

# The Step-by-Step Guide to Online Reputation Research

 reputation x

# Content

## Contents

### Content 2

Introduction	3
Reputation the Right Way	3
The Purpose of This Book	3
Step 1: How People Use Search Engines	5
Seeing Things From Your Customer's Perspective	6
Non-Branded Search Queries	8
Step 2: Mimic Your Customer's Search Habits	10
Use Your Google Analytics Account	10
Collect the Best Search Phrases	13
Research Your Competitors' Search Phrases	13
Conduct a Brand Search Result Audit	14
How to Start Your Search Result Audit	15
Step 4: Start Your Reputation Management Plan	20
Reviews	21
Negative Content	21
Content Creation	21
Promotion	21
Step 5: Get Ready to Manage Online Reviews	22
Negative Review Removal for TOS Violations	23
Step 6: Get Ready to Remove Negative Content	24
Removal from Google or Bing	24
Removal from a Blog	25
Removal from Negative Review Sites	25
Removing Content Using the Host of the Website	25
When to Hire a Lawyer	26
Step 7: Get Ready to Create Content	26
Research the Brand Narrative	27
Reverse-Engineering Your Search Results	28
Step 8: Get Ready to Promote Content	30
Conclusion	31

# Introduction

This eBook is the first in a series to help brands improve the way they are seen online. It was created by the team at Reputation X, an online reputation management firm. We hope you find it helpful.



**Most reputation management companies do it wrong.** In an attempt to overwhelm search engines with a lot of positive content they create a large number of websites, blogs, biographies, social media accounts, and other pages with little regard to quality. They have lists of ready-made site skeletons they use repeatedly and they fill the pages of these sites with content - often the same article but written in different ways - and hope some of it rises to the top of search results. And yes, this used to work many years ago - but it no longer does. It's the wrong way to perform online reputation management because people have never been dumb enough to be fooled by low quality content; and now, with the advancement of technology, neither is the Google search engine.

## Reputation the Right Way

The right way to perform reputation management is to start by identifying your audience online, in order to understand what they want or need. You should then research search results for companies or people similar to your brand to understand what search engines think that audience wants. Only by understanding what information both people and search engines want to consume can the path to positive online brand sentiment be charted.

The research stage of reputation management helps you gather the information needed to move to the next step - strategy (Covered in a later book).

## The Purpose of This Book

The purpose of this e-book is to help you research your brand's current reputation and start a plan to improve it. The steps have been broken down so you don't miss a thing. By the end of this e-book, you should have a strong idea of:

- What your branded search results reveal about you
- What your customers want when they search for your brand online
- What search engines prioritize as quality brand content
- A list of web content ideas to be used for the next stage: Strategy

**Action:** At Reputation X we use Google Docs to create a sharable spreadsheet so multiple team members can work on it. In the spreadsheet we create a few different tabs:

- Brand Queries
- Similar Queries
- Positive Brand Results
- Negative Brand Results
- Content Ideas
- Influencers
- Strategy

We'll explain what these all mean later in this and the next guide (Strategy).

## Step 1: How People Use Search Engines

Generally, people either take time researching in-depth, or they perform a search quickly and in the moment. The first might be used for finding a good restaurant, or service provider. We call this process in-depth brand research. Business-to-business searches are generally performed this using this method. In-depth brand research is used most commonly when there's some kind of stake involved for the customer, like money or time.

The latter is called a micro-moment. A micro-moment occurs when you perform a quick search on impulse, like if you were to whip out your phone to prove to your partner that, yes, *synecdoche* is a real word. It might happen with a voice search in your car on the way home from work, when you noticed a billboard advertising free beer.

According to Google, micro-moments occur when people reflexively turn to a device (like a smartphone) to learn, do, discover, watch, or buy something. Micro-moments have become so prevalent and ordinary that we often barely notice them.

Consumers usually find your brand online through one of these two methods, so consider whether your audience prioritizes one method over the other before researching brand-related search queries.

A micro-moment occurs  
when you perform a quick  
search on impulse

If you're reading this, you're probably either the manager of a company brand, or that of a person - that person might even be you! In either case, people searching online follow one of these two patterns. Identifying which one is followed most commonly for your website is going to help you target how you want to optimize it.

Businessman Peter Drucker famously never said "If you can't measure it, you can't manage it." But even if he didn't actually say it, it's true. You need to measure what consumers of brand information are searching before you can manage it.

- What if they search your brand names with the word "reviews" tacked on the end?
- What if your customers can't find your brand buried beneath ten (or even one

hundred) higher-ranking search results?

- What if a competitor is poaching your brand name either on purpose, or through inaccurate search results?
- What if a competitor is trying to take you down online?

The reality is, if you don't control search results, someone else might. And in order to control search results you'll need to understand what people see, what people want, and how search engines work to accommodate people's needs. Fortunately, there are ways of finding out.

**Action Step:** Write down search queries for similar entities to your brand. If your brand is a person, what are examples of similar people? Write down their names. If the brand is a company, what are similar companies? A list of top competitors might be just the place to start. Place the queries in the Google Docs spreadsheet on the correct tab - Brand Queries or Similar Queries.

## Seeing Things From Your Customer's Perspective

People rarely think of a brand, Google it, and then buy something

People often begin a search with a question, and all questions come from a problem that needs to be solved, sometimes called a "pain point." Research shows that people rarely just think of a brand, Google it, and then buy something. Instead, they perform some research first. This is often called the buyer's journey.

