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About the Author

Harold Marsden believes the Internet has great benefits for everybody.

He said, “I could also see that many people were making problems for themselves in the way they used it.”

“The Internet offers more opportunities than ever for all kinds of businesses. Many businesses thought that they could just continue to use same promotion methods which worked in Main Street early last Century.”

“And few people understood or were prepared for the problems which the hugely popular Internet would bring with it.”

“A major concern for businesses is building and maintaining a premium reputation. They used to promote themselves by advertising and strengthen their links with the communities by supporting charities.”

“If a customer had a problem, they would usually contact the manager who would sort it out.”

“Now, the customer may be in another state or even another country and they may vent their unhappiness on the Net.”

“That criticism may remain unchanged on the Net for years even if the company fixed the problem!”

Most books about Reputation Management focus on large businesses. They understand that any risk to their company’s good name could cost them a lot.

At this stage, few people realize that almost everyone who uses the Internet could have their personal and professional success damaged by something in their Internet history even years after it happened.

Nothing that happens or is recorded on the Internet ever goes away. And, we need to be aware of how best to deal with all the information, good and bad, truth or fiction, which is there about us.

Introduction

Your business probably has an online reputation, whether or not you have a presence there. You need to be aware of what it is and any changes in it.

If you are not watching it, then you are at the mercy of those who are.

Everyone, whatever their circumstances, has one asset worth a great deal - their reputation.

When we mostly did our business in the areas where we lived, it was easier to build personal and professional relationships. Our friends, business associates, customers and even many of our competitors would respect our reputation and strong bonds could develop.

It is more competitive now. Many people expect responses and support at electronic speeds.

If someone has a concern about the treatment they get from you on the Internet, they may complain through Social Media services, review sites or even their own blogs and web sites.

Even when you satisfy their concern, the original negative message is likely to still be held in search engines or an archiving service and may show up in the future to embarrass you!

Businesses and individuals are starting to realize the problems which our new freedom and fast technology has brought to our business and personal lives.

This book will help you to understand:

- 1)** What is already happening
- 2)** The benefits and the risks
- 3)** Why it's a concern for almost everyone that uses the Internet
- 4)** When to get professional help
- 5)** How you can reduce most risks and
- 6)** How you can deal with whatever lies ahead!

This book will prepare you for what's there now and give you pointers as to what to expect with the new developments in the future.

Why is Your Online Reputation Important?



Most people understand that their reputation is an important asset.

As we went through schools and into the workforce, we met more people. Some of those became friends who became part of our networks.

We extended these relationships as time went on.

Those relationships included many people who knew about us and our activities.

We did business together and part of our good name extended to the businesses we became involved in.

We would probably hear about anything negative someone said or wrote about us through those networks. Sometimes, people would answer the complaint without contacting us first.

Now, anyone doing business needs to be connected to the Internet.

They also need to be aware of potential risks to their reputation which lurk there.

If you have any sort of business or are self-employed, your online reputation is obviously important to you.

What if you Don't Have a Business?

If you are an employee, you probably use the Internet for your personal interests and you may research topics related to the business you are involved in. You may also have looked at possible alternative employment opportunities.

You probably regard what you put on social network sites as semi-private, but that information is available very widely and can be seen by prospective employers and other people even years later.

Many people have a website or blog related to a personal interest like their family history or a hobby.

Everyone who uses the Internet leaves some information about themselves there.

This information is collected and stored. It is sometimes used in ways that we don't understand and might not be happy about if we did.

The information can affect our social as well as business relationships without our being aware of it.

Prospective employers, clients, competitors can get more information about you and your activities than you may realize.

This book will show you where the problems are and help you to deal with them now and in the future.

Your personal reputation can also be affected.

These problems which affect businesses can also hurt people in their private activities.

Anyone looking for information about you will see what has been recorded in all areas of activity.

The Impact of the Internet

The Internet has changed everyone’s lives, even if they do not actually use it themselves.

The Internet is a wonderful resource for everyone.

You might just use it for keeping in touch with your extended family and friends.

Email made communication almost instantaneous. Internet telephone services were great when they could only provide links to talk through. Now you can see the other people on the call and even hold small conferences at very low cost.

To research topics you have an interest in is much easier.

Search engines provide more information than even at our fingertips.

But, the new access to information has made some problems at the same time.

Nothing on the ‘Net ever goes away!

