KEEPING A GRIP ON YOUR REPUTATION BY **REPUTATION MANAGEMENT**

OBI4WAN

Reputation management ensures that you are engaged in a structured way to keep everyone within your organization constantly informed about what is going on among stakeholders, which expectations are and are not met and to what extent this plays a role on social and/or mainstream media.

This means that internal stakeholders must be able to trust that the webcare team will take care of answering questions and complaints, and that proactive monitoring of a potential crisis will take place. In addition to peace and calm in your organization, this also provides insight into the pain points, actions and their effects.

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1. PRINCIPLES

Reputation management is only about organizations

We only deal with the brand reputation, meaning how as an organization you can measure, protect and improve your (online) reputation. This means that a personal reputation is not covered, unless of course it concerns the CEO of a company or a member of the Board of Directors. These people represent the organization, and thus influence the brand reputation.

Online reputation management is mainly social media

A good integration of online with offline media is a prerequisite for success, but we mainly focus on social media because it appears that most companies are organized on a separation between mainstream media and social media.

Why online reputation? The outside world sees only one reputation

Our starting point is that, as far as the customer is concerned, there is only one reputation. We will mainly focus on measuring, influencing and using social media channels, but always keeping in mind that the customer sees no distinction between the online and offline reputation.

Actions speak louder than words

Reputation management is bigger than just communication. When discussing reputation management, often only the communicative aspect is mentioned, but it is actually the improvement of your products and services that helps to achieve a reputation improvement. Actions speak louder than words.

2. MEASURING AND MONITORING

The basis of reputation management is good monitoring: charting, protecting and improving a reputation. You first need to clearly define what you want to monitor. Which information is important to your organization? Equally as important is ensuring that the information is brought to the attention of the right people in a manageable and understandable way. An efficient and effective information flow leads to awareness and - if necessary - action. You can only structurally work on your reputation if you ensure that the right information reaches the right people at the right time. To make your monitoring and information provision transparent, you can divide it into five components.

The first component consists of determining which sources are important for the organization. In practice, this differs somewhat per sector. In more traditional sectors - such as the pharmaceutical and automotive industry - the focus often lies mainly on offline media, especially print. Telecom companies and financial institutions are much more focused online. Increasingly, organizations are combining online and offline monitoring in an integrated tool where information from social media channels, online news, radio, TV and print media (newspapers and magazines) is available. If you want to know which sources are important, the following questions remain:

- What do you want to know?
- When and how do you want to know?
- How do you make those insights actionable?
- In summary: where (coverage), what (insights), when and how (frequency and format) and once you have the knowledge (awereness): what to do? (action).

5 COMPONENTS OF MONITORING & INFORMATION PROVISION

The diversity of sources is huge and constantly increasing. The monitoring of online news sources, radio, television and newspapers is most obvious. These sources have a wide range and are fairly easy to catch with traditional press cutting services. The diversity and volume of social media platforms is many times larger and therefore more difficult to interpret. But with a strict formulation of search questions and a user-friendly tool, the gathering of information from these sources becomes manageable.

3. COVERAGE

Monitoring both online and offline channels is important because:

- Online and offline channels influence each other: from both sides, reputation issues are initiated and further enlarged;
- Provides insight into the potential virality of topics about online and offline channels;
- Subjects that receive a lot of attention in traditional media are not necessarily picked up in social media (and vice versa);
- It offers a complete picture: monitoring social media, online news, print media and radio/TV gives rich insights.

4. INSIGHTS

There are many aspects of your reputation that you can understand through monitoring tools. The most important ones at a glance:

Volume and range

Insight into the number of expressions (articles, reactions, tweets, posts) about your brand, your competitors and important themes in your industry. This can also be subdivided into articles/posts and reactions to them. It is very important to gain insight into range. This leads to totally different insights than when you look at volume. The volume of expressions in print media, radio and TV is much lower but reaches a much larger audience. This always concerns potential reach. You may have 10,000 followers on Twitter but only a fraction will see that one tweet. A newspaper may sell 500,000 copies, but how many people really read that article about your brand? And how many people have the TV on without really watching? True reach over all those sources is immeasurable. The potential range is the only measure that approaches reality.

