## Contents

**Thank You for Downloading The Guide!** 4

**Online Image Changes Affecting Business** 5

- No longer just about good reviews 6
- At least 18 ways to be seen in Google 7
- People are using their voices instead 8
- Context changes how people interact with your business 8
- Mobile is most important now 9
- Old style marketing is becoming ineffectual 9
- Artificial intelligence is a huge new factor 10

**How People Find Your Business** 11

- Information, not brand searches, are performed first 11
- Make sure your business is seen in early non-branded results 13

**People Take a Journey to Find You** 13

- Searches for your brand happen later in the funnel 14

**Articles vs. Reviews: Which Carries More Weight?** 14

- One negative article can end your buyer’s journey 14
- Why negative articles are worse than reviews 15
- People trust the opinions of strangers 16
- Reviews are so fake that people look beyond them 16

**Engineer a Beautiful Online Profile** 17

- Finally! Searchers see your branded results 17
- Satisfy user intent to win 18
- What if a business already has negative content? 19
- Starting with the lowest hanging fruit 19
- Ask what you’re being judged against 20

**Don’t Outrun the Bear, Outrun the Guy Next to You** 21

- Understand your buyer before crafting your online reputation 21
- What does a prospect see first? 22
- How would you like to be seen? 24
- Different types of information 24
What is Your Ideal Profile? 25
   Technical factors behind the search profile 26
   Researching how the ideal search profile works 26
   Google’s AI, for better or for worse 27

Three Phases of Reputation Management 28
   The things that matter most 28

Tools We Use for Reputation Management 29
   Research Tools 29
   Project Management Tools 29
   SEO Tools 29
   Web Development 29
   Content Development 30

People on a Brand Reputation Team 30

Reputation Building at Scale 30

The Future of Online Reputation Management 31
Thank You for Downloading The Guide!

We designed this guide to give business owners a crash course in online reputation management, so they can improve the way their brand is seen online and get more customers. The Guide lays out important changes to the online landscape that are affecting businesses now, and in the future.

It discusses how people must find a business before they can do business with it, and illustrates how people learn about and decide on which company to do business with. Knowing how your prospects find you online before they’ve even heard of your brand is key to understanding what steps need to be taken to improve your chances of getting more business.

It also outlines the three phases of reputation management:

- **Repair**
- **Improvement**
- **Protection**

**Repair**

If a business already has problems with their online profile that are driving away prospects, then the knowledge contained in this section is a good place to start.

**Improvement**

If a business has no negative content online, then it can move to the second stage of brand building - improvement. The improvement phase seeks to design and then develop the optimal profile. The optimal profile is the one that will drive the most
customers possible.

**Protection**

The third stage in online reputation management is protection. The protection phase seeks to strengthen now optimized results so future negative content is reduced or eliminated altogether.

Each of the three phases works together to first remove roadblocks to business, grow its sales base, then protect its online brand investment.

We hope you find this guide useful!

The Reputation X Team

**Online Image Changes Affecting Business**

Most people think good reviews are the key to reputation management. They are important, but only a small part of the decision-making ecosystem prospective customers travel through to decide whether or not they will use your business.

There have been many changes to the very structure of search results that have altered the way business leaders must look at how their companies are seen online. In the past, nearly all search results were simply a blue link and a description. Today only about 3% of search results are composed only of those original “ten blue links”. They’ve been replaced with knowl-
edge panels, instant answers, auto-complete, competitors’ advertising, and more. Smart business leaders are using this new landscape to outmaneuver their competition.

**No longer just about good reviews**

Most people think good reviews are important, and they’re right. In fact, 33.1% of search results contain reviews with a star-rating. But people today are also suspicious of reviews, and they have a right to be. A huge percentage are simply fake.

While reviews are an important part of the mix, many businesses are so focused on reviews they’ve lost sight of the massive change around them. Other indicators of trust are now equally or more important.

For example, if a prospective customer is deciding between two competing companies, and one of the companies has a five-star review while the other has a two-star review, the choice becomes clear - go with the one with the best reviews. Everything else being equal it’s obvious which company will most likely win the business. But in reality, the choices aren’t that clear and customers are more sophisticated than that now. In fact, some will choose a company with slightly less perfect reviews simply because they don’t believe the reviews.

