

Topic | Social Media

Tutorial 45

Online Reputation Management

Managing customer reviews is imperative in order to improve and lift your business' reputation. If you turn a blind eye you risk losing business. This tutorial will provide assistance with assessing and managing your customer reviews.

Reading time: 15 minutes

Prerequisite: None



1. What is online reputation management and why is it important?

A 2009 NIELSEN GLOBAL ONLINE CONSUMER SURVEY REVEALS THAT RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCES ARE THE MOST TRUSTED FORMS OF ADVERTISING: 90 PER CENT OF RESPONDENTS SAID THEY TRUSTED THEM “COMPLETELY” OR “SOMEWHAT.”

Online reputation management (or monitoring) is the practice of monitoring a reputation on the Internet in order to monitor, assess and control the perception of that reputation.

The web has evolved into a giant social community where people interact and exchange ideas. Just as they would do with friends in an offline environment, online users ask peers for advice and trust users more than they trust advertisements.

a) Why manage my online reputation?

In the travel and tourism industry especially, user reviews have taken new dimensions:



Online communities such as TripAdvisor.com, Hostelworld.com, Menulog.com.au feature millions of traveller reviews of cities, hotels, hostels, restaurants, and attractions.



Region-centric tourism and hospitality guides feature reviews of hotel, restaurants and many other products.



Online forums such as the Thorn Tree on LonelyPlanet.com are online spaces where traveller interact 24/7 asking for advice and searching for answers.

It is now common practice for consumers to leave reviews online. They do so on their own blogs, on other peoples' blogs, on Facebook and Twitter, on restaurant review sites, and everywhere they can.

One key implication to the tourism operator is that all this user-generated content is being indexed by search engines. Consequently, people searching for you online have a very large chance of finding these reviews as well. **Staying passive is therefore not an option.** The only solution is to embrace this user-generated content and turn it to your advantage.

b) Benefits of managing my online reputation

There are many benefits to managing, monitoring and engaging in online reputation management which have been listed in order of importance below:

1. You are aware about what is being said online about your business
2. It proves to your potential customer you care about your business and that you want them to have a pleasant experience
3. The majority of the tools are free or have a free version

4. Once you have set up the tools and processes it should only take you 30 minutes per week to manage your online reputation and dramatically improve your online strategy.

2. How to get reviews

There are two main ways in which your business will be reviewed online:

- Guests decide to find you on TripAdvisor, Google Places, Facebook or a similar service and leave a review for you
- You encourage guests to review your business across a variety of channels.

As you would expect the most effective way of gaining reviews is to request them and this has become common practice. When requesting a review there are a number of different strategies that you could choose to implement, all of which work well when implemented correctly. The best ways to request a review are:

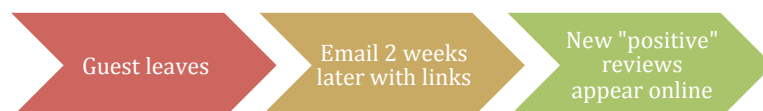


In person – speak with your guest live on the spot while their experience is fresh in their mind. Ask them to leave a review on your TripAdvisor profile from their smart phone or laptop. Alternatively you could take a quick 30 second video of someone saying how great your tour was or hand out pamphlets or thank you notes with the details of your Facebook, Google Places, TripAdvisor etc accounts.



Via email – Once they have returned home send an email saying how great it was to see them and you hope they enjoyed their time. Request a small favour of them in the form of a review and provide them the direct links to your review platforms. At this time you can also mention that they can like your Facebook Page (www.facebook.com) or follow you on Twitter (www.twitter.com) etc.

To make things easier make sure you create an email template with links to the various sites you find easy to manage! Ensure you remove the “difficult” customers from your email list first of course.



3. Which websites allow reviews?





A vital part of a successful reputation management strategy is to encourage users to review your business on a variety of platforms.

IT IS NO LONGER ACCEPTABLE TO HAVE A FEW GREAT REVIEWS ON YOUR GOOGLE PLACES ACCOUNT AND EXPECT THAT EVERYONE WILL JUST HEAD THERE AND CHECK THEM OUT.