Sentiment

Sentiment analysis is an important part of monitoring. After all, you want insight into the positivity and negativity that people express about your brand and your competitors. Most monitoring tools provide this analysis in their services as standard. There are three ways to assign sentiment: automatically, manually and a combination of the two. The advantage of automatic analysis is that you gain insight quickly and real-time. The system does the job. The disadvantage is that this way of analyzing entails a margin of error of about 30 to 50%.

Take, for example, the health sector where diseases can be recognized as profanities. Sarcasm and irony are also well-known pitfalls. In more complex issues or when strategic decisions are made based on measured sentiment, manual analysis is more appropriate. The labels (positive, neutral or negative) are assigned by an analyst who reads and assesses the statements. There is also a margin of error here, but this is considerably lower. An additional advantage is that the person who evaluates the statements can also give more interpretation than the automatic variant. The disadvantage analyzing method is that it is slightly more expensive and that it causes delay because your data is only updated once or twice a day. A mix of automatic sentiment analysis, supplemented with manual samples, offers the advantages of increased accuracy, structural errors in automatic sentiment algorithms are identified and at the same time you have a representation of sentiment. Moreover, you can analyze more deeply: gaining insight into arguments ('triggers') that cause negativity and positivity.

Argumentation

Know which arguments lead to negativity or positivity about your brand or your competitor's. What is the competition doing well, where is room for improvement for yourself? If you understand which arguments unleash a certain sentiment, you immediately know how to achieve a more positive sentiment. On the basis of argumentation that has been measured around sentiments you can formulate concrete, 'actionable' recommendations to improve the sentiment around your brand.

Trends

Trends are especially insightful when you perform qualitative analyses on social media data. This cannot be extracted from a tool at the touch of a button, because things such as volume and sentiment are not decisive here. Social media channels lend themselves perfectly for gaining insight into trends and movements within your market.

Influentials

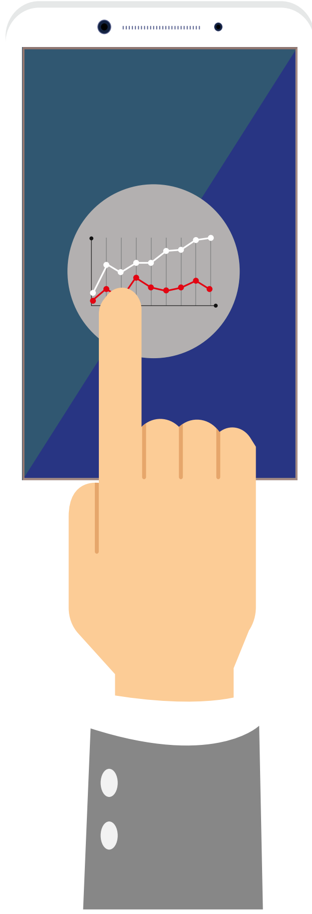
Who's talking about you, how many people do they reach and to what extent does their opinion resonate? Influentials are brand transcending but their influence is often limited to one specialism. That means that they are also important to your competitors. If you want to bind certain influentials to your brand, it is important to do so before the competition does.

Sources

Which sources are important to you? Are they based on visibility (range), authority or the volume they produce? Your monitoring tool will probably indicate that Twitter is (still) responsible for the largest volume at the moment. Keep in mind, however, that networks that contain a lot of closed content can also be interesting and that monitoring tools are limited to publicly accessible information.

Involvement

To what extent does a discussion resonate on social media? For example, is sustainability really a trending topic in society? This mainly concerns the engagement that you see on that theme within social media. Does this get support through retweets, likes and shares? Is that content shared more often than other content? In what form and how often are news and insights delivered? Each job profile has a different information requirement. A member of the Executive Board probably has no interest in a notification for a tweet by a BN'er (Famous Dutch Person), but is best served by highlights on a weekly basis supplemented with significance. A social media manager needs to be more on top and probably has a much more intensive information need that is more frequent and therefore less in-depth.



"We receive an e-mail newsletter three times a day including all articles, off- and online, radio and TV and the most important social media messages in which bol.com is mentioned. In addition, we immediately receive an email alert as soon as bol.com is prominently mentioned in an article or on radio and TV and social media. In addition, we use the tool if we need internal reports to make PR efforts transparent, to monitor campaigns in real time or to search afterwards."

- MARJOLEIN VERKERK, BOL.COM

5. FREQUENCIES AND FORMAT

The organization of information provision consists of two components: the daily information provision and the structural insights.

