



Your Online Reputation

A Guide to Managing Your
Online Reputation

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Your Online Reputation

If you think back to high school, you might remember being judged based on your reputation, along with your clothes, hair, and whom you were friends with. Times have changed, and with the growth of social networking platforms, the World Wide Web has turned into a popularity contest that pits your online reputation against others.

What Makes Up Your Online Reputation

Your online image is made up of everything about you that exists online. The range of materials that could potentially impact your online reputation is broader than you might realize. Here are just some components of your online image:

- All of your profiles on social networking and media sites
- Comments you make on social media sites
- Images you share on blogs, social media sites, or basically anywhere on the web
- Videos you share on YouTube and elsewhere
- Posts and articles you publish online
- Comments you make on other people's blog posts, articles, and on message boards
- Geolocation information that you broadcast through services like Foursquare and Gowalla
- Comments that others make about you in social media or in blog posts
- Images of you that others publish on social media

Why an Online Reputation is Important

Creating a good online identity is becoming indispensable in today's world. What you once thought was your private online information may not really be as private as you thought. Having a bad online reputation can kill your potential jobs, business, or even relationships without you ever having the chance to say a single word in your own defense. Students who pay attention to their online reputation and "personal brand" throughout college will have a natural advantage in the job market upon graduation, regardless of their course of study. ¹

What Employers Are Looking At

- 91% of employers are now using Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc. as a screening tool for potential employees.
- The going rate for Facebook profile checking is about 76% of the 91% of employers who do social media screens, which means pretty much anyone you're going to try to work for. About 48% of those same 91% of employers check your LinkedIn profile and 53% check your Twitter account.
- 47% of employers check these accounts right after receiving an application and only 7% don't use sites like this to screen potential employees.
- 69% of people are rejected due to information obtained about them on social networking sites such as these.

It is very important to carefully manage your image on these types of sites. Hirers are trying to get a more personal view of a candidate, rather than the resume-like view of them. While you may conduct yourself properly on sites like this, there are a lot of other aspects that are looked at and evaluated. Employers are looking to see how you approach what you put on these sites. Is it immature? Appropriate or

¹ <http://freelancefolder.com/why-online-reputation-management-is-more-important-than-ever/>

inappropriate? They don't judge your activity; employers are looking at how you communicate, what you do, and your thoughts and judgments to the public, as a reflection of what you will do with clients and team members.

5 Things Employers Check

1. Your pictures. 11% of candidates are rejected due to inappropriate photos.

- Do you have “skanky” party pictures? Pictures of you losing that beer pong match? How about pictures of you passed out on the floor?
- They may have been fun for you but to an employer it shows a lack of self-control and reliability.

2. Your information. 13% of candidates have been rejected due to lying about their qualifications and information.

- Does the info you have posted match what you have told to your employer? Did you lie about anything, like for instance your resume says you graduated from Northwestern University, but your Facebook says Arizona State?
- It's not so much about the college you graduated from, but the fact that you lied. Something like this is going to raise red flags and could cost you the job all together.

3. Your posts and statuses. A total of 63% of candidates are rejected due to posts and statuses on their accounts.

- 11% are rejected for inappropriate comments, 11% for inappropriate comments about previous jobs, 11% for poor communication skills, 11% for discriminatory comments, and a combined 19% for content of alcohol abuse and drug use.
- Do you ever complain about your job? Write about your hangover? Or make foul and racist jokes and comments?

- Saying things like this in a public forum is inappropriate and can land you in hot water with employers.

4. The times you are active on these sites.

- Everything is time stamped. Employers look to see if you're really working or watering your crops on Farmville.
- This could cost you your current job and quite possibly a potential job.

5. Your friends.

- Nearly everyone has some idiot friends who don't think before they act or post. While stupid posts can be removed, they have to be caught first and no one can monitor their facebook 24/7.
- Even things about you, like pictures or comments, on other pages can get you in trouble. Has your friend ever tagged you in a picture where you or they are wasted and streaking down Main Street? How about projectile vomiting out of the car window?
- We are judged by our friends, like it or not.

Just BE SMART on all sites like this.

You never know what could cost you your job. While employers cannot legally make hiring decisions based on race, religion, marital status or disability, they can make decisions based on whether or not they like your attitude or your ethics. Use your account security settings to restrict what is seen to people and most importantly make good decisions. If you would be embarrassed for your grandmother to see something, don't put up.²

² <http://www.helium.com/items/1800544-what-employers-are-looking-for-on-your-facebook-page>

The Good Things

Employers don't just look at the "bad" things you or others have about you online. 86% of employers reported that a positive online reputation factors into their hiring decision and 68% of those employers hired a candidate for the good things they found and concluded about them on these sites.