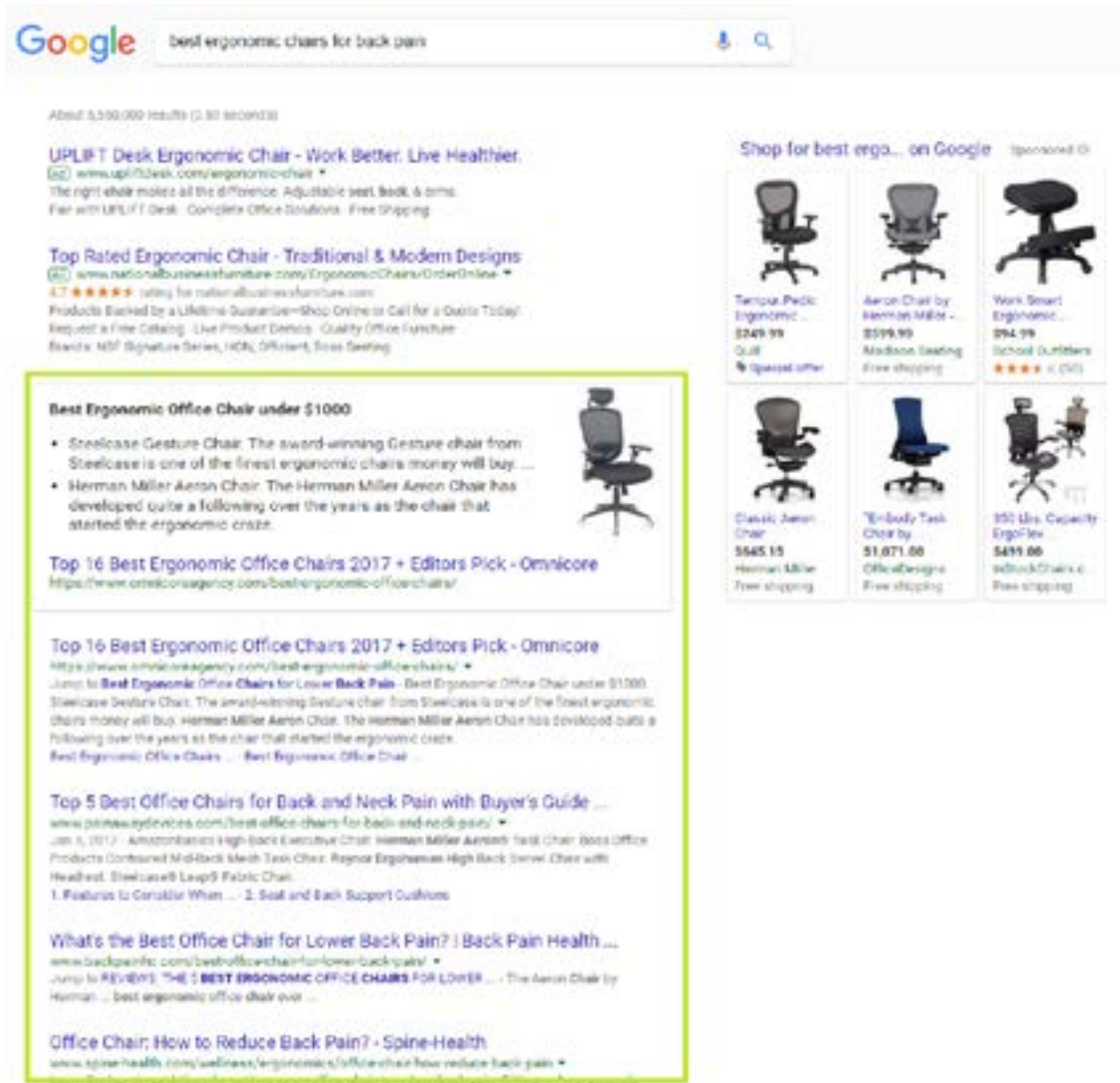
There are two types of searches, branded and non-branded. Non-branded are by far the most frequently searched type - the person searching for an answer doesn't yet have a brand in mind. Branded searches occur when someone already knows the brand and is either considering it, or wants to do business directly.

Either way, a person has a problem, and they are turning to the online environment for

help. They may be at the very beginning of their journey and have never heard of your brand; maybe they are curious about how an ergonomic chair can help their back pain, so they search “how do ergonomic chairs help with back pain?”

Or, if they’ve already learned about ergonomic chairs and are ready to shop, they may search “best ergonomic chairs for back pain.” If you are a furniture company that specializes in ergonomic solutions, you should be present in these non-branded search results if possible.

Why are non-branded searches important? Because most people searching the internet have likely never heard of your brand, so they’ll often first see your brand name while making non-branded searches to solve a problem.



## Non-Branded Search Queries

If a searcher is looking to buy something, and they are performing a non-branded search, it could mean they are still circling in on the eventual solution to their problem. The image above shows the results of a prospective customer conducting a non-branded search, where the results display brands reviews of chairs. Those reviews drive people to check out brands in a later step.

Everything in the green box is an **organic** search result, meaning the owners of these



websites didn't pay Google to appear at the top. Organic searches are free to the company owning the website they click on, and always sit just below paid searches

Paid searches are the results at the top of the page. They're often called "pay per click", and only about 15% of people actually click on the paid search results (even though they're at the very top!). The rest click on organic search results. So organic search results are the kind most prospective customers are going to click.

## Branded Search Queries

When someone makes a branded search query, it means they know the name of the business they want to buy from or work with. They may have discovered it through an ad, previous experience with the brand, word of mouth, social media, or other means. Branded search results are where online reputation management really becomes important.

The most obvious example of a branded search would simply state a company's name, something like "raul's skiing equipment". But branded searches also include more specific queries, like "raul's skiing equipment products", "raul's skiing equipment ski poles", or "raul's skiing equipment reviews".

When customers are making branded searches for your company, being the best doesn't always come with looking the best. Let's imagine you're managing the brand of a company that makes top-notch ergonomic chairs. Doctors recommend them and your customers love them. But your online reputation might still be poor because:

- **Reviews are negative.** Online reviews, like Amazon ratings and Yelp stars, are proven to be as influential to modern consumers as a family member's opinion, sometimes even more so. Anyone can write a review, even old aunt Daisy, who can't figure out why washing her new iPad is causing the screen to flip out.
- **There are skeletons in your closet.** Negative search results, even outdated ones, can be enough to make a customer click your competitor's site instead of yours. An old recall notice, a bankruptcy from 1992, an influential blogger with a bone to pick — each of these are danger signs to a prospective customer even though they are no longer relevant.

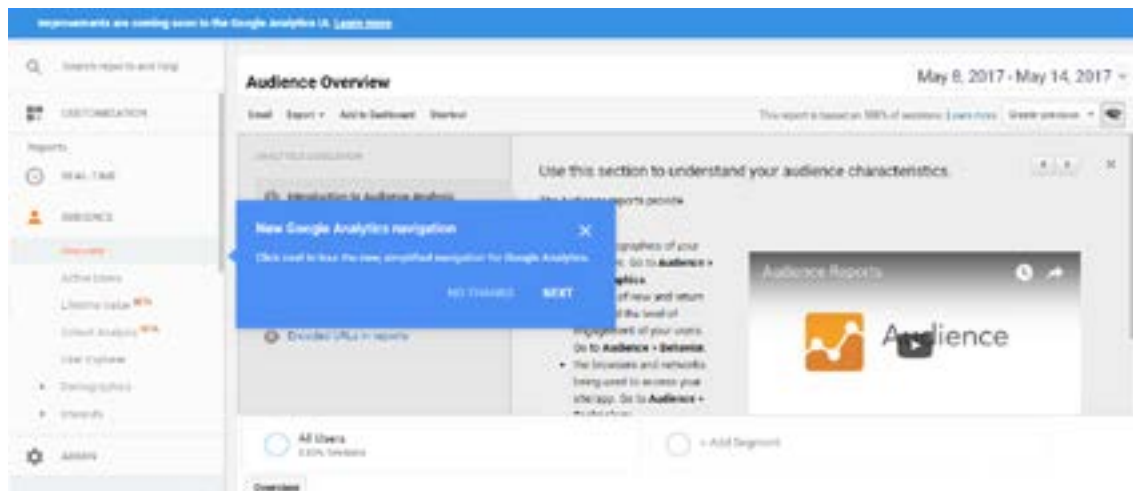
- **Customers don't see your business on the front page of search results.** You may be prominent in your community or among furniture enthusiasts, but you're missing a huge amount of market share if you're not on the front page of search results. Search result prominence is one of the major signs of a good company.