A more realistic example would be a customer comparing three or more companies. **Today, prospective customers look at the entire search profile.** Because of this, a company with a four-star review can easily beat a company with a five-star review if the story told by search results about the four-star company is better. This is because all else is not equal and people’s trust of reviews has decreased. In this case, reviews certainly matter, but
not enough to guarantee business growth.

**At least 18 ways to be seen in Google**

They have a lot of choice. Today there are least **18 different ways** for a business to be seen in search results, and that doesn’t even count social channels like Facebook, Pinterest, and Twitter. One of those ways is reviews, the other seventeen are not. Think about the last five searches you have made. Did you notice how various searches provided different looking results?

Some results have a large number of images, others tend to feature many review sites, some have advertising while others don’t. Instant answers that make it so a user doesn’t even need to click on a website are growing rapidly. Google is essentially stealing clicks from businesses. So what is a marketer to do?

When viewed from above, patterns emerge. Different types of search results include Adwords at the top or bottom of the page; the Knowledge Graph that showcases the most important information about a brand; information without the need to click; image strips; reviews; news; shopping; social media; videos; and of course normal blue link search results are included.
in the mix.

**People are using their voices instead**

Other significant changes have occurred online as well. For instance, voice search is on the rise. A recent study found that at least sixty percent of people have started trying voice search on their mobile device, and about 20% of Google searches are now performed using voice.

Voice search changes the way queries are entered making them more like natural language. Look at the graph that shows the growth of voice search over the past two years for the term “call mom,” a dramatic testament to the changing landscape of online interaction. The way people interact with information is quickly evolving from search based queries to natural language, a significant fact for businesses across the globe.

**Context changes how people interact with your business**

The search context people use when interacting with businesses has changed as well. For example, today you can stand on the street in front of a restaurant and **simply ask your phone to “show me the menu.”** Your phone will often know what
restaurant you are standing in front of, realize your intent, and display the menu. Creepy? Definitely. But it’s an example of how the online environment has evolved in our post-privacy world. At a time when huge internet corporations probably know more than the NSA, the threats and opportunities to business are ever-changing.

Controlling brand online has become at least 10 times more complex as brand managers grapple with the explosion of choice consumers have. Our advice: pick your battles and focus.

**Mobile is most important now**

Mobile use has surpassed desktop for the first time recently. In fact, *Google is now using the mobile version of a website as the primary indicator of search quality*. That means that most websites that were designed for desktop browsers and with mobile as an afterthought might lose out on a lot of search traffic. Focusing on the mobile version of your site has now become a new priority.

**Old style marketing is becoming ineffectual**

Marketers are in many ways forced to join the revolution or perish at the hands of better informed and better equipped competitors. Questions like “how, where, and in what situation is our brand being interacted with?” are more important than ever to ask. *A company’s online profile may change for different people at different times based on a number of factors* including:

- Time of day the business is being searched
Artificial intelligence is a huge new factor

In large part, artificial intelligence decides what your business looks like online. It helps decide which branded properties rank and where. Artificial intelligence directly affects how many customers you reap from online source by informing many search results. AI is a very real factor in any solid online reputation management program.

Early in 2015 Google began putting into effect a deep learning system called RankBrain. RankBrain helps generate responses to search queries. It is not a factor to be manipulated for better search results like keywords or other SEO tactics. It isn’t something that can be directly engineered for SEO reasons. Instead it helps Google understand content better than it did before. So we need to understand something about AI to get the best branded results to appear in a business search profile.

AI engineers don’t understand their own invention

The artificial intelligence used by search engines is so sophisticated, it is said that even the engineers who designed the systems don’t understand why they make the decisions they do. If the engineers who created the systems can’t predict outcomes, it’s even harder for a marketer to do so.
But the good news is that we don’t need to figure out AI, instead we need to better understand human beings. That’s where something called “user intent” comes into play. By focusing on user intent, we can leap frog the AI discussion to some extent and focus on what people appreciate. Then use that knowledge to dominate search results with appropriate positive messaging. User intent is discussed later in this guide.

