one friend, an unhappy customer tells ten."

- 1) Secure your company profiles on review sites.
- 2) Optimize your profiles, making sure data is accurate and up-to-date.
- 3) Actively request positive feedback from happy customers.
- 4) Setup and capture all brand names in social media portals.
- 5) Watch the negative reviews drop down and surround profiles with happy customer reviews.

STEP 1: GRAB YOUR COMPANY'S BRAND PROFILES AND SECURE THEM

Find your company on major review sites that actively rank in search engines like Yelp.com, Places.Google.com, Local.Yahoo.com, Citysearch.com, etc.

Secure the account on record with the review site and identify yourself as the official business owner. Lock it down with your correct information. It is never pretty when a competitor or disgruntled customer takes the account before you get around to capturing it.

Complete the profiles as much as possible, paying particular attention to detailing your customer service policies and disputing resolution records. Link to your Better Business Bureau rating, if possible. Make sure to add your customer service hotline or link to a page that addresses customer issues.

STEP #2: OPTIMIZE YOUR REVIEW SITE PROFILES FOR FINDABILITY

Include your target keyword phrases in the following areas for a good user experience: Title, Company Description, Promotions and "Other".

Make sure to use keywords in your profile like "Television Repair Denver" or "Family Medicine Brea, CA." This elevates your profiles inside the review site, when searchers are really digging to validate their purchasing decision. They want the real skinny on your services, your products and past customer experiences. Ranking highly inside the review sites helps validate buying decisions when customers are in the final shopping stages.

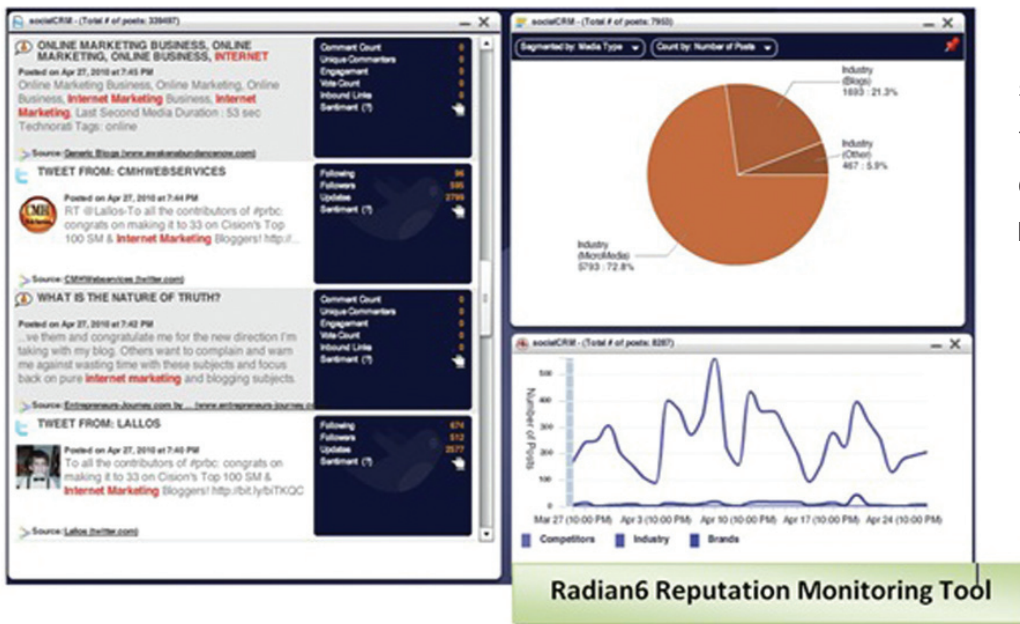
STEP #3: ACTIVELY FILL REVIEWS WITH POSITIVE FEEDBACK FROM HAPPY CUSTOMERS

Initially, reach out to your most loyal customers, explain the circumstances and politely request they help you combat this very negative review. You will get many customers who will immediately jump at the chance to help you.

Next, if you have a physical store location, instruct your employees to ask customers to write a review on Yelp.com or Places.Google.com. Then, tell them that if they provide proof of the review, you will have a small gift for them. Coupons for discounts or \$5 Starbucks Gift Cards make great thank-yous.

Record an extra message on your business voicemail to actively campaign for reviews. This may sound something like, "Please post a review on Yelp.com or Citysearch.com and receive a little gift for your appreciation! Thank you

Heather Lutze has spent the last 10 years helping business owners get their enterprises noticed on the Web by their target audiences. She is the author of "The Findability Formula: The Easy, Non-Technical Approach to Search Engine Marketing." Visit FindabilityFormula.com for tools and resources to increase your site's findability.



Radian6 is one of several companies that offer tools to help you monitor your online reputation, which can be well worth the investment.

for your business and helping us to serve you and the community better.”

STEP # 4: SET UP, CAPTURE AND MONITOR YOUR COMPANY'S BRAND ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Companies often forget where their happy and unhappy customers communicate. Social media sites are a great place to commiserate with others about good and bad experiences.

Make sure to set up, actively monitor and participate in your company's presence on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

Use free tools such as Alerts.Google.com and Tweetbeep.com to keep track of what people are saying about your company and brand so you can respond accordingly. If you have the budget to monitor your reputation online, consider sources like Radian6, Buzzlogic and Nielsen.

STEP #5: WATCH NEGATIVE REVIEWS FALL AND HAPPY CUSTOMERS SPEAK FOR YOUR COMPANY

As you capture your social media accounts under your company name and fill review sites with happy customers, the negative review will be surrounded by positive commentary. You have killed the negativity with kindness!

As you optimize your profiles with your company name and keyword phrases, you will start to fill the search results pages under your company name. You now “own” every search result when someone searches for your business. If a negative review is posted on RipOffReport.com or another review site and ranks under your name, it is surrounded by a resounding number of happy customer reviews.

As business owners, we will probably never think its okay to have an unhappy customer. But it's important to always be prepared for them. In today's social Internet community, the voice of an individual can have long-term, detrimental effects on your company's brand and profitability. Be prepared to fight back by asking for help from your loyal customers who know the truth about your company. It has been my experience that loyal customers will jump through hoops to help you. ■

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