## Step 2: Mimic Your Customer's Search Habits

### Use Your Google Analytics Account

A good place to find the search phrases your customers use to find you is within your Google Analytics account, if you have one associated with your main website. Google Analytics is a great tool for observing the full extent of your online presence and testing new site changes. To do this search, follow these steps:

1. Log into Google Analytics.
2. Under *Acquisition*, open *Search Console*
3. Click *Queries*



If a customer visits your site, this page will show the search phrase that led them there. It does not show you search phrases that may have *kept* people from visiting your site, like “[company name] ripoff.” It also won't give you an idea of which search terms

are revealing your competitors sites, rather than yours. The information on this page is useful for finding what's working for bringing potential customers to your site, giving you the power to make educated decisions on what changes you may want to make to increase traffic.

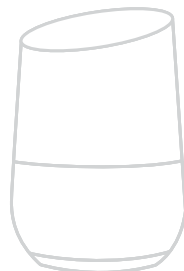
We suggest exploring different search techniques to find other ways people might try to find your brand online. For this step, pretend to be your customer, and try each of these techniques. Record your results in the spreadsheet, under your "Brand Queries" tab.

**Bounce around.** Search isn't linear. A customer might start by searching "[company name]" and then "[company name] product" and then "is [company name] any good?" or "[company name] reviews" Google indulges our impulsivity and natural curiosity. Being creative is a huge part of managing your business's online reputation, so dream up as many possible search queries you can that could lead customers to you.

Want to really see what prospects see when they search your brand? Append your brand name with keywords like *reviews*, *problems*, *complaints*, or a geographic search like *San Francisco* or *Plato, Missouri*.



Mobile



In Home Appliances



Tablets

Voice search is becoming normal across most devices

**Try voice queries.** Voice search is replacing text search in specific instances, largely due to an increase in the use of mobile devices over desktop computers. According to Google, **in 2016, 20 percent of mobile queries were voice searches**. Here are the most important points about voice search:

- **It's conversational.** A voice search reads naturally. For example, while

someone may type in *Brand X reviews* they may speak “what are the reviews like for Brand X?” When brainstorming your customer’s potential voice queries, think out loud.

- **People primarily use mobile in the car, or at home (on Amazon Echo or Google Home devices).** At work, by contrast, people tend to use typed queries (so they don’t seem like crazy people talking to thin air!).
- **Consumers use voice search more than businesses do.** Though business-to-business searches are typically typed, consumer searches are often done verbally. If your brand targets consumers directly, voice search is especially important.

**Use navigational terms.** A navigational search means **customers are trying to find your website through a search engine** instead of directly. This type of search query might be your brand name. It could also append words like *website, blog, or contact*. Though navigational searches do not happen as often as most product managers

wish they would, it is still useful to observe which results are generated from these searches. Are they positive, negative, or absent? Are the results helpful or confusing? Do they lead the customer directly to the part of your site they’re looking for?

**Be specific.** It is likely that a customer will use specific search terms instead of your brand name to arrive at your site. Let’s take IBM, for example. Some people may type IBM into the search box and hit “enter.” But far more people conduct related searches like *IBM computer, IBM meaning,*

*IBM executives, or IBM subsidiaries.*

**Think local.** If you’re the owner of a physical office, store, or restaurant, people will often search for your location. Someone interested in Alba Ray’s Restaurant in San Francisco may search “Alba Ray’s menu”, “Alba Ray’s address”, or “reviews of Alba Ray’s”. These are all phrases that reveal the searcher’s intent. If someone searches for your address, they may have already decided to eat there. But someone searching for reviews probably hasn’t decided yet.

the more search phrases you pursue, the more resources you will need for your campaign

## Collect the Best Search Phrases

Now it's time to choose which search phrases to target. These are the search phrases that will guide your reputation management campaign. By now, you should have a lot of search phrases in your spreadsheet under Branded Queries. Ideally you'll want to pick out only a handful because the more phrases you pursue, the more resources you will need for your campaign. At Reputation X, for example, we usually work with three to five at a time. Here are some examples using our own company name:

### Branded searches:

- Reputation X contact
- Reputation X pricing
- Review for Reputation X

### Non-branded searches:

- Online reputation management pricing
- Reputation management firm
- Online reputation management companies

For the purpose of this book, we'll be focusing mainly on branded search results.

## Which Phrases to Pick?

Pick the most often searched and the ones that could be costing you business by leading customers away. Your goal should be to direct customers to your site when they search your company directly.

## Research Your Competitors' Search Phrases

You will not only want to determine your own branded, core search phrases, but also those of your competitors. What are people searching that leads them to your competitors' sites? This type of research is intended to help you find phrases that may not concern you now, but could in the future.

In order to find the search phrases leading your customers to competitors' sites, type or speak their branded search phrase just like you would for your own brand. For

example, instead of “IBM computer prices” we might search “Apple computer prices.” Now, scroll to the bottom of search results and check out the “**Related Searches**” section. This is where Google will reveal real searches similar to the one you conducted.

### Searches related to apple computer prices

apple laptop deals	mac laptops
apple laptop prices	mac laptop best buy
apple laptop best buy	mac apple
apple macbook student discount	macbook best buy



Spying on your competitors’ similar searches can give you wonderful insight into the types of phrases that may lead customers to you in the future. Do you see any search phrases for your competitors that could be significant for you but that you didn’t see when you performed your own branded searches? If so, add them to your Branded Queries list.

**Action Step:** xxxBrand Queries or Similar Queries.

## Conduct a Brand Search Result Audit

Once you have a list of top search phrases related to your brand, it’s time to perform a *search result audit*. This audit compares your brand’s search results with those of your competitors. One of the reasons to perform an audit is to clarify a searcher’s intent and behavior. What do your customers want, and how do they find it?

We also want to know why people are searching for your competitor’s brand and what they see in search results when they do. If you can simulate a customer’s behavior,

you can understand why they may choose your competitor. You can craft your search results to outshine the competition by placing better content in your customers' paths.

A search result audit can also make your business better. Search results can be an excellent tool for marketing, research, and development. Every page of search results tells a story about your customer and what they're really looking for. If you're an ecommerce company and you notice that prospects are searching for ERP integration, you can highlight that service in your web content.