**How People Find Your Business**

*Information, not brand searches, are performed first*

People aren’t searching for your brand at first. They’re still circling in on the right questions to ask. That’s right, the first searches are usually people trying to find the right questions to ask. This basic fact of human behavior is important to understand in order to execute a holistic brand reputation management campaign.

There was a time when someone might have heard a radio ad and simply called the 800 number. It still happens, but it’s changing rapidly. Today people perform due diligence online before interacting with a company for the first time. Whether they are using Google, Bing, Facebook, Yelp, Amazon, or some other specialty search engine, they will look for information about information first. They are circling in on the solution to a problem.

Because the first search people generally perform is not to provide a solution, but instead to simply gain information about the kind of question they should ask, it’s important for businesses to be seen in both informational and branded search results. Most businesspersons optimize for their brand name, or
a product or service. But few optimize for the questions leading up to those searches. **This is a great time to start dominating brand positioning** - early in the search process. How? Reputation management of course!

A typical highly simplified search query might go something like this:

- **First search:** “Good restaurant nearby” (Now they refine)
- **Second search:** “Good sushi restaurant nearby” (To strike their fancy)
- **Third search:** “Acme sushi reviews” (The first branded search)
- **Fourth search:** “Fishy Fish sushi reviews” (The second branded search)
- **Fifth search:** “Fish Fish sushi menu” (The one they chose based on various search results)

**Notice that neither the first nor second search even mentioned a brand name.** Only during the third and fourth search did the searcher consider a brand. Once they did, they compared two different sushi restaurants. They finally made a decision to look at a menu during their fifth search. Most searches are more complex than that. For example, think about how much research you did when you bought your last car.

In the above example, there may have been ten great sushi restaurants in the area, but “Fishy Fish Sushi” had better looking results (even if their name is pretty terrible - but that’s our fault), so the diner went with them over the others. **The competitors were never really considered because their online**
profiles were weak. It wasn’t because the other restaurants weren’t good, some of the other restaurants would have been a better choice. But the fact is that the other restaurants simply hadn’t paid enough attention to their online reputation, so they were never really in the race to begin with. Most companies are in this position today.

**Make sure your business is seen in early non-branded results**

As we lay the groundwork for a strong online reputation, it’s important to keep the user top of mind at all times. Because search engines are continuously trying to find ways to improve results for people, we must do the same. So the first thing to do is to understand why people end up thinking about a company’s brand in the first place.

**People Take a Journey to Find You**

Buyers take an information journey to find your product or service. It starts in the Awareness stage where they are experiencing a problem. Then they get to the Consideration stage where they begin to look for solutions. Finally, they get to the Decision stage where they start compiling a list
of vendors to shortlist.

**Searches for your brand happen later in the funnel**

As seen in the example above, business leaders should realize that consumers will perform a search to solve a problem long before they perform a search for a brand. So a brand’s reputation management efforts should start earlier in the discovery cycle.

The searcher will try a search, note the results, and then refine their search. During their search, they’ll see various reviews, articles, and other information about products and services - a few names will stand out. Marketers need to focus their online reputation efforts earlier in the funnel and make sure their companies are on this shortlist.

Once a prospective customer has a few brands in mind they perform more research on each of the prospects. Generally speaking, the company with the best online profile will get a chance to earn their business. The others won’t even be contacted. So, does that mean businesses should get better reviews? Yes... in a way.

**Articles vs. Reviews: Which Carries More Weight?**

**One negative article can end your buyer’s journey**

Let’s assume your business has made it into the branded search phase of the decision making process. Now it’s you against two other brands. One of the brands has a beautiful search profile with great reviews, well-crafted and informative third-party articles, a well-designed website, great ratings from trusted third-parties like the Better Business Bureau, industry-related
publications, and more. The other two brands have average search results, and one of them, your business, has a single negative article on page one visible for all to see. Who do you think will get the business?

**Why negative articles are worse than reviews**

One bad review, true or not, can spoil a business’s chances of making it to the final round in a prospect’s decision making process. It’s interesting to note that according to Yelp, 46% of their reviews are five stars. Add to this the fact that about 67% of consumers report their buying decisions are influenced by online reviews and you can see why even one bad review can spoil a company’s chances of even hearing from a prospect in the first place.