The information which we provide to web sites on the Internet is collected and may be used in ways which we are unaware of.

Memories, Good and Bad



The ease with which that information can be accessed is shown by businesses which provide memories of past events to their subscribers.

For a fee, they search the Internet and send the subscriber some material about what they were doing on each day, one or a specified number of years ago. This might be attending a theatre, dining with friends, starting an overseas trip or almost anything else.

These services, such as [Timehop](#), got a good response from the start.

The major change which clients are asking for is to be able to filter certain

dates or people from the reminders they are sent.

This shows there is plenty of information about people on the Internet, some of which they probably forgot about. It’s relatively easy to find and getting even easier.

But, do you want everything you said or did online years ago to affect your future?

Your History Affects Your Future

Everything you put on the Internet is stored somewhere for years.

Some of the information may be wrong. A lot will be outdated. It may give a negative impression of you because it is short and lacks important details.

You may not want information, comments or pictures you put on any particular site years ago to be reviewed by people now.

They may be prospective employers or business rivals.

You do not have the time or resources to find everything and you probably would not be able to get it removed anyway.

This book will help you to improve what can be improved and ensure you protect yourself in the future.

Who’s Checking on You?



Even if your business has no Internet presence, you can be sure that some of your customers are checking the information about it there.

They want to know what others think about your business in every aspect.

Those comments about your services, products and attitude of your staff could be affecting your business without your knowledge.

Before the Internet, a customer who was dissatisfied would contact the business. The manager would make sure that the problem was resolved and that would usually end the matter. Sometimes, giving the customer a good hearing and a quick resolution would turn them into a repeat customer who actually praised the business when other people mentioned it to them.

The spread of review sites for all types of activity have made it easier for people to give their opinion about you and other businesses like you.

The modern experience is that more people will leave negative reviews than will take the time to record their satisfaction with a business they use.

I suggest some ways which you can be aware of most of these in a later section of this ebook.

Don't take it Personally!



The most important rule is to separate your personal feelings from your business discussions.

This is especially important when you are dealing with customers.

How can you get the best outcome for the customer and your business?

Try to put yourself in the shoes of the person making the criticism.

They probably don't know you.

They don't know the circumstances which may have affected the quality of service they got.

They may be mistaken, inflate the effect of what happened or even be lying. But, they were a customer and the best outcome would be to have them return to your business.

Always remember that your online comments will be read by many people who can only judge each of you and your business by what they see in the discussion.

Protect Your Online Property



Security is also important to your reputation on the Net. Problems with your web site may mean that some visitors can't see what you offer.

That will lose you some potential business because people have a lot of choice who they do business with.

Another company is just a click away, whether they are in the next city from you or even another country.

You can get a security advisor to check how your sites are set up before you open them to the Net. This is not cheap. But, it's the best way to have peace of mind.

If you, a designer or an employee, set up your sites, make sure that you use the latest versions of all programs and have licenses for all material which you did not produce yourselves. Many people have had trouble because they have not got the copyright owner's permission to use a picture or the permission of those in the picture.

This can be costly and also affect the impression people have about your business even if you were lied to by your supplier.

Grab Your “Name” Site

If you are a sole trader or you have a significant personal profile in your area of business, you also should try to register your name as a domain name.

Grab it now if it's available, even if you don't have a set use for it.

If you develop a more prominent profile later on and decide that you then want to buy your “name” domain when someone else has it, you will not get it as easily or cheaply.

Your Representatives

Every person that works for you will affect your reputation. Your sales people probably work very well with the people they meet.

A savvy Advertising executive gave receptionists at his company the title of "Director of First Impressions" because they were the first company representative which many clients saw.

The support people who answer phones or emails about your products from unhappy clients are equally important to your success.

Give them training so they are skilled in dealing with the customers they meet. Often, those clients are under pressure and defensive because they have problems with the products you supplied.

Listen to your staff's feedback about the questions and especially any complaints which they deal with in the field. Listen to their suggestions and reward them for ideas which improve the customer's view of your business.

Selecting Your Online Communicator

Will you handle the online interaction yourself? You need to be sure you have the time and experience can to do that on top of your other duties.

Are you the best person available? If you have people that are more experienced and interested in the social media and have the professional attitude to represent the business well, consider giving them the task.

I suggest that you have two people doing it, even when one of them is you. That's to ensure there will usually be someone with the authority and experience to handle anything important quickly.

