

REPUTATIONDEFENDER®

ONLINE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT DIAGNOSE YOUR STATUS

Managing any online reputation starts with diagnosis. You can't begin to counteract negative results until you know they are there, so it's important to first run a baseline search on Google. This is the kind of search a future employer or any professional contact will make if they want to find out more about you. About 77 percent of HR personnel are actually required to Google potential employees as part of the hiring process, so a professional result page can make a big difference in your career. At ReputationDefender, we help clients create an online presence that actually increases their chance of landing a top-level job.

77%

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START WITH A VANITY SEARCH



Sign out of your Google account so you don't pull up a personalised SERP (Search Engine Results Page). Then type your professional name into the search bar and hit enter. Include your middle name if you use it regularly and don't forget to check for variations or misspellings of your name.

You can diagnose your search based on the following categories:

- 1 Irrelevant** – There are no results that tell an employer about your education or career. Anything about you is either out of date or it relates to a different part of your life.
- 2 Someone Else** – There are results for another person with a similar name. Recruiters are often considering multiple candidates at the same time and it's easy to confuse people on the internet. Negative results that aren't about you can still hurt you and positive results about someone else can be just as problematic. If a recruiter calls thinking you have a Master's degree in physics, only to find out you don't, it won't make a favourable impression.
- 3 Negative** – There is at least one undesirable result about you. This could be an unfortunate Facebook post, a silly picture tagged by a friend, or a story about something unflattering that happened at your last job. Many people have this kind of material left over from college days or a period of their life when they were less careful, so it's nothing to be ashamed of.
- 4 Positive** – This is the gold star rating. There are positive results that tell an employer about what you've done professionally. Some examples of positive results are professional social media profiles, articles about your career, or blog posts that relate to your field.

After running a search on Google, you should go on to diagnose your status on other search engines (Bing, Yahoo, DuckDuckGo, etc.) Google is the most widely used, but it's a good idea to make sure you haven't missed any results.

If your diagnosis revealed any of the first three categories (which is likely, unless you've already put a lot of work into reputation management) there's work to be done. Read the next post to learn more about getting the results you want.

PERSONAL SEO CREATE A PRESENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA



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At ReputationDefender, we recommend that all our clients create professional social media profiles which will give employers more information about their education and career. If you interact with friends a lot on Facebook or other social sites, it's worth creating two profiles, one with your professional name and one with a pseudonym or nickname that your friends know but a work contact wouldn't. Keep posts on your official profile limited to career-relevant material.

OPTIMISE YOUR PROFILES

These are the most important profiles for SEO:



Google+ – While this might not be your most active profile, it's one you know Google will index. The page-title on the SERP will be your name, so make sure it's exactly the same as the one you put on your CV. Use a professional profile picture that is recognisable even in a thumbnail size. The meta-description below the title will combine four fields that you enter when you sign up for the account: tagline, occupation, employment and introduction.



LinkedIn – LinkedIn is the social site that's most used for professional purposes, so your profile here is going to count. Fill in Location, Position and Company to make sure they appear in the Google snippet. Customise the URL using your name and title if appropriate and make sure to set the profile to public so it will be easy for employers to find.



Facebook – You probably don't think of Facebook as a professional account, but it's one of the profiles that's easiest to rank with Google. Any posts that aren't set to 'Friends Only' will be visible to an employer and shares from other friends may increase the audience, so it's important to think about what you're posting and who can see it. As mentioned earlier, separate profiles can be an advantage. Tag the professional profile with your job title and include a bio about your career.



Twitter – Like Facebook, Twitter is used widely for a variety of purposes, both personal and professional. Twitter accounts are entirely public, so again it's important to think before you post. A professional Twitter profile with your full name and a brief intro about your career will help an employer find you online.

WIDEN YOUR AUDIENCE

These are the four largest social sites. However, there are numerous others that may be important to your career. Build as many profiles as you can keep active on a regular basis. If you have one that you don't update regularly, include a link that directs researchers to a more current page.

Once you've created a number of professional profiles and succeeded in ranking them on the SERP, you're off to a good start.



BUILD THE FOUNDATION — TAKE CONTROL OF THE SERP

Having a solid reputation means filling most or all of the SERP (page one) with positive content. This might sound like a daunting task, but if you start putting one or two hours per week into reputation building activities, you'll develop a strong presence on the web which will help to ward off reputation damage in the future.

At ReputationDefender, we tell our business clients it's not a matter of if but when they will receive a negative comment on the internet. Private individuals are less likely to attract this type of attention, but anyone who interacts personally with clients in their job could also find themselves mentioned in an unflattering review. Once this review ranks on the SERP for your name, it will start to hurt your career.



CREATE YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

Imagine your career is a business. Your first step would be to claim the trademark name so it can't be copied. Then you would go on to build a professional website so customers can find the company easily with a quick search. This is exactly what you should do to start developing a personal reputation as well.