But an article mentioning a businesses name is worse than a bad review. Generally, a bad review is lumped in with other reviews and by itself doesn’t often show up in search. But a bad article is a stand-alone problem that cannot be remedied by new good reviews, especially if your brand name is mentioned in the title. Attack sites know this, so they design their sites so that your brand will show up high in search results. They do this so people will click on the bad news about your brand, which signals to search engines that their site is a good information source for searches about your brand. **Sick, right?** To reward the attack sites, search engines raise their ranking in search results. Which makes more people click... you can see the cycle.

Articles about a brand that are negative tend to cause more damage and be harder to fix than a few bad reviews. Still, reviews are important because people tend to think like herd
animals (apologies to any humans reading this).

**People trust the opinions of strangers**

Over 80% of people under 35 seek out the opinions of others before making a purchase. *Even a good review that looks bad in search results can be a problem* because most people don’t click to investigate, they simply trust the search result and move on. In fact, *more people trust Google* than they do actual news sources. People are so incredibly sensitive to negative reviews from strangers that a two-star review near the top of user-reviews on Amazon is enough to kill a sale even if the overall review for the product is greater than four stars.

As human beings, *we are looking for something as elusive as a leprechaun’s pot of gold* - perfection. In over ten years of online reputation experience, perfection, or something close to it, is almost always engineered.

**Reviews are so fake that people look beyond them**

There are good ways to engineer online reputation and bad ways. About 57% of people are suspicious of really good reviews. So even if you have that 5-star review, you may still be suspect. People know they’re quite possibly fake, and they think they can tell - but studies show people really aren’t very good at it. So people look beyond reviews. They look to:

- Articles
- Press releases
- Social proof
- Third-party news
- Charitable giving (is it a nice company?)
● The company website
● Blogs mentioning the company
● Images of the company
● Videos about the products and services
● ... and more

Engineer a Beautiful Online Profile

As mentioned above, perfect reviews are suspicious. But a perfect online profile is less so. This is because there is a lot of social proof that the company is worth doing business with.

Finally! Searchers see your branded results

Only once a prospect has moved far enough down the sales funnel to shortlist a brand do branded searches really come into play. The vast majority of Reputation X clients come to us because they have challenges with their branded results, but only later realize that had they improved their overall online brand they may have doubled their revenues long before.

Branded search results are a complex blend of owned, earned, and paid web content. Getting a company’s own website to perform better is often the easiest part of a project because nearly all search ranking factors and social factors can
be engineered. After all, most companies totally control their own website. The challenge comes about when engineering the other 90% of online messaging where factors are more difficult to control.

**Satisfy user intent to win**

We discussed “user intent” earlier. The technology that drives today’s online rankings and content priorities takes its clues from how people interact with information. Search engines quietly watch every transaction anyone makes with branded and non-branded websites, blogs, social media, articles, images, videos, search engine snippets, and much more. The level of surveillance is in many ways more “Big Brother” than Big Brother was in George Orwell’s book *1984*. The machines are trying to figure us out in order to (we hope) help us.

As marketers, we can use similar metrics to understand which messaging works and which should be ignored. When our goal is to build a complete search profile for a company that satisfies the most users, we win more often than not. Uncovering what it is the user wants is often the challenge. What content do they want to see? How do we attract people to our content? How do we make them stay for as long as possible? We make it sticky.

**Making brand-related content sticky**

While online technologies track every search and click we make, they also try to understand how long we view content. For a marketer working to engineer their online profile, this means we want to create content that not only gets clicked (see the psychology behind click-bait) but is “sticky” and keeps people looking at it for as long as possible.

**The dreaded bounce**
An important signal to search engines that you are satisfying user intent is how long they stay on your page - or any other page about your brand (even bad ones). When someone clicks on an article about your brand, but then clicks away quickly, Google notices. In effect, they downgrade their estimation of the quality of the content. This is because the consumer just “voted” it down by clicking on it and then immediately away from it. The result is that search engines reduce the ranking of this type of content, moving it down, not up, in search results (there are many other factors as well). This is the opposite of what we want to happen to positive content as we create the ideal search profile to attract consumers. To satisfy user intent, you must create content people want to consume.