There should have a system which keeps the message focused correctly without any personality differences between the representatives coloring the message which the customers or media get.

It is common for people to speak for the company as themselves. But, this can cause disconnects with some of the people who have linked to your site or social media page if they have strong personalities which some customers may not like personally.

Set firm guidelines for the persons representing the company’s views and products so that all responses are consistent.

Remember that these people, however committed, cannot do the job without resources, including time and money. You also need to give them enough authority to do the job.

Even when they make a mistake, support them as much as possible or you will find that no-one is willing to take on the risky role as your representative.

Crisis Management

It can happen to any business at any time.

The Internet has only made it even more important that you are as prepared as possible to deal with any crisis involving your company or its products or services quickly and effectively.

Focus on facts and getting your response ready.

Have someone keeping a log of all related events and communications.

Don't avoid the hard questions.

Never get upset (unless there are injuries etc).

Keep your comments on the topic. Bringing in other information will confuse people. If you are asked irrelevant questions, you should steer them back to the topic.

If you find your information was wrong, get corrections to those who asked you.

Give everyone who is likely to ever speak for your organization appropriate training. At least encourage them to join **ToastMasters International** or an equivalent group where they can get training in formal and impromptu speaking in a supportive group of experienced speakers.

Sometimes, you do not have anything you can make public. Don't lie.

Say something like you are waiting for more information which you will share as soon as it is available.

Make sure that you follow up as soon as possible.

Look over your business for any areas which might cause problems. Remove or resolve them before a crisis situation can develop.

Ask your staff to tell you about any problems they have in properly representing the business.

If there are factors which you cannot fix completely, get professional help to fix it.

Then, discuss with your key staff what sort of crisis your organization might

face.

Are there any changes you could make to minimize each possibility?

How would they handle the crisis?

Is there anything they would need which they don't have? That might include training, equipment or access to outside help.

The training and support you give your staff during regular business activities will also pay dividends if there is a crisis situation.

Improve the Appeal of your Web Site

Follow the adage, “Your customers won’t care about your products unless they are sure that you care about them.”

Even if you get someone else to design and maintain your website, you should try to become familiar with the basics so that you can:

- ✿ Understand what web designers and web developers say.
- ✿ Explain to them what you want and expect to get it.

You want an **effective** web site. If a designer tries to sell you a design with a lot of eye appeal and fancy effects, your question should be, “Will it sell more of my widgets?”

You should have your site set up so that it will show up well on a wide range of the available mobile devices as well as computers.

If you don’t, you will be losing access to a significant part of your potential market.

When you buy a website design, ensure that you get full rights to use it as you wish and releases for any pictures supplied to you.

You should be able to get written confirmation that your supplier of photographs has model releases signed by each recognizable person in all photos which are used on your products and web sites.

Even experienced companies have been caught when someone has sued after their image was used in a way which they did not explicitly authorize in writing.

All the text on your site should be focused on showing the potential customers how your products or services will benefit them.

Don’t bother with fluff about how long you’ve been in business or how many degrees your staff have.

Don’t put large pictures or video players near the top of your page unless your market is mostly using high-speed Internet connections. Slower computers and Internet links will cause those large pictures and screens to

take some time to start appearing.

The most important space on your web site is the part of each page which first appears in the browser or mobile screen. Put your most important message there and some way for the viewer to connect with you.

Make it as easy for people to contact you through your website as it is through your phone.

Comply with all legal requirements for disclosures on your web sites. Always get the professional advice of your own experienced legal representative.

Links – lifeblood of the Internet

Links are the connections which you click to be transported between different web sites.

Some links lead to rogue sites, so you should only click on links where you are confident about the outcome.

Some sites used to have only pages of links to other sites which they persuaded to link to them so both sites could register as more popular in the search engines.

The search engines found out about this tactic and soon delisted these sites which made them useless. Don't try any tricks to improve your search engine rankings.

They may work for a while. But, the search engines find them all and consequences can be grim. They don't like it and their revenge may be to banish your web site to page 105 of any listings.

Links between sites are called back links. You probably get emails or even personal requests from friends to link to their sites.

Most of the emails are worthless. The senders' sites are usually low-ranked and probably not related to your type of business.

Those are two of the factors which search engines use for evaluating the quality of back links.

Even if it is the site of a good friend, linking to them does neither of you any good unless the material on each of the linked pages is on the same topic.