By using your profiles to show your:

- Personality
- Organization
- True professional qualifications
- Solid communication skills
- Well-roundedness
- Good references from friends' and others' posts and comments
- Awards and accolades

Employers get a better understanding of your reliability, quality, determination, and over all true self which leads to a good impression and most likely the job. Your site is a way to showcase your singular talents and those qualities that would make you a stellar candidate for a job. In this way, you can still increase you visibility without risking any unwarranted exposure. ³

It's Not a Violation of Your Privacy

The FTC has decided that companies that research how you spend your personal time and what your passions and hobbies are do not violate your privacy. The company Social Intelligence scours the Internet for the information, pictures and comments you

³ <http://www.geeksaresexy.net/2011/10/07/91-of-employers-are-creeping-your-facebook-profile-infographic/>

freely share with the world and sells that data to your potential employers. The FTC found the company in compliance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act, meaning the Internet is fair game.

A Social Intelligence report to a company would include the racist remarks, sexually explicit photos or videos, or flagrant displays of weapons or illegal activity you have on these sites. Your decision to post a naked picture of yourself might not go over too well with a potential employer or even your current one.

For an employer to view pictures on Facebook of you at a party does not constitute an invasion of privacy since that information is available to the public. No, it's not available to the public, you argue, only to my Facebook "friends..." Be careful, there are plenty of ways to uncover your actions and history on these sites.

So, what can you do to make sure that current and future employers don't see anything you don't want them to? The answer is surprisingly simple: Don't post it.^{4;5}

Social Intelligence

Social Intelligence is a Consumer Reporting Agency that offers social media screening and investigative services including employment background checks, insurance claims investigations, corporate due diligence, government services, and more. Social Intelligence accesses, reviews, and reports information that is publicly available online. Their patented technology searches millions of websites, including the most well-known social networking websites.

The reports provided by Social Intelligence contain the consumer's full name, email address, and permanent address, as well as employer information and a time-stamp history, screen shots of the material that matches the employers' pre-defined criteria, and comments provided by the Social Intelligence team concerning its findings.

Discrimination is a major issue when hiring new employees, therefore Social Intelligence is designed to create equal opportunity for all potential hires by concealing any material that falls under U.S. Federal and State protected classes such as race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, gender identity, disability status, veteran status, and genetic information allowing the employer to conduct "fair and consistent" hiring practices.^{6;7}

⁴ <http://studentsforinternationalscholarships.blogspot.com/2011/10/personal-branding-getting-started-with.html>

⁵ http://mqjeffrey.hubpages.com/hub/How_employers_look_at_Myspace_and_Facebook_pages

⁶ <http://www.socialintel.com/>

What You Can Do About Your Online Reputation

- 1. Google yourself, then Yahoo!, then Bing.** If you've ever signed up for anything (social media profiles, blogs, court or public records, dating sites etc.) on the Web, you should check out Pipl as well. Make every effort to find out what's out there about you.
 - Subscribe to Google Alerts and receive an email as soon as your search phrase (like your name, product, work, or company) enters Google's index. Google Alerts cover news stories, video comments, blogs, pages found in web search, and even Google's own mailing lists, Google Groups.
- 2. Clean up what's out there.** Anything that may be taken out of context should be removed. If you need to delete an account from any website take a look at [PCMAG's How To](#) article for instructions on how to do so.
- 3. Make sure everything is accurate about you.** Instead of clearing off all the information on your online profiles or removing your name from your website or blog, ensure that what's on those pages complements your reputation. Companies look at layers of social media to determine your identity; you want it to be correct.
- 4. Surround your name with information you want to be associated with.** Keep in mind that bits and pieces of you are at a number of other sites, like LinkedIn, Craigslist, or Foursquare, not to mention blogs, forums and wikis that you might visit. Always be cautious of what you post and do on these sites. Surround your name with information you want to be associated with.
- 5. Frequently check and keep up to date** on your privacy settings on the social media accounts you have.
- 6. Create a positive online presence.** Put up your resume on a site with your domain or make yourself noticeable on forums of charitable organizations that you support. For information on common mistakes made visit [REPUTATION.COM](#).^{8;9;10}

⁷ <http://www.socialintel.com/faqs/>

⁸ <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/could-you-pass-a-facebook-background-check-2011-07-25>

⁹ <http://www.smartplanet.com/blog/smart-takes/how-to-build-and-manage-an-online-reputation/350>

¹⁰ <http://lifehacker.com/357460/manage-your-online-reputation>

How You Can Create a Positive Online Reputation

1. **Create your personal brand.** Creating a positive name for yourself means establishing yourself as personally involved and making yourself known in the online community. Imagine that your personal brand is another version of you, because, in effect, it is. If you don't feed and nurture it, it will die.