You now need to have people reviewing you on TripAdvisor, Google Places, your Facebook Page (via a reviews tab), your website, online forums and even on your own blog. A way to achieve this is to change the platform you mention each time you request them, simply request TripAdvisor etc for the first 5 people and then request Facebook, Google Places etc for the next 3 and then switch. Alternatively, you could assess the origin of the bookings and ask people to leave a review on the site they booked (e.g. TripAdvisor, TotalTravel...)

The most common sites and tools for online reputation management have been listed below:

	Tool	Best for	Website
	TripAdvisor	Accommodation mainly. Tours, restaurants and other attractions are now accepted but have smaller prominence.	www.tripadvisor.com
	IgoUgo	Accommodation, tours and attraction, restaurants.	www.igougo.com
	Stays	Accommodation - Rental properties	www.stayz.com.au
	Hostel World	Accommodation - Hostels	www.hostelworld.com
	Menu Log	Restaurants	www.menulog.com.au
	Urban Spoon	Restaurants	www.urbanspoon.com
	Eatability	Restaurants	www.eatability.com.au
	Google Places	All	www.google.com/places

	TrueLocal	All	www.truelocal.com.au
	Facebook	All	www.facebook.com
	Pinterest	All	www.pinterest.com
	Cruise Critic	Boating Cruises	www.cruisecritic.com

Do a search on Google for accommodation reviews *your city* or replace “accommodation” with your product/service type to identify other possible review sites or forums. E.g. accommodation reviews Kangaroo Island.

[Kangaroo Island Travel Guide - Kangaroo Island, Australia Review...](#)
www.tripadvisor.com/AllReviews-g255095-Kangaroo_Island_South... [+7](#)
Kangaroo Island, South Australia Travel Guide: Know **Kangaroo Island** before you go, with TripAdvisor's articles, forums, and 960 **reviews** of **Kangaroo Island** lodging, ...
www.booking.com/Kangaroo-island-Hotels Book your **Hotel** in Kangaroo ...

[Kangaroo Island Accommodation - Holiday House & Apartment ...](#)
www.stayz.com.au > SA [+7](#)
 25+ items – **Kangaroo Island** Holiday **Accommodation** - Find a great deal on ...
 • Western's Rest – Glass fronted holiday house in Penneshaw – Brilliant location ...
 • Blue seas beach house – self contained house in D'Estrees Bay – wildlife and ...
 • Wilderness Valley Studio **Accommodation** – MAGNIFICENT LOCATION & VIEWS

[Kangaroo Island Hotels - Reviews & Rates - VirtualTourist](#)
www.virtualtourist.com > ... > State of South Australia > Kangaroo Island [+7](#)
Kangaroo Island Hotel Reviews: Tips, guest photos, and deals on **hotels** in **Kangaroo Island**, Australia from real travelers and locals.

[Kangaroo Island Accommodation: Find Kangaroo Island Hotels ...](#)
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Kangaroo Island Hotels: See traveller **reviews**, photos, and great deals for 9 **hotels** in **Kangaroo Island** at TripAdvisor.



[Southern Ocean Lodge - Reviews - Kangaroo Island Resorts ...](#)
www.tripadvisor.com.au/Hotel_Review-g255095-d1064636-Reviews... [+7](#)
 ★★★★★ 83 reviews
 Southern Ocean Lodge, **Kangaroo Island**: See 83 traveller **reviews**, 84 photos ...
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4. Tools to monitor feedback

Prior to responding to feedback it is important that tourism businesses have a plan as well as processes in place to monitor and assess feedback.

The best way to monitor online feedback is to set up your TripAdvisor email alerts (refer to the TripAdvisor for tourism tutorial) as well as the two following tools. All three tools are free.

	Tool	Best for	Website
	Google Alerts	Social media and non social media	www.google.com/alerts
	Social Mention	Social media only	www.socialmention.com

a) Google Alerts

Setting up Google Alerts will only take you approximately 10 minutes and offers a very easy way to subscribe to what the world is saying about you or about any topic of your choice. Set up as many Google Alerts based on your keywords and any new webpage mentioning them will land in your inbox!