It is important that the link actually goes between areas on both sites which have text about the same general topic.

Keep Adding to Your Site

The content of your site and its value to your customers are the most important factors in getting a good number of eyes on your site and getting the people to come back to your site as well as recommending to their colleagues and friends.

A site which does not change soon loses its appeal to many people.

Whether you have a blog or a regular website, you need to provide information and ways for your visitors to interact with your business.

Giveaways are always popular, but their impact is limited to the time they are available. You may upset some visitors who come to your site after the offer closed, when they learn they missed out!

A better idea is to offer a newsletter and give the free item to people who subscribe to it. Some people will probably just subscribe long enough to get the freebie, but many will stay subscribed if you provide interesting and useful material, with the occasional gift, in future issues.

The people who just wanted the freebie are not likely to have been serious prospects anyway but you do need always to be polite in handling them.

You should be careful to limit the amount of personal information about your family, your employees and their activities outside the company.

This information can be misused, so always ensure that they understand how the information will be displayed and you have their permission.

You can include information about activities which improve your products or help the community which you are in. Just get permission for the content which shows or refers to any individuals not directly connected with your business..

A Q&A (Question and Answer) section can be very popular where you or your technical staff answer questions from your customers.

This can also be done through your page in various social media sites.

Always keep the emails or letters on file but make sure that you do not disclose any significant personal information on your web site or in your

electronic newsletter about the people who provided the questions which you used.

Surveys often get a good response on the Internet. People seem to appreciate the chance to provide feedback and suggestions about a company’s products or how they deal with customers.

It is easy to set surveys up through web sites such as **SurveyMonkey®**
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/>

Make sure that you only ask questions which are relevant to the product or service you provide and that you explain how you will handle the information and, especially, the personal details from those who answer the survey.

Competitive Intelligence

Check your competitors’ sites and other material on the Internet. You may see ideas which could be adapted for your own site. Something they don’t do well may give you ideas which will improve your results.

Study the layout of their pages, headlines and other features.



None of this is unfair – it has been common practice for centuries. Main Street stores had shoppers who were paid by their competitors to buy their products and report on the quality of service they got.

Try to look at their offers and their whole site through the eyes of a potential customer.

- ? Does it open quickly in your browser or mobile device?
- ? Is the color scheme effective?
- ? Are your eyes drawn over the

page to the most important sections?

- ? What is the best thing they are doing?
- ? What is the main problem on their site?

Do this sort of check for each of your main competitors. The sites of those who are most successful in your area of business will probably give you lots of ideas.

Always adapt ideas to where they are distinctly your own and do not copy any aspect of something on another site.

Working With Forums and other Social Sites

Forums were an earlier form of social site where people interested in a particular topic joined to share their views, information and opinions.

Some forums have a membership fee but many are free to enter as the operator is also an enthusiast about the topic.

They may put some advertising for related products around the forum pages which earn them a commission if any of the members buy through those links.

There are always a set of rules which each person must agree to before joining in the forum activity. Sometimes, visitors can see the comments in some areas but cannot add their own until they sign up.

Forums are still very popular and I believe they are valuable for two reasons. There is much information and expertise in their files and the members are almost all seriously interested in the topic. So, it worthwhile to connect with the most popular forums related to your business area.

The material on Forums and other similar sites should not be copied or distributed. The copyright on that material may belong to the individuals who put it there or to the operator of the Forum or both.

There are usually restrictions or even bans on any advertising in the forums unless it is arranged with the owner to sponsor a link on the border.

For many people, that adds to the credibility of the comments and recommendations.

You can gain some good connections through these forums by answering questions which members have and making suggestions which are useful to them.

I always use my own name on forums and identify any related business connection which I have.

To get the best results from your participation in forums and other social sites, put some time into looking at the archived material which is there.

That will give you a better idea of how the members interact with each other

and the level of knowledge which the members of the Forum have about the topic.

Some people try to mark themselves as experts by giving their opinions about every issue which is mentioned.

Use your best judgment and always treat everyone as equals.

Be Alert about Your Business

Google Alerts from <http://www.google.com/> are simple and to set up and use.

Their value can be quite high to anyone with a special interest in any topic.

When you have set up an Alert, you will get an email each day when Google collects another entry which refers to the topic of your Alert.