To create an effective personal brand follow these 5 steps:

1. **Define your brand by defining yourself.** Be personal without giving away personal information. Your online presence should represent a professional and thoughtful portrait of who you are. Aim to provide content that demonstrates your intelligence, professional skills, and likeability.
 2. **Be proactive when using social media tools.** Use social media tools to help shape your online brand, make sure it offers some kind of value for you, either as a networking tool or as a place to share a concise professional biography.
 3. **Offer compelling and quality online content.** After you have established how you want to appear online, and signed up for the appropriate websites to premiere your personal branding campaign, focus on delivering consistently quality content.
 4. **Protect yourself from social media online brand hijackers.** Your online brand should be yours and yours alone. There have been numerous instances of reputations ruined because someone posted inappropriate content under their name. Focus on claiming as much of your digital real estate as possible.
 5. **Live and breathe your personal online brand.** It is important to take time every day to add fresh content to your social networking accounts, build out your professional network, and scan the Web for references to your name.¹¹
2. **Start a blog in which you can share your expertise and connect with other people.** Your writing quality and content will get you noticed by your peers and improve your standing in your community. The people who are offering real solutions to pertinent issues, original viewpoints, and valuable commentary, are the ones who have the best reputations.
 3. **Have multiple profiles on the web.** Your personal style plays as great a role as any in the establishment of your unique online persona, and the more stable you are in this style, the more memorable and recognizable you will be in the online community.
The 3 must have social networking sites for a good online reputation are LinkedIn, Google Profile, and Twitter.
 - LinkedIn is the web's most popular and well-established professional social networking website. It provides ample resources to promote your good name and

¹¹ http://www.reputation.com/how_to/five-steps-to-build-your-online-brand-and-protect-your-online-reputation/

make valuable connections with your peers due to its professionalism and tightly controlled sharing.

- Blogs are great reputation tools, but the time needed to create and manage a blog is too much for some web users so Twitter makes sharing one's opinions with the world as easy as sending a text message. Just be sure to use proper Twitter etiquette.
- A Google Profile is a must considering that Google is the first place someone will go to look you up. It gives you a guaranteed spot on your first page of Google results, it helps distinguish you from other individuals who have the same name, and it gives you the opportunity to link up all of the different sites you're on.^{12; 13}

People are slowly becoming aware of the consequences of posting too much information on the Web, but you shouldn't wait until you make a mistake and lose a job because of it. Remember that the Internet never forgets (even if you delete something!). So your best strategy is to always put your best foot forward online. You can't afford to let the collective Web dictate what other people think about you—certainly not if you can help it—and taking steps to build and maintain a GOOD online reputation helps you control that.

Consequences

Many people have faced consequences due to ruined reputations from careless social networking including celebrities like Miley Cyrus and David Hasselhoff, politicians, and ordinary people. Learn from their mistakes on how you can prevent these types of occurrences from happening to you.

- [HOW THREE ONLINE REPUTATIONS WERE RUINED THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORKING. – REPUTATION.COM](#)
- [UCLA Student's Racist Rant Leaves Indelible Mark – Social Times](#)
- [Comedian Gilbert Gottfried fired as voice of Aflac duck – CNN](#)
- [Galliano fired after reportedly praising Hitler in rant – MSN](#)

¹² http://www.reputation.com/how_to/create-your-personal-brand-online/

¹³ http://www.reputation.com/how_to/three-must-have-social-networking-sites-online-reputation-management/

Resources and Additional Information

Check out all of our sources located in the footers and for further information on how to build and maintain a good online reputation, check out some additional sources and articles:

For Social Media information:

- [Your Facebook and Your Online Reputation](#)
- [How to develop an effective social media strategy](#)
- [How to use social media to manage your reputation](#)

For college students and employment information:

- [How your online reputation can lead to job offers](#)
- [Online reputation management for college students](#)

For overall online etiquette and more on reputation management:

- [Guide to online etiquette](#)
- [Guard Your Online Reputation](#)

[Reputation.com](#) is a company that offers online reputation management and internet privacy services. They began with a focus on helping to protect people from damaging their reputations through embarrassing and detrimental postings on social media websites, but now their services include monitoring of almost all web content about their clients and has moved beyond the 'defensive' and onto the 'proactive' face of reputation and privacy management. They have a paid service that monitors content about you and when damaging content is found, the company tries to get it removed from the offending websites. They also have tons of useful articles, many used to create this guide, about what you can and should not do to help you manage a good online reputation. Check out their [resources](#) for more information on how you can help your online reputation.