**What if a business already has negative content?**

Most businesses that come to Reputation X already have some problem with their search results. They go directly into the “repair” phase of the reputation management process.

If a business has unflattering content, it already begins with a significant headwind. The content must be either removed at the source, removed from search results, or suppressed for branded searches.

No matter how good the rest of the search results are, a negative will stand out like a squashed bug on a white piece of paper. A solid reputation campaign works to either remove or suppress negative search results while at the same time creating a strong search profile. That way, even if a negative cannot be removed, the rest of the search results frame the story better.

**Starting with the lowest hanging fruit**
Often the first step we’ll take is to identify already existing positive search results that just need a boost in rankings. Promoting the good tends to demote the bad. We’ll start this process as early as possible after identifying promotion candidates. Promotion candidates are identified based on existing search ranking factors (see below). We’ll use powerful search engine marketing techniques to cause certain content to rise - but this takes time. While a number of factors come into play, the average search engine optimization campaign doesn’t start to bear fruit for ten to twenty weeks after publisher outreach has begun. Some things move before then, but not in earnest. Because it takes so long, we get started with that first before moving on to other aspects of brand reputation management.

The days of optimizing keywords on a website are just about over. In the olden days, a website would optimize for keywords. Machine learning has changed that. Search engines now understand a page even if a specific keyword isn’t present. Today search engines understand topical relevance. They better interpret what a page or an entire site is about. While adding keywords does help as an indicator to search engine bots as to what the page is about, it is no longer as strong a factor as it once was.

**Ask what you’re being judged against**

Let’s assume a business wants more business (imagine that). The Marketing Director believes that if a prospective customer performs a comparison between their product and that of a competitor, it would help tip the scales in the company’s favor if it had better search results than the competitor.

A bit of examination reveals that an article exists on page three of search results for a branded search (one with the company’s
name in it) that paints the company in a glowing light. But the article isn’t on the business’s own website; it is on an industry site that isn’t very powerful.

Because the company doesn’t control the site the article is on, their hands are tied to a certain extent. Most of the search ranking factors are out of its control. So how does the Marketing Director get that result to move into daylight? Reputation marketing will get that content to move.

**Don’t Outrun the Bear, Outrun the Guy Next to You**

But wait... Before deciding to move that result up, let’s take a step back to understand the Marketing Director’s real objective. **What is the bigger picture here?** There is a saying that “You don’t have to run faster than the bear to get away. You just have to run faster than the guy next to you.”

The objective for most companies when crafting reputation is to identify key competitors, examine their online profiles as well as your own, and develop a plan to beat them. When comparing companies to do business with, you only need to be better than your competitors in the right ways. So choose wisely where to put your resources.

The way to approach this is to think as a prospective customer - someone with little to no idea what to look for. To do that, we must start by creating a Buyer Persona.

**Understand your buyer before crafting your online reputation**

Similar to inbound marketing, reputation management starts with the objective of satisfying the end-user / ideal customer.
It’s important to pay attention to this, as it is the root of any successful online brand management campaign. Most reputation management companies don’t take this step and that’s one of the reasons they so often fail. We build at least one persona of an ideal customer before we start. To do so, we ask questions like:

- Who is the prospective customer?
- What do they think they want before they start researching solutions?
- What location and language might they do their research from?
- What device might they be using?
- What questions might they ask?
- What new questions might the answers to those questions generate?
- How might they modify their search as they learn?

Notice we haven’t tried to create the answer to the ultimate question yet. We’re not trying to sell them anything. We just want to understand the evolution of their questions. We want to do this because eventually we want to already be where they are most likely to look on their decision making journey.

We want our client’s brand to be at the intersection of those queries long before the prospect starts comparing companies.

**What does a prospect see first?**

We suggest putting on your ignorance hat for a little while. It will enable you to emulate the experience of someone who knows nothing about your company, nothing about your com-
petitors, and is just starting a search online for a solution that you may be able to help them with.