E.g. If you are a bed and breakfast called “Gold Coast Lone Star” on the Gold Coast, create a few Google alerts: “Gold Coast Lone Star”, “bed and breakfast Gold Coast”, “tourism Gold Coast” etc. Set alerts for the name of your competitors, your staff, your State or Territory’s Minister for Tourism...

1. Go to www.google.com/alerts
2. Enter the terms you want to subscribe to. Put the terms inside quotes if there is more than one (so write “tourism marketing” if you want to subscribe to tourism marketing)
3. Confirm your email address
4. Repeat the same process for more alerts
5. Set up a Google account if you want to manage your alerts (however, you don’t need one to set up the alerts)
6. Once the alerts are set up they will go straight to your inbox.

This blog post provides further information on how to monitor your company’s online presence: <http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/4203/How-to-Use-Google-Alerts-to-Monitor-Your-Company-s-Online-Presence.aspx>

This blog post provides information on how to further customise Google alerts: <http://labnol.blogspot.com/2006/11/google-alerts-tutorial-to-help-you.html>

b) Social Mention

Social Mention is a social media search and analysis platform that aggregates user-generated content from across the universe into a single stream of information. It is one of the most

popular and free social media aggregators. It is just as quick and easy as Google alerts.

1. Go to www.socialmention.com
2. Enter the term you would like to subscribe to. Social mention isn't very good at searching for phrases (more than one term) so it is recommended you use only one word
3. Click on email alerts on the right
4. Create the alert to set up your alert
5. Repeat the process as many times as required to receive alerts on other terms
6. Once the alerts are set up they will go straight to your inbox.

5. How can I successfully assess and respond to feedback?

Once the monitoring tools are in place it is important to set up processes for assessing and responding to feedback. Aim to create a short document that meets the Who, What, Where, When, How and How many listed below. One page should suffice. Ensure the document is added to the company's operations manual and read by all staff. Also ensure that feedback is given in accordance with your processes document.

Who	Who will prepare the draft response to the reviews, who will sign off on them, who is the person who left the review?
What	What was the review about, what will be done in the company to ensure this does or doesn't happen again
Where	Where did the review appear (which medium?), where will the response be posted
When	When was the review posted, when was it "found" and what are appropriate timeframes for response?
How	How should the response be structured, what guidelines should be put in place to ensure consistency.
How many	How many reviews (if any) are required to move a negative review to page 2, 3 or 4?

6. FAQs

- **Shall I respond to every review?** If time permits, yes. However, you absolutely need to respond to all the negative reviews. Responding to the glowing reviews is also an excellent strategy.
- **I have received a negative review that wasn't justified, can I get it removed?** In most cases this won't be possible and isn't recommended. The best approach will be to respond to the review (if possible) and to encourage your past guests to leave positive reviews to move the negative one off page 1.
- **Is it a good idea to pay or reward people to leave me reviews?** Paying or rewarding customers to leave reviews is against the terms and conditions of the majority of review sites. The best way is to contact your past guests and ask to be reviewed. Many people will do it as they had a great experience.

- **Do I have to pay to be listed on online review sites?** Most generally you don't. Some sites offer paid listings but the majority also offer free listings.

7. Key learning outcomes

- Monitoring, managing and growing your online reviews becomes part of a routine and quick process once set up
- TripAdvisor is one the most popular online review sites and a basic listing is free
- Google Alerts and Social Mention are two of the easiest and free tools to monitor your online reputation
- You need an action plan to manage your reputation to ensure you address and seek reviews regularly.

8. Related material

a) *Related tutorials*

- Bringing people to my site with e-marketing
- TripAdvisor for tourism

b) *Related websites*

- TripAdvisor Owner Page: www.tripadvisor.com/help/owners#c0
- TripAdvisor Getting listed: <http://www.tripadvisor.com/pages/getlisted.html>
- TripAdvisor 101 for your business: www.untanglemyweb.com/language/en-US/About/Blog/articleID/187/Tourism-Strategy-Promote-your-tourism-business-on-TripAdvisor