Daily information provision

When the day-to-day or regular information provision is arranged properly it leads to peace and confidence. The communication department gives the rest of the organization the feeling that they are on top: “We’ve got your back!” As soon as there’s something going on online or offline, they will know immediately, they can place it in a context and possibly decide to take action. The daily information provision is usually arranged per user group. Relevance and time are key. For good daily information provision, it is essential to be the first to know everything and to be able to process, share and report information efficiently.

Real time updates

The ‘We’ve got your back’ feeling needs to be supported by good alerts. This is a prerequisite if you want to be informed in real time of a potential crisis, escalations or external developments that can directly affect your organization. This allows you to be well prepared in case a journalist calls you with a question about a subject that has come up moment before. You also book the best result immediately in case of fast developments such as malfunctions. It often occurs that failures are signaled quicker via the monitoring tool than by their own IT department.

Examples of alerts you want to receive immediately:

- Food poisoning;
- Fraud;
- Embargoes that have been violated;
- Headline in the newspaper (your brand appears in the title);
- Member of the Executive Board is mentioned;
- Issue alert for specific source (Das Kapital, Geenstijl);
- Trade union or other interest group posts something about your organization.

Structural Insights

In order to know how your organization's reputation is developing, you have a structural need for insights such as your visibility on certain themes, development of sentiment, development of volume and reach. These insights are delivered on a monthly, quarterly, semi-annual or annual basis. When setting up monitoring, first look at the information needs within the organization. This starts with an organization chart in which you map out for each individual user or user group what the desired delivery frequency is of specific information, at what time it is desired and what scope the information should have. Blindly following the need per user is a classic pitfall. You want to avoid basing information provision too much on the basis of a personal information requirement. If that person were to leave, a successor could experience the information as information overload or feel that important information is being missed or delivered too late.

Format

This has everything to do with budget and internally available resources. Do you do it yourself or do you outsource it? How much information should be shared? Does information mainly consist of text or is it more visual in nature?

Possibilities are:

- Online reports that are updated in real time;
- Extensive reports
- Infographics
- Automated or editorially composed e-mails.

6. AWERENESS

A good information provision results in awareness within the organization about 'where the organization stands'. In terms of reputation this means: what is the perception of our stakeholders about the organization? How do our customers experience the service, what questions and complaints are there.

Webcare plays an important role in this process. The webcare team and the communication department are the eyes and ears of the organization, where the input that the webcare team receives is often different from that of the communication department. It is in particular the webcare department that converses with customers, even more so than call centers that are charged for the number of calls per agent per hour. The webcare department is perfectly capable of exposing the pain points of the organization. Their input, combined with the broader provision of information from corporate communication, should lead to awareness within the organization that enables decision-makers to prioritize and convert the acquired knowledge into concrete action points. There is also a nice challenge for every communication professional: how do you find the right balance in your information provision while creating awareness without falling into repetition. Too much repetition is counter-productive, but one point of attention that is not communicated frequently enough will be overshadowed by the long list of priorities. The awareness that results from a good, balanced information provision makes it possible to set priorities that lead to action which in turn leads to improvement. This improvement can be limited to your communication but can also affect the products and services that the organization delivers. Depending on the responsibilities of the individual or a department, all information must be followed by action.

The moment when information is only 'FYI' and no action ever follows, you probably didn't need that information in the first place. That is why it makes sense to regularly determine whether the information you receive is 'actionable' enough for your department. Just calculate what it costs to have a department of twenty people spend 10 minutes per person per day on 'nice to know' information. Such a calculation can easily be made if you have insight into the average costs per employee.

7. ACTIONABLE

Also important to determine is the amount of time you want to spend on staying 'up-todate'. For a communication specialist, this is a main issue: to know what is going on around your own organization, your stakeholders and your industry. A large part of his or her time can be spent on collecting, analyzing and sharing insights. A marketer has a much more limited information need: How is my campaign doing? - possibly benchmarked against a similar campaign. In this case, a weekly update is often sufficient.

The Board of Directors or Executive Board receive highlights that provide insight into what is happening and why and what the impact is, but they often want to see these highlights linked to other internal data such as turnover, churn rate or customer satisfaction. Weekly or monthly updates are sufficient in the majority of cases. 'Manageable information' does not automatically mean that this information is immediately usable. With the right sources, the right input and the right format you come a long way. However, by looking carefully at the ultimate goal of the information you can go one step further and make the information actionable for the recipient.

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