## How to Start Your Search Result Audit

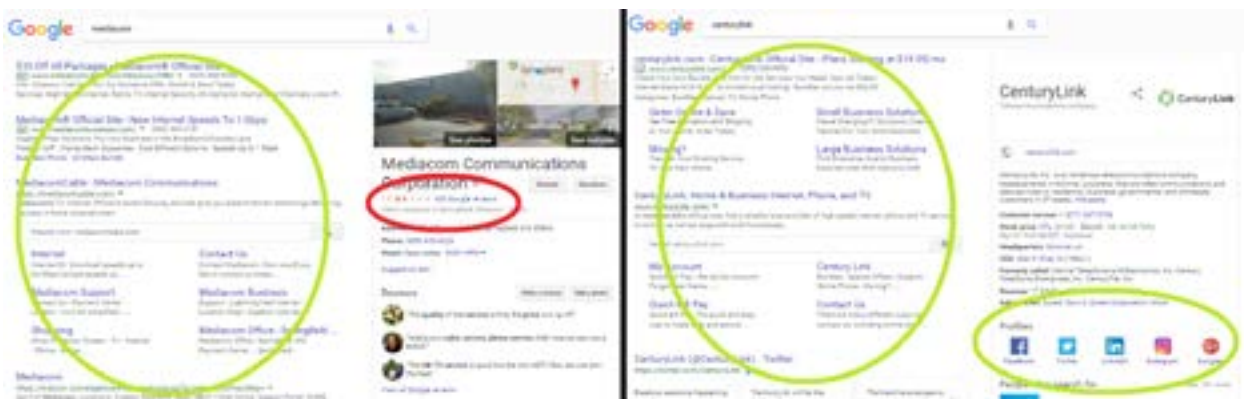
**Do a side-by-side search comparison.** A side-by-side comparison gives you visibility into how your search results compare with your rivals. If your computer display is large enough it's helpful to open up two browser windows side-by-side. Perform a search for your brand in one window, and perform one for your competitor in the other. Compare the two. What do you see? Does your competitor have better looking search results than your company?

Ask yourself: if you were a consumer and these search results were the only thing guiding your decision, which company would you rather do business with?

**Action Step:** If possible, open two browser windows side-by-side on your computer display. Check your brands search results in one window, and a similar entity in the other. This is especially useful if the other entity is a competitor.

In the example below, Mediacom (pictured left) appears comparatively worse than CenturyLink (on the right). The top results for the branded search "Mediacom" reveal the company in the top paid and organic spots. However, there are no links to social media pages, and there are a number of poor reviews displayed on the right.

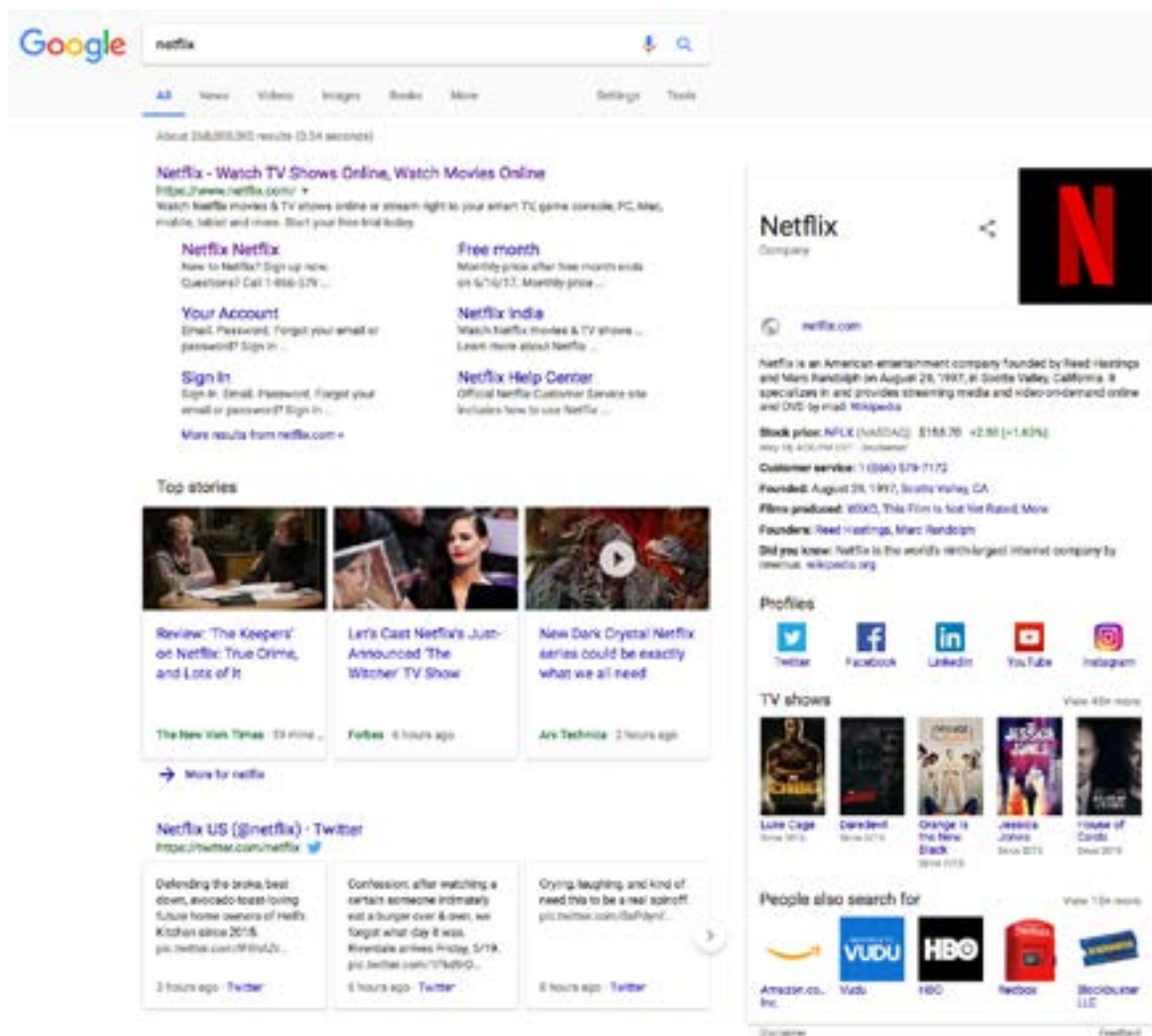
By contrast, CenturyLink also appears in the top results, but has no visible poor reviews — and it has a tidy set of social media icons on the Google Knowledge Graph to the right. If you owned Mediacom, you could borrow ideas from the CenturyLink results to improve your reputation.