You can get any number of Alerts you feel that you need. When you start getting some responses from Google, you can think about refining the terms you set up the Alerts for so that you get information which better suits your needs.

To start, get a Google Account if you don't already have one.

You fill in the form with the term you want Alerts on. Use a different Alert for each significant term or person's name.

Then, you can refine the sources used to particular types, such as blogs.

You can select other options which give you greater control. They include how often you get Alerts and where you want the Alert information sent to.

You may want to get an employee to check the Alerts and just refer the most important and interesting to you. But, I would start by doing that task personally for a few days to get some idea of the current state of Internet comments about the business.

Some people will copy your best ideas. Some have even copied whole web sites! Slip a couple of unusual phrases or technical terms into your most popular pages and then create Alerts for those terms. If you catch someone who is copying significant parts of your material, send them a Cease and Desist letter from your lawyer. If that doesn't work, contact their hosting service direct. The Hosting company will usually check the information you provide and then most will take action according to the Terms under which they provide hosting to the person who is using your material.

Using operators like “Or” and “And” can you better control of the results.

Analyzing Your Web Traffic

This is a valuable way to learn more about your visitors, how long they stay on your web site and where they come from.

It is a free service from Google if you have or create a Google Account.

All the information you need is at <http://www.google.com/analytics>

The instructions are located here:

<http://www.google.com/analytics/learn/setup/checklist.html>

Some of the most important information is:

Time on Your Website: This is believed to be one of the factors which the search engines use for ranking sites. If people only spend a few seconds on your site, they obviously didn't find much to interest them.

You have probably lost those people forever, so you need to encourage future visitors to stay longer.

If you get someone to bring up your site on their computer, you may find that it takes too long to open up.

You may not have noticed this because your web browser would store a copy of that page which you would see open quickly on your computer.

Where Your visitors Come From: This tells you who is sending you visitors. If your traffic mostly comes from a few sites, you should concentrate more attention on them and perhaps look for other similar sites to connect with as well.

Bounce Rate: Those users who rapidly depart after looking at just one page. If you need more detailed information, check the Google site above or search Youtube.com for related videos.

Protecting Your Good Name



It is just as important for people who interact on the Internet to protect their reputation as it is for any company.

Of course, this is obvious when you are your product, an actor or some other kind of entertainer, or when you have your personal image tightly linked to

the product or service which you provide.

It is also important that anyone who has a goal of reaching a high level in any business area needs to protect their personal image so that there is little chance of previous events or statements causing problems when they are approaching those high levels.

Much of the information in this ebook will be helpful to those people.

Here are some extra tips for the individual operator.

Start now if you have not already started to protect your personal reputation.

The first step with any social platform is to know as much about how it operates before you become a member.

Talk with friends and colleagues about what they know and their opinions about the various platforms they use.

Thank them for their help and connect with them if you join that platform.

That can give them a good feeling because you appreciate their willingness to help you.

That is a lesson for all interactions; people like to be appreciated for what they do, not just what they are worth to us.

Dealing with Privacy Issues

It's a fact that we all have less personal privacy because of the way the Internet is being used now.

The legal system in most countries is far behind the point where it is an effective protector of our privacy.

Most sites that you visit collect the sort of data which I mentioned in the section about Google Analytics.

All sites which collect personal data in any form are required in the U.S.A. and most other countries to have notices which tell us what they collect and how it is used as well as who they share it with.

If you need forms for your website, check those available from **Comply** in the reference section at the end of the book.

But, some sites have significant amounts of their profits depending on the collection and manipulation of data. That includes Google and Facebook.

Google issue new Terms of Use at times which we are expected to accept before we use any of their services.

Facebook have their own Terms and they also change them fairly often. Facebook seems to think that we like to share as much information as we can with as many people as possible.

Every time you hear of some change at Facebook, check your privacy settings in case they've changed them for you!

Consider the worst possible outcome which might happen from sharing that information or photo. Only then, decide what you are willing to share. That will vary with each reader's particular situation and interests.

There are many Privacy Options available in your Facebook account. When you decide to review them, keep in mind their prime interest in user data.

One area of particular concern is your Facebook Photos. When you set any photo to be shared, you will probably have to sort through and find that photo again if you want to change the sharing setting on it. Because friends don't always last and our views on things we did may change, you may want

to delete photos you don't want to share any more. That's probably the safest strategy.

Be aware that many other sites do similar things. The only way to be completely safe is not to connect to the Internet.