- ✓ **Purchase Your Domain Name** – It usually isn't expensive to purchase the domain for your name, and the benefits far outweigh the investment. As you probably know, there are a lot of domains on the internet. The most credible are .edu or .gov. However, for a personal site .com or .net sites are usually appropriate. Try to purchase a domain that includes your professional name with no alterations so the URL will rank high on a search for that name. If you have a common name and both the .com and .net domains are already taken, add another word that relates to your field (for example: JaneSmithAccountant) or a generic word (JaneSmithOnline). Take out the longest registration license possible. The point is to prevent someone else from using your domain and creating sites that could damage your reputation or add irrelevant results to the SERP.
- ✓ **Build a Personal Website** – this is a great place for employers, or anyone else, to learn more about you. It's easy and free to create a site with WordPress, so you don't need a lot of technical knowledge. Include the same information you have on your CV and write a detailed, professional bio for the about section. Link all your social profiles to this page, so anyone looking you up on Facebook or Twitter will be directed back to your site. Use relevant keywords, including long tail key phrases related to your field. Add separate pages for different aspects of your career, but keep a clear site hierarchy and interlink pages so they will be easier for Google to index.
- ✓ **Blog** – Blogging about topics that relate to your career is one of the best ways to get more results on the SERP and it will also help to impress an employer. Stick to material that relates to your career and avoid controversial issues. Link your blog posts back to the website and share them on your social media profiles to generate incoming links. Schedule a weekly or monthly time to update the blog. Adding fresh content here will help keep all your pages up to date.

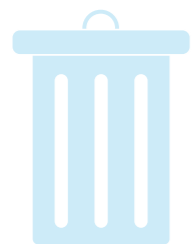
A strong SERP will put you on the way to having a positive, resilient reputation in the long term. However, you never know what may happen in the future. Read on for some advanced tactics to counteract a serious reputation attack.

WHAT IF THE WORST HAPPENS? COUNTERACT NEGATIVE RESULTS

If your original Google search turned up a lot of negative results, it will make building a professional profile quite hard. Unfortunately, it doesn't matter whether a compromising story is true or not. If it attracts a lot of attention, it will rank higher than your content and it will take a lot of work to change that.

People with serious reputation issues often find it more effective to work with a professional service. If you're dealing with viral stories or compromising pictures (revenge porn, for example) the problem may be too big to manage on your own. Our experts at Reputation Defender work with clients who are struggling to regain control over their life and career after damaging material has been published about them on the internet.

3 STEPS TO COMBAT UNDESIRABLE CONTENT



1 Delete It If the content was posted by you at an earlier date, you may be able to change the settings to private, delete the post, or even deactivate the account. This could apply to posts you shared in teenage or college years or activity from an old account you don't use any more. Of course this won't necessarily get rid of all the shared and archived copies, but it can help to remove the source.



2 Get It Taken Down Some content is removable, but it depends on the situation. Google will only ban results if they are defamatory or contain personal information that could be used to hack important accounts. Content that violates the terms of service agreement on the platform where it is posted may also be removable, but you will need to familiarise yourself with the exact wording of the contract and put in a direct request. Pictures or videos taken by you can be removed on the basis of copyright infringement but removal processes vary from country to country, so it may be helpful to get professional legal advice.

Sometimes the most effective way to get content taken down is to send a direct message asking the person to remove it. Many people thoughtlessly share posts they find funny without realising there is a real person involved, so they may be sympathetic to your request. This process is time consuming however, since you have to do this site by site, person by person, and there is no guarantee that everyone will cooperate.



3 Bury It Since it's usually not possible to remove every negative result, the next step is create a lot of positive, high-traffic content that ranks high enough to bump it off page one. A personal website, social media profiles and blog posts are a good way to start. However, you'll have to do more to counteract results that have attracted a lot of clicks and shares. These are some suggestions:

- **Organise an Event on Meetup** – MeetUp ranks high with Google. If you create a profile and plan a professional event, everyone attending will link to the page and boost its ranking.
- **Write a Press Release** – Anyone can write a PRNewsWire for around \$300 US. This might sound costly, but PR is one of the highest-ranking news sites on Google. A news release about an important event in your career will add another positive result on the SERP.
- **Comment on News Articles** – Write professional comments on high-ranking news sites. Include your name and link back to your website or blog.
- **Guest Blog** – Find a suitable blog and offer to write a guest post. This will give you a chance to send traffic back to your blog with an incoming link, which will improve your site's ranking.
- **Create a Profile on a .gov or .edu Domain** – If you can get a result on either of these domains, it will rank higher with Google than .com or .net. Of course it's not always easy, but it's worth checking to see if you can create an .edu profile through your university, or get yourself listed as a volunteer with a local government agency.



Hopefully, you'll never have to deal with serious reputation issues, but it's always best to be prepared. If you start building a strong reputation today, anything that happens in the future won't be as big a problem. For further questions, or more information on reputation management, contact our experts at ReputationDefender.

The importance of a positive online reputation cannot be underestimated. If you are worried about your online reputation contact the experts on **0800 131 0700** or email hello@reputationdefender.com