**Include diverse content.** When you look at the search results of your brand or those of your competitor, you'll notice that there are many different types of content returned. This is due to something called "universal search." Universal search provides users with a variety of media in their search results, which could include video, images, statistics, blog posts and more. This is designed to keep the user engaged, but you can use it to create a strong image that's spread across diverse channels. This will allow you to reach new potential customers and give the impression that you're a powerful and connected entity.

When a user searches "Netflix," here's an example of results:





As you can see, the results contain a variety of media options. Universal search is great for your reputation management campaign, since it allows you to see many types of media that could later be used to influence your customers' opinions.

**Pay attention to negative reviews.** Obviously, every consumer wants to buy the best product they can get, and research has shown that they decide which product is the best primarily by using online reviews. According to a 2017 Zendesk survey, *The Impact of Customer Service on Customer Lifetime Value*, **90 percent of survey respondents said their buying decisions were affected by online reviews**. That means that on the web, every whisper about your product counts. Therefore, if you think

that one of your customers may be having a less than optimal experience, it's almost always worth addressing as quickly as possible. Keeping your reviews squeaky clean is a big part of internet reputation management, because your conversion rate suffers when there's anything online hinting that your company isn't the best.

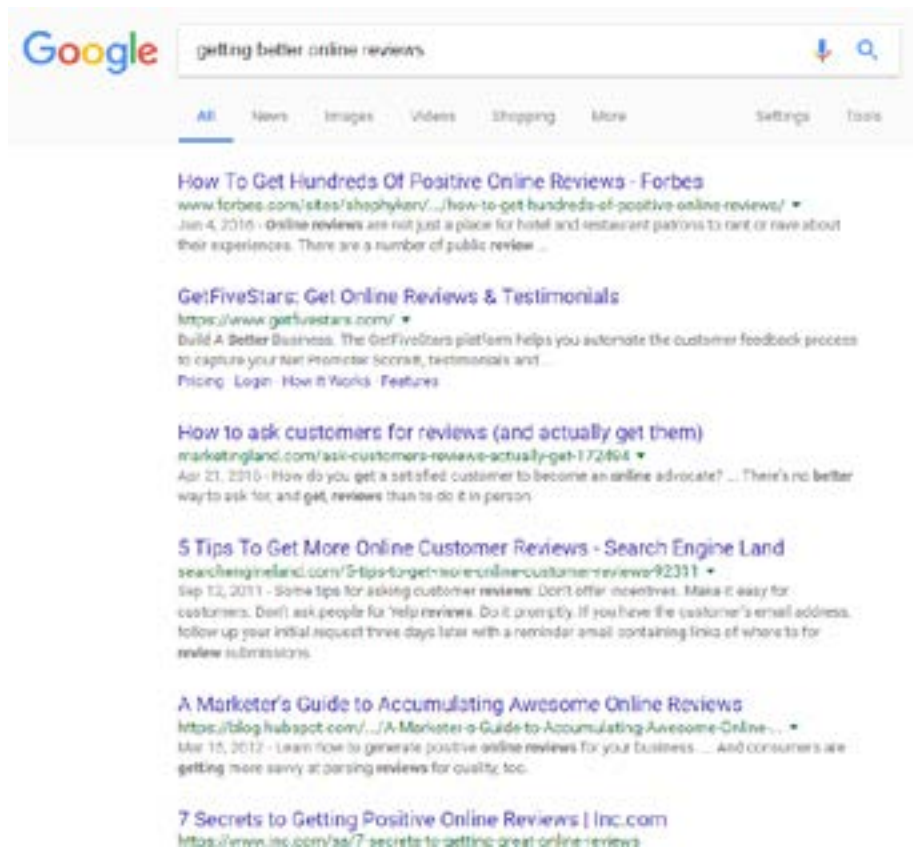
**The buyer is on a journey from problem to solution.** During this journey, the buyer is comparing your company to others. Winning the comparison portion of the buyer's journey can greatly increase your revenues. This can be done by crafting your search results page to outshine those of your competitors, and often must be carried out with an extreme level of care. According to a 2015 reputation management study by Moz, **businesses risk losing up to 22 percent of prospective customers when there's even one negative article in search results.**

Furthermore, **"a one-star increase in a Yelp rating leads to a 5-9 percent increase in revenue,"** states a 2016 Harvard Business Review study by Michael Luca. If your competitor has a four-star Yelp rating, you should work towards a five-star Yelp rating. If your competitor has an excellent Glassdoor rating, you should strive to make yours better.

**"Businesses risk losing as many as 22 percent of customers when just one negative article is found by users considering buying their product."**

*-Moz online consumer behavior study,  
September 9, 2015*

**Divine user intent from SERPs.** SERP stands for "search engine results page." Using this technique, you're working backwards from search results to determine what a customer might have wanted to learn. Try it yourself: search "getting better online reviews."



As of the time that this was written, the SERP gives links to articles on how to get more reviews, how to influence customers to write reviews of your business, and companies that provide these services. Notice how these results aren't all directly about getting *better* reviews, but about getting *more* reviews. The implication you can derive from this SERP is that searchers are interested in the overall quantity of reviews even though the search query wasn't explicitly using the word "more". The "related searches" box at the bottom shows the following at the time that this was written:

### Searches related to getting better online reviews

- how to get more online reviews
- how to ask customers for online reviews
- get five stars reviews
- asking for a review template
- how to get online reviews for your small business
- customer review email template
- how to get google reviews for my business
- five star review system



It appears that people who want better reviews for their business are searching for these related topics as well. Search engine results pages help you understand what your prospect wants to know about. Your job is to meet this need by creating branded search results that tell a story similar to what the online world is already talking about (with your own unique twist on it, of course!).

**Action Step:** The Similar Searches area at the bottom of search results is a goldmine of content ideas because it shows you what people are really searching for. Document the best ideas you see from the Similar Searches are in the Content Ideas tab of your spreadsheet.

## Step 4: Start Your Reputation Management Plan

Online reputation management is the act of curating what people see about your business online to achieve a desired outcome. For businesses, the goal of a reputation

management plan is usually to acquire more customers or reduce the number of lost opportunities. They both lead to the same end: more money in your pocket.

Now, let's look at the four key components of a reputation management plan. We'll explore each in depth in the next section.

## Reviews

**Are there any negative reviews to address?** Managing online reviews is an ongoing process. This may involve removing negative reviews, improving existing reviews, garnering additional reviews, or a combination.

## Negative Content

**Do you need to remove any of your search results?** Many brands contend with negative online content beyond customer reviews. A YouTube video, a critical blogger, or a viral news story can resonate in search results for months, years, or even decades. Under certain circumstances, this content can be removed. In other cases, it can only be suppressed.