Putting oneself in the place of a buyer and then going through the exercise of discovery provides a valuable education to an in-house marketer or business leader. But it isn’t easy being an expert and trying to see things from the viewpoint of a non-expert. You might want to surround yourself with ignorant people (We’re nervously looking at each other as we write this). We’re looking for people who know almost nothing about your product or service - not drooling nimrods - just regular people who don’t know anything about your company but have a need.

When you **succeed in seeing past your wall of expertise**, you may find that the competition may not be the same as you may have originally thought. Wrong assumptions are discovered allowing new paths forged. For example, you may be wondering why a certain publication keeps popping up. As an expert, you know it’s not relevant to the search. But to someone who doesn’t know the difference, that publication seems a goldmine of knowledge. Mark that publication down. There may be a reason later to insert your company into it for early brand recognition.

While taking the buyer’s information journey, there are a few questions to ask such as:

- Which solutions tend to come up more often than others?
- Are people asking certain questions on places like Quora?
- What Google suggested search terms are coming up at the bottom of the search results page?
● What other products and services are mentioned?

● What websites tend to come up repeatedly, even if they shouldn’t?

● Who is the real competition online? Not just for products and services, but for information.

● What are the best things about each of their search profiles?

Document your findings. We find that recording a written narrative of the journey helps. Marketers can go over the narrative later to discover hidden gems that may be opportunities for brand insertion.

**How would you like to be seen?**

The buyer’s journey through discovery maps out territory that was probably unseen previously. In the end, it usually reveals a shortlist of similar companies or purveyors of information pertaining to a product or service.

Each company will have a search “profile”. A search profile is the mix of different kinds and quality of information that are returned on a search result page - usually the first 20 results if it’s a Google search. Search profiles for different industries vary widely, but similar companies will tend to have similar properties. Those similar search profiles will be made up not only of similar publications but similar information types, too.

**Different types of information**

As mentioned above, there are at least 18 different ways to show up in search results so the combinations are seemingly endless. But the search profiles revealed during discovery will
inevitably uncover patterns. There will be similarities, and we want to take note of these. These patterns form an archetypal search profile for an industry. When you perform a search between FedEx and UPS, you will see a lot of similarities between their search profiles. Both have a knowledge panel in the upper right; both have Twitter as their second search result (at least today they do); the social media properties are similar; and so on. One of the biggest differences are the number of results returned. UPS has far more results in Google than Fedex. This is probably because UPS is also an acronym for Uninterruptable Power Supply. Google doesn’t know exactly what the searcher is looking for, so they show them all with their best guesses first.

What is Your Ideal Profile?

While there are many variations, there is probably an “ideal” search profile comprised of the best parts of all competitors. It’s a bit like a fantasy football team of search results. Imagine performing searches for the top ten competitors in your industry, then cherry-picking the best ones to create your own ultimate profile. This ideal search profile is the template we aim to fulfill during a business reputation management campaign. It be-
comes the guiding light for all we do that follows.

**Technical factors behind the search profile**

An ideal search profile is more than just a collection of publications, review sites, images, videos, knowledge graphs, instant answers, and other information types. Behind each of those is a network of information driving each information object to high ranking success.

For example, if a search profile includes an Inc.com profile of the CEO, that article will most likely have a certain number of shares, likes, inbound links from relevant sites, and other technical factors that drive its success. It will contain an optimal amount of information presented in a way that satisfies the intent of searchers.

The question to ask when defining optimal technical characteristics of an individual result is “what makes this result deserving of high rankings?” When one understands that search engines like Google are essentially pattern-mining machines, and that they are constantly A/B testing for the best search results (switching out results to see which perform best), it’s easier to see that Google gives you most of the information you need to succeed. The trick is seeing the pattern in a sea of data.