That is not an option for many people in this connected world!

It will only get more frantic as more social sites are launched with even more enticing interactive features.

Linking Through LinkedIn

LinkedIn’s unique selling point is that it is the social media platform that actively encourages business between its members.

This site is very good for people involved in any kind of business and also for people that want to work in a particular type of business as well.

Connections you make through LinkedIn can be great sources of advice, referrals and new business ideas.

If you are an enthusiastic person who wants to reach higher levels, a membership at LinkedIn can help.

The first thing you need to do is to fill out profile as fully as possible.

As well as ensuring that it is accurate, try to make it likely to keep people reading.

This is a great tool for easing the path to connecting with people you want to meet. People will get a strong impression of you from that profile.

If it’s dull or only has the minimum information, most will pass it by because there are always plenty of new profiles to check.

One way to get noticed is to emphasize your special expertise in a particular area. Then you check about the LinkedIn groups related to your industry.

Although the site is focused on marketing, you’ll attract more interest by contributing to the discussions you take part in than by only referring to your own exploits.

Giving useful responses to questions from other members can also get more interest in you and your activities from other people.

Like all the best offline business groups, enthusiasm and willingness to contribute your expertise is highly valued.

Take care and plenty of time and thought when you start to set up your LinkedIn profile because it will be an important part of your campaign for better jobs or assignments for years to come.

While connecting with other people in the network is encouraged by other

social media sites, it is required when you want to be an active and successful LinkedIn Member.

You can share information with three types of contacts in LinkedIn:

- ▶ **Your Contacts** are the people you have connected with directly. Either you invited them to connect with you or vice-versa.
- ▶ **Your Network** includes people you know and the people they know.
- ▶ **Everyone** includes Members of LinkedIn and also anyone searching through the major search engines.

Take care at every step when you set up your LinkedIn profile. I would check with someone I know for advice if you are unsure because some details change from time to time, though probably not as often as Facebook’s Privacy Terms and settings.

I suggest that you use a personal email address rather than one in your employer’s system, especially if you may be seeking a new job through LinkedIn at some time in the future. You never want to use an employer’s email system for anything to do with that. People would regard it as being disloyal and using your employer’s equipment for personal business.

While LinkedIn is an obvious place for potential employers (and even some prospective customers) to check for information about you and your business, they are also very likely to check what sort of image and comments you have on Facebook. It is always wise to keep your personal comments and activities discreet because all aspects of your online personality are likely to be vetted when you are being considered for any sort of important position.

More Social Sites

LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/>

This is currently the premier business-focused social media site. But, just as MySpace developed a huge following but has slipped behind some newer sites, I am sure that LinkedIn will, in its turn, face more competition as the business-related sector of the Social Media area of the Internet continues to develop.

The sites listed below are more socially focused but there are some with areas where businesses which obey the individual site’s rules can promote themselves without upsetting many people.

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/>

This is a site for being sociable. It is not a receptacle for any sort of business discussion. But, businesses do set up pages where they interact with people.

Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/>

Twitter has lots of members and you can connect with people that are interested in your type of business, as long as you can do it in 140 characters or less at a time.

Setting up your Business Blog.

Another option is to have your own business blog. That gives you ultimate control of the discussion. But, there are some traps for the unwary.

You can delete negative or unfair posts. But, always review each post carefully first. If there is a genuine concern in the comment, you must deal with it as sensitively and openly as possible. Often, that course will turn the complainant into a promoter of your company.

If people notice that a lot of comments are deleted, they will lose confidence in the information on your whole site.

Blogs: You can set up a blog on your business web site where people, including customers, can ask questions and report their experiences and questions about your products.

You, or your staff, can produce tips for using the products and also announce new products and special promotions.

Keeping the commercial aspect low-key and updating the useful content frequently is the formula for a successful blog.

Many people are more comfortable commenting or asking a question through a blog than a regular web site because it is a less formal structure.

A blog can be a valuable asset for your business or you personally.

But, it comes at a cost which many small businesses are not prepared for.

If you are to attract potential customers to your blog, you need to maintain it to a high standard and respond promptly to any enquiries or comments about the material you put on it.

If you look for blogs related to your area of business, you will find some which are getting comments frequently and probably there will be others which have not had any changes in several months.

It may take some time to get people actively commenting and sending enquiries through your blog but that is little different to when you try to attract attention to a new business in the main street.