## Content Creation

**Do you need to create any new content?** When you performed your competitive search result audit, you may have noticed that your competitors' content upstaged yours. Your brand can have its share of the limelight, but to do so, you will need to make new multimedia content. This often requires an investment of marketing and production resources.

**Action:** Document content that similar entities show in branded search results on the Content Ideas tab. You may be able to emulate these results later.

## Promotion

**What existing positive content should be promoted for higher visibility?** One of the most frustrating things about creating online content is to work hard on it only to see it falter in search rank and not be seen. Having excellent content is important,

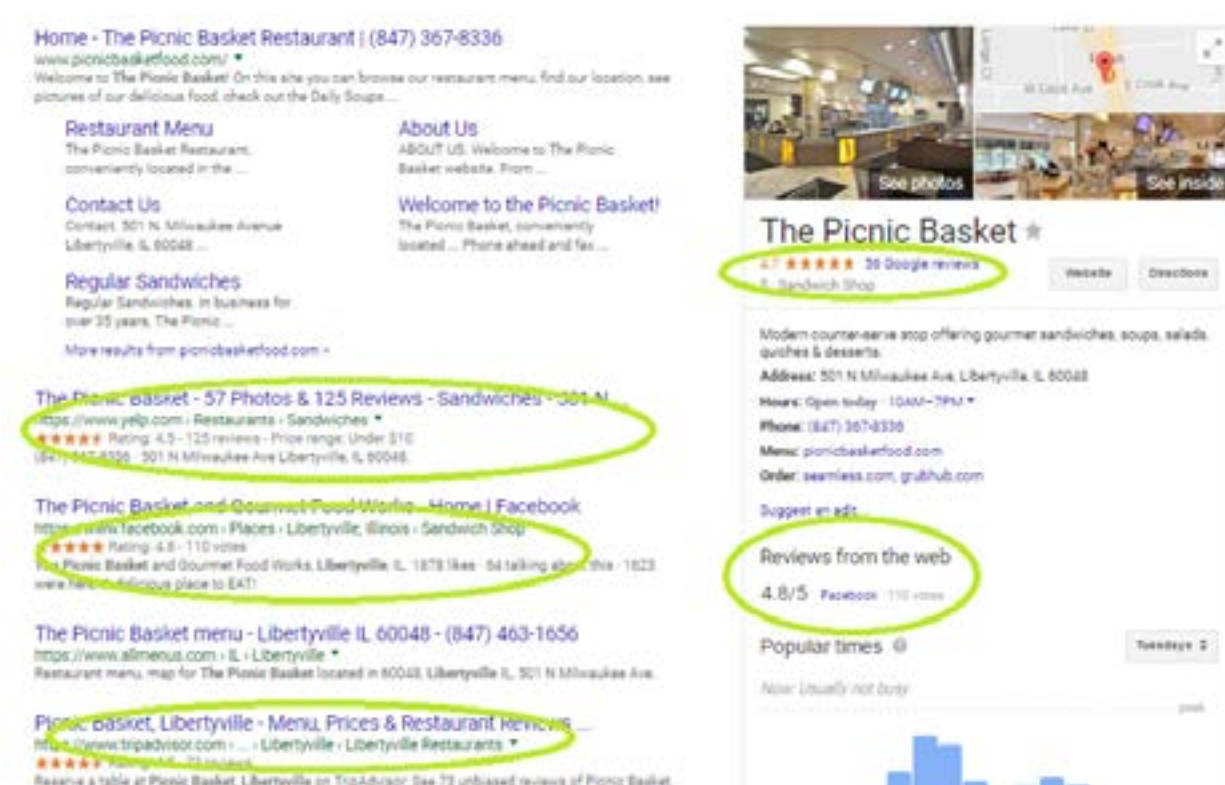
but in a very cluttered cyberspace, it will usually get somewhat lost without promotion. Whether you are working with existing or new content, it needs to be promoted in search results. For this, you'll use search engine optimization (SEO). SEO works for all kinds of online content, which we classify as either "owned" or "earned". Owned content is anything that you have direct control over, like a blog post on your website, or a video you posted. Earned content generally comes from an outside source; perhaps a positive news article was written about you, or you've achieved a five star rating on Yelp. While the sources might not be the same, you're going to want to promote positive content from all kinds of places on the internet, using SEO.

**Action:** Document your Owned and Earned content URLs under the "Positive Brand Results" or "Negative Brand Results" tabs in your spreadsheet. In a later step you'll promote these to rise higher in search results.

## Step 5: Get Ready to Manage Online Reviews

Online reviews are becoming an art form: it seems that no matter the industry, customers across the world are turning to review sites with their criticisms and commentaries. A genuine review from a satisfied customer can be worth as much as an expensive ad campaign. On the other hand, a negative review can strongly repel potential new customers.

How do you decide whether you need to focus on customer reviews or not? To start, you can check if search results for your brand return review sites on the first or second page. If so, write these down in your reputation management plan. In the example below, the search query "The Picnic Basket Libertyville" shows results for four different review sites in five different areas on the page — Google, Facebook, Yelp, and Tripadvisor.



A good idea is to look at the search results of companies similar to yours to see which review sites are returned. Their search results may reveal review sites you can later leverage for your own success. For example, if you're a restaurant like The Picnic Basket (shown above), and your main competitor has reviews on a local site called "Libertyville Restaurant Reviews," you should prepare to garner reviews for that site, too.

**Action:** Document review sites that appear for similar entities on the Content Ideas tab.

## Negative Review Removal for TOS Violations

It is possible to remove some reviews if they violate a site's terms of service. If a negative review includes harassment, sexually explicit content, or reviews made by someone who did not actually experience your product or service, you can often

contact the review site and request the review's removal. Once the offending review is gone, your star rating should increase and your overall online reputation could improve.

Unfortunately, most negative reviews do not violate terms of service and will usually be kept up. If a review cannot be removed it may be able to be "diluted" in search results by additional positive reviews.

**Action:** Document any negative review sites on your spreadsheet in the Negative Brand Results tab.

## Step 6: Get Ready to Remove Negative Content

Because free speech is a tenet of developed nations, it is not easy to remove content online. While some webpages can be removed at the source, other content can only be removed from search engines — and most content cannot be removed at all.

If Google removes content from their search results, it's usually because the information poses a risk to identity theft or some type of fraud. Other information can be removed directly by working with the website where it is posted. This section outlines your options for content removal.

### Removal from Google or Bing

Removing content from search results can be a great first step to improving your reputation. However, just because a user can't find a website on Google doesn't mean it disappears from the internet as a whole. For example, Google will remove child sex abuse imagery, and they will usually remove something stated in a legal decree by a judge — but a user could still access these sites by browsing to them directly.

When you want to remove negative content about your business, the path most often taken is a copyright notification relating to the [Digital Millennium Copyright Act](#). This happens when someone uses your company's intellectual property without permission.

