

Online Moderation



6 ways to Protect your brand on Social Media

We all know that Social Media has changed the way people create, find, and represent brands online. No longer optional, social media for business offers enormous opportunities. Navigating the online world, however, can be tricky. Almost daily, we hear about another public relations nightmare. Let's look at 6 of the best ways to avoid becoming the latest victim and in the process, you're very likely to increase the trust and respect of your followers.

1) Continually monitor social channels

Legendary Baseball Hall of Famer and Yankees catcher Yogi Berra once said, "You can observe a lot by watching." The humor aside, there's a lot of truth in that statement.

Ongoing conversations about your business and your competitors are happening on your social channels every day. By monitoring these exchanges, you can observe the habits, behavior, and feedback of your constituents. This is a great yardstick for measuring your relationships, while also revealing opportunities and highlighting failures.

Acquiring new insights may not happen overnight, but will be well worth the investment. Use **Social Media Listening** as a way to better engage with customers, deal with support issues, and look out for sensitive or inappropriate content. You'll learn as you go and have the ability to gain powerful insights into your customers, competitors, and industry experts.

2) Respond to all comments and complaints – not just the positive ones

What people say can be good or bad, but that alone doesn't determine your social media success. The way your company listens, engages and responds to social media posts, will dictate the impact on your brand's reputation.

Customer Engagement is key. Responding and participating in conversations with your customer and advocates help you build brand loyalty. By responding to all posts, not just the positive ones, you have the opportunity to turn a negative experience into a positive one. Take for example Jet Blue's crisis when a Valentine's Day ice storm closed all the eastern seaboard airports, forcing JetBlue to cancel 1,000 flights. Stranded customers took their frustration out online. Instead of blaming mother nature, CEO David Neeleman wrote a public apology, introduced a customer's bill of rights, and offered monetary

compensation. That year, JetBlue won first place in J.D. Powers North America Airline satisfaction survey.

By listening to what people are saying and making it a point to empathize with your customers and express concern you will show everyone else that your brand is trustworthy. Lower the risk of losing customers and increase the odds of acquiring new ones, when the next storm hits, literally or not.

3) Make sure you have a Social Media policy

You need to have a defined policy and procedures for your brand channels. By establishing clear guidelines and expectations you can lower your risk of legal issues and help protect your brand. A good Social Media policy should take into consideration:

- Company culture
- Brand guidelines
- Roles & Responsibilities
- Process
- Laws & regulations (copyright, industry regulations)

By creating and publicizing a social media policy, you ensure that everyone's working from the same playbook and that you're ready to react.

4) Educate and Train your employees on your Social Media Policy

It is not enough to just have a social media policy. You need to put some time and effort into training your employees on what it says. Not only will you mitigate risk, but training employees on best practices around the use of social networks can have much further reaching benefits. Studies have repeatedly shown that by training employees on social media usage, companies can reach wider audiences, build better brand awareness, increase sales, help recruitment efforts, and increase employee engagement.

5) Conduct a social media brand inventory

Conduct a social media brand inventory to see what's out there about your company. Start with a simple search on your company's name on google and other popular social media sites. This can help reveal how your being represented.

Next, evaluate your social media profiles. Are they meeting your brand standards? Your brand should be immediately recognizable across all your social media profiles. When there's a disconnect, it's difficult for customers and followers to determine which profiles are official, or if they're even following the right company. Consistency is crucial.

6) Search for rogue or duplicate pages

Rogue sites can damage your reputation and confuse search engines, which don't know which pages are real. Rogue Sites may include:

- Counterfeit Accounts – These accounts look virtually identical to corporate pages, set-up with the purpose of diverting traffic, selling counterfeit goods, or falsely endorsing a business to generate leads and sales.
- Phishing Accounts – Like counterfeit accounts they look identical to corporate pages. Their intent is to get customers, suppliers, and even employees to enter information or click links that lead to hacked devices and breached networks.
- Customer Community Account – created by brand enthusiasts who admire a company, but don't necessarily comply with brand, messaging, and style guidelines.

It's important to identify rogue sites before they can impact your brand. According to a study on brand fraud by Proofpoint, almost 20% of the social media accounts associated with 10 top brand names in Q2 of 2016 were fraudulent. You don't want to be another statistic.

Protect your brand on Social Media

Make **Brand Protection** a priority for your business. Social media engagement has tangible benefits, which is why more and more companies are connecting with their followers. But, beware the pitfalls. It can take years to build a good reputation, but only seconds to damage it.