**Researching how the ideal search profile works**

There are a lot of reasons an individual piece of an ideal search profile ranks the way it does. According to Moz, a search engine research and software company run by a guy with awe-some hair, the top five factors that cause a search result to rank well include:

- Domain level factors such as number and quality of in-
coming links from other sites

- Page level factors, like domain level factors but specific to a single page
- Content quality, quantity, and relevance to the search query
- Content speed, technical factors like HTML markup, and structured data
- Traffic and visitor usage signals (user intent)

This means that when a business is working to convert more leads by changing search and social results, they don’t have much control over sites other than their own. That’s where reputation management comes into play since it helps the other sites to rank well, transforming the company image in the process.

**Google’s AI, for better or for worse**

You can do your best to increase the probability of owning search results. You can do everything as right as possible, but brand reputation management isn’t always an exact science. When working to recast a company’s search results, user intent and satisfaction are a big piece of the puzzle, but they are trying to be understood by a machine. The machines are not always right, in fact, they are wrong much of the time.

Example: Normally a corporate website would be returned in the top position for a branded search, but that isn’t always the case anymore. We’ve seen search behavior change the rankings of sites that don’t make sense. In this example, GlassDoor.com, a job satisfaction and posting website, recently outranked our client’s own website for their main branded search term. In oth-
er words, when someone Googled our client, GlassDoor.com came up first instead of their own site. It makes no logical sense for this to happen because the client’s own site is a far better result than GlassDoor.com.

We suspect GlassDoor was chosen by RankBrain (Artificial Intelligence) to be in the first position for reasons known only to a machine mind. It probably viewed search behavior for a recent hiring spree and changed results accordingly, but imperfectly. If something like this happens to you, it’s time to get back to basics. So let’s examine humans to see what happens when they are in the process of discovering your brand.

**Three Phases of Reputation Management**

There are three phases of reputation management. They are:

- Repair
- Improvement
- Protection

**The things that matter most**

The factors that move profile pieces around most effectively are vast. But there are two that matter more than anything else:

- The quality and relevance of the content
- The number of high quality links from relevant sites linking to the content

*If marketers get just those two things right, they will improve the online brand profile immensely.*
Tools We Use for Reputation Management

We do a lot more than that, but the above two things do matter most. Search engine marketing concepts and tool usage would fill volumes. We are often asked what tools we use to perform reputation management. Well, here is the list, and it will probably change before this guide is available online. That’s a testament to how often tools change. Our current tool set utilizes proprietary tools like:

Research Tools
- RepuTool™
- Majestic
- Ahrefs
- SEMRush
- Screaming Frog
- Moz

Project Management Tools
- Basecamp

SEO Tools
- PitchBox
- Ninja Outreach
- Google Docs
- Microsoft Excel

Web Development
- Wordpress
● Hubspot (our favorite due to inbound marketing capabilities)
● Photoshop
● Adobe Illustrator

Content Development
● BuzzSumo

Other promotion tools are always being added and discarded as new and better ones take their place.

People on a Brand Reputation Team

Hundreds of vendors across many industry specialties fill the inevitable knowledge gaps working within the Reputation X Framework, a process that has evolved over a decade.

Reputation Building at Scale

The old methods for optimizing business listings for search engines are rapidly falling by the wayside in favor of machine-centric methods. For example, today a thousand pages of unique content can be created instantly using natural language generation (NLG), deployed and tested in almost real time. Compare that with manual search engine marketing and you’ll see how the future moves faster than the human eye can track.

Businesses that realize this may have an advantage, because it enables them to reallocate resources from the old way of doing
things to more modern methods of messaging and publication.

**The Future of Online Reputation Management**

The best reputation management will be automatic, fast, and incremental. When was the last time Amazon.com redesigned their website? The answer? They do it everyday in small ways. Reputation management is evolving into constant semi-automated A/B testing of reputation touch points instantly published, tested, and revised in real-time.

Machine learning and natural language generation (NLG) will be combined with instant development and publication of subtly different messages. These messages will be tested against each other very rapidly. The best performing messages will be promoted, while the weaker performing messages will be deleted and replaced by new content candidates. This will assure that the best possible reputation touch-points will always be optimized for every company. This automated process of continuous improvement will become the norm in online reputation management for businesses and individuals alike.

Thanks for taking the time to read The Guide. It is being updated presently. If you have questions or ideas as to how to improve it, please let us know at guide@reputationx.com.

Thank you!
The Reputation X Team