Google may also remove personal information such as bank account numbers, images



of signatures, credit card numbers, or sexually explicit images that were shared without the subject's consent. Google usually will not remove addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and other non-sensitive personal information.

## Removal from a Blog

Blogs are difficult territory. Sometimes, the owner of a blog will remove negative content upon a user's request. More often, bloggers intentionally post negative content, and will refuse to remove it for that reason.

We have seen cases where attorneys have sent legal requests to bloggers requesting that certain information be removed, only to see the attorney's letter posted online as an addendum to the original offending blog post. To make matters worse, Google sees this as a refresh of the original content and may reward the content with even higher search results.

## Removal from Negative Review Sites

Some review sites are positively predatory in nature. There is almost always a financial motivation behind these online forums. Some will remove content for money. Some will not remove content, but will add to the original content with a statement of some kind, again — for money. Some of these sites are driven by advertising. They exist to sell ad space and rely on angry consumers to provide free content to fuel their SEO efforts.

Removing information from an attack site is different for every platform. Some sites will allow you pay them to remove content, while others don't even have contact information listed. For complaint websites that will not allow removal, the only option is to suppress those sites in search results with better, more accurate content.

## Removing Content Using the Host of the Website

It may be possible to request the deletion of information from the company or person hosting the site. To find out who owns a website and request removal, use a [Whois](#) tool to locate the owner of the site. Often this is privacy-protected, but if it's not, you will find the name, email, and other information about who owns the website. If you can get this information, keep it handy. It might be necessary in a later step.

**Action:** Document negative content (not reviews) to suppress or remove on the Negative Brand Results tab.

## When to Hire a Lawyer

It can be difficult to know when to call a lawyer. If your brand is dealing with copyright infringement online, it is almost always a good idea to hire an attorney. If your brand is dealing with online defamation or libel, and it is provable in court, this may be another opportunity to enlist a lawyer.

However, most online reputation management problems either do not benefit from the use of legal services or can be exacerbated by them. Taking a soft approach first is almost always the best way to begin a reputation management campaign.

## Step 7: Get Ready to Create Content

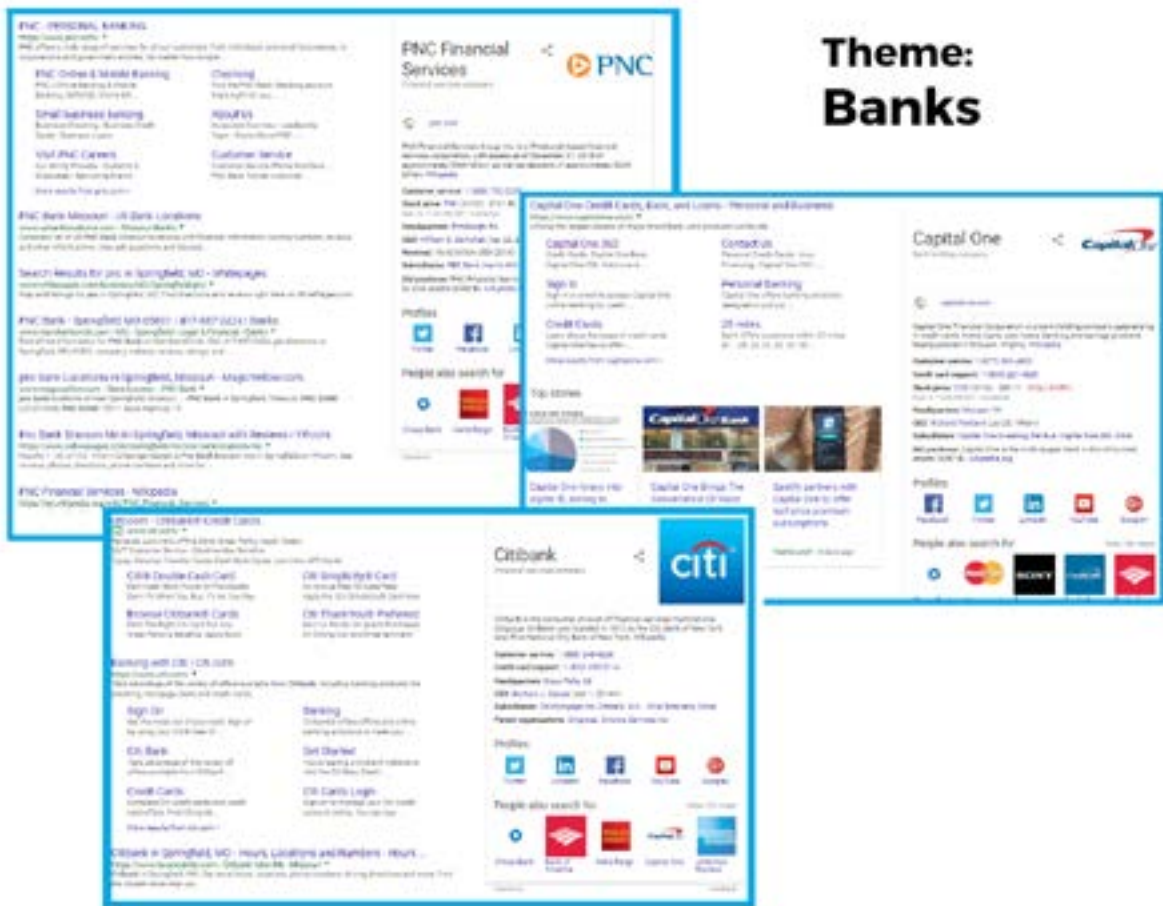
As you know, Bing, Google, and other search engines blend different types of content together in search results. It's through your search result audit that you will discover which types of content to focus on creating.

But content doesn't just mean writing. There are many types of content online today, including:

- Infographics
- Case studies
- How-to guides
- Newsletters
- Research
- Apps
- E-books

- Slideshows
- Videos and cinemagraphs
- Blog posts and articles
- Reviews

You can build it all, but understanding what your customers already consume can help narrow your list and focus spending.



Knowing your brand's theme will help you design your ideal search results because it helps you understand what people (and search engines) want. After all, it is easier to swim with the current than against it.

The same is true when deciding which kind of content you'll spend money on. Instead

of trying to create a blog, a YouTube channel, and daily Instagram photos, focus on the kinds of content and stories already returned in similar search results throughout your industry. You will have a higher probability of success.