Reputation Related Resources

All the web sites listings here are supplied only as examples. Use of them is entirely at your own risk.

Web traffic Analysis

Compete.com: <http://www.compete.com/> Compete.com offers its analysis of visitors to web sites. The figures are derived from information supplied by a variety of professional services on the Internet and data collected from people who use the Toolbar which Compete.com supply in their web browser.

Google.com services

Google Analytics:

<http://www.google.com/analytics>

Google offers a free and also a paid service to provide data about visitors to a website and their activities while on the site. The services are mostly of use to people offering goods and services to their visitors. But they can be helpful for discovering where visitors to your site are coming from, what pages they visit and how long they stay on your site.

This link will give you more information about the service.

<http://www.google.com/analytics/learn/setup/checklist.html>

If you decide it is useful, you might get an employee to handle the actual set-up and analysis if you do not want to learn to do it or don't have time..

Social Media Sites

These sites encourage people to interact and comment on their own and/or other people's activities. Some of the revenue for some social media sites comes from supplying information gathered from data they collect about users of the sites and services which they provide.

As well as getting information about other people by entering their names, I suggest that you take the time to put in your own name to see what other people will find about you if they use the site.

If you find that no results about you are easy to find when you type in just your name, try another search and add your location, your type of business or something which you are well known for in your personal or professional circle.

Spezify: <http://www.spezify.com/>

This site offers a way to see what is available in any sort of media from sources such as Amazon.com, Facebook.com, Soundcloud.com and Vimeo.com.

Spezify offers a collage where the items shown are can be clicked so that you get to see the full item on the site where Spezify.com collected it from.

It is not a source or answers to your questions.

Social Mention.com: <http://www.socialmention.com/>

Sends daily messages about where the topic you selected has been mentioned in Social Media. You can select the subject or person you want to be notified about and also restrict the listings to particular type of media such as videos, events, audio, news and several others.

Hootsuite.com: <http://www.hootsuite.com/>

This site offers

The basic free (advertising supported) service lets you manage up to five social media profiles and get access to:

“**HootSuite Conversations**” with Members

Five Social Profiles: These social profiles include those you have in other Social Networks.

Free Quick Reports: Custom reports with analytics which help you to measure your effectiveness in Social media.

The service is useful for individuals and is also used by major corporations and all types in between.

Free Apps: these allow you to add and manage your Tumblr and YouTube.

You can also use the free service from Evernote (<http://www.evernote.com/>)

to record your activities.

Tweetdeck: <http://www.tweetdeck.com/>

This is a Dashboard which you can use to monitor your Tweeter.com and Facebook.com accounts. You can get your Twitter Searches, Tweets and even Facebook comments.

Twitter Search: <http://www.twittersearch.com/>

This service from Twitter collects details of comments about your company or just about anything else in Twitter at the time you run the search. These results reflect what people are saying or feeling about the topic.

Trackur: <http://www.trackur.com>

This is a high-end service which supplies search results and other services mostly to large firms and professional public relations service providers about commentary and other feedback about companies and products. One of their reports tries to gauge the emotion in a response!

Touchgraph.com: <http://www.touchgraph.com/>

Touchgraph offer a variety of graphing services. They produce charts which show relationships between websites (Touchgraph SEO), Facebook Members (Touchgraph Facebook) and books and the referrals they get on Amazon.com (Touchgraph Amazon).

Sample Forms

The sites listed offer the forms without warranty or guarantee.

Any use you make of them is entirely at your own risk. Always have your own lawyer check any documents before using them.

Comply: <http://cmp.ly> disclosure forms

Human Resources at About.com:

http://humanresources.about.com/od/policiesandsamples1/a/email_policy.htm offers examples of Policy documents which cover Employee activity on the Internet and with email among many others.

These are free to adapt but there is no warranty of any kind from me, the

publisher or distributor of this book.

Reputation Management Services

Reputation.com: <http://www.reputation.com/>

Reputation.com offer a variety of services related to reputation protection and management. The company has patents for some reputation-related programs.

Final Words

I hope your experience on the Social media whirlpool and with your business activities is less stressful and more successful after reading my book.

The multitude of cautions in the book are not to scare you about the problems and pitfalls we face with the Internet.

I want to leave you better prepared to deal with them and more confident that you can achieve all the success you deserve.

Harold Marsden

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