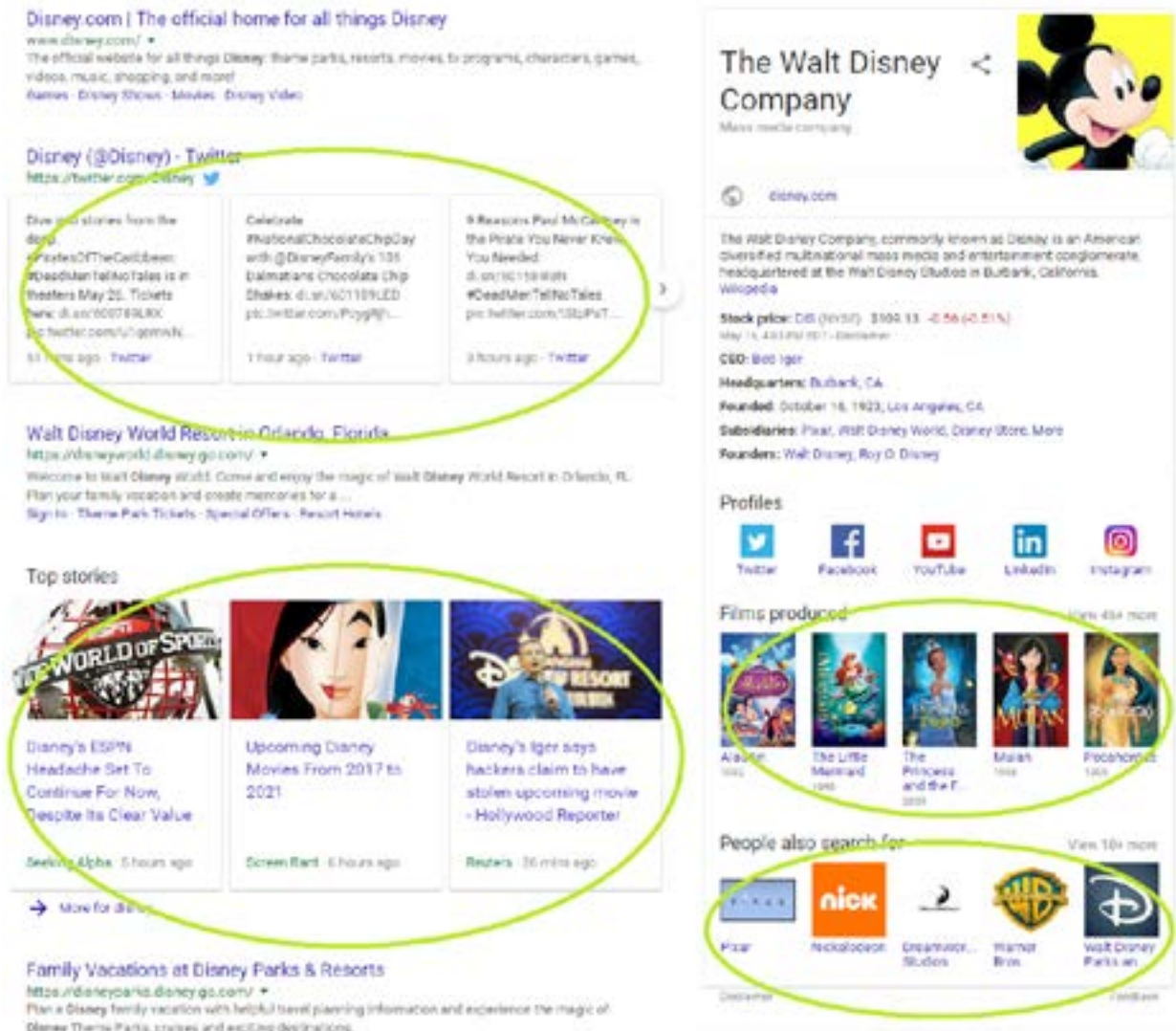
**Action:** If your branded search results don't show a certain kind of content, like YouTube for instance, but similar entities do, add them to the Content Ideas tab.

## Reverse-Engineering Your Search Results

Treat search engines like a lens that reveals your customers' intentions. Use what you find to reverse-engineer your content to respond to your consumers' needs and curiosities. Once you've identified those needs and curiosities, you can commission irresistible articles, videos, and more.

**Tip:** Later, when you are actually creating content you can find writers on UpWork.com, TextBroker.com and other online writing services for about five cents a word and up. We suggest spending at least ten cents a word for content created for other sites you don't control, and more for content on sites you do control - like your main website or blog.

When designing the ideal online brand narrative for your company, divide that story into many parts. How can you tell the story of your company using the formats most commonly seen in similar search results? Does your brand support a charity? Perhaps a website devoted to how that charity has helped people would satisfy some part of searchers needs.



On the “Disney” search results page above, the brand narrative tells a story about movies, family vacation destinations, related companies, and news pertaining to the brand. By studying this page, you might surmise that people who search “Disney” want to hear about upcoming Disney movies, learn more about existing movies, or plan a family vacation.

Your brand narrative doesn’t have to be as complex as Disney’s. Start small and focus on the best things about your brand. Perhaps you have a unique manufacturing process that your customers are interested in. Can you show this process in a series of

YouTube videos?

Maybe your company is a work platform that connects freelance designers to job opportunities (like the aforementioned UpWork.com): would your readers be interested in reading about the latest design trends and technology? You may later create press releases on the subject, or even make “Design News” a subdomain of your site that is devoted to that type of information. As you design your narrative, always keep an eye on what your industry competitors are doing. When in doubt, use their branded results pages as a guiding light for what type of content you should be working on.

**Action:** Now that you’ve thought about your brand narrative you may have come up with more content ideas. Document these on the Content Ideas tab. You should have a lot of ideas by now.

## Step 8: Get Ready to Promote Content

Content that deserves to rise in search results has a tendency to rise in search results. But simply writing a great article does not guarantee excellent online performance. The opposite is true, too: working hard to promote a lot of sub-par content is a waste of resources.

The first and most important concept behind online promotion is to make sure your content deserves to be on the first page of search results, or for voice searches - position “zero”. Position zero is an answer that appears above normal search results for a query like “how tall was Abraham Lincoln?”. It looks like this:

Your spreadsheet should have a lot of information now. To recap, the tabs are:

- Brand Queries
- Competitor Queries
- Brand Owned
- Brand Earned

- Similar Owned
- Similar Earned
- Negative Brand Results
- Negative Similar Results
- Content Ideas

## Conclusion

We've covered eight steps you can follow to begin researching your business's online reputation. Here's a recap of each step:

1. Learn How People Really Use Search Engines
2. Mimic Your Customer's Search Habits to Better Understand Them
3. Discover Search Phrases People Use to Find You
4. Start Your Reputation Management Plan
5. Get Ready to Manage Online Reviews
6. Get Ready to Remove Negative Content
7. Get Ready to Create Content

Brainstorm a plan for each step and you'll be that much closer to managing your brand's reputation online. In the next ebook we'll discuss what to do with this information by creating an online reputation management strategy around it.


















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