

## Your brand's reputation matters more than ever—five tips to shape public perception



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No business can survive without a strong reputation. This makes reputation arguably one of the most important success metrics of any organization, big or small, B2B or B2C, in any city, state or region of the world. At some point, a considerable measure of your business success boils down to your public image. Should customers trust what you're selling? Why should they care about the service you're offering? What makes you different from your competitors? What do news sources they trust have to say about you? When they search your business, what kind of information do they find?

Trust and reputation are inherently linked and when times get tough, consumer trust is more important than ever as consumers become increasingly selective regarding how (and where) they spend their dollars. Maintaining media coverage in your favor and sharing thought leadership that brings to life who you are, what you do, why it's important and how it can better other people's lives will help you garner trust and maintain relevance. A good reputation shapes your public perception; it validates your business, your products, your services.

Building trust and reputation doesn't happen overnight, but with specific strategies in place, you can begin shaping public image and perception in a way that generates results and puts you on a path to successful reputation management. Here are a few tactics to support you on that journey.

### **1. Tell a great story – but don't make it all about you.**

Media, followers, customers and potential investors all want to hear a good story, and the better the story, the better the chance it will resonate with the people you are trying to reach. That story, however, isn't just about you and what you're offering. It should speak to your audiences and directly address the benefits they will see from your service or product. Tighten your narrative to deliver a compelling story that's relevant to your audiences and the struggles and challenges they're facing *now*.

### **2. Establish yourself as a thought leader.**

Thought leadership is one of the best ways to position public perception in your favor, so get your voice heard! There's a reason that thought leadership has become a key element of content marketing for many successful brands. Consider contributing guest articles on trending topics that highlight your expertise, offer valuable insights and pitch yourself as a quoted industry expert. Get more active on LinkedIn and share information where you have value to provide.

### **3. Boost your credibility through press pickup.**

People support businesses they trust, and having third-party accolades about your work is one of the best ways to build your reputation and capture customers. When consumers look for your business online and find rave reviews by media outlets about your offerings, they will be swayed in your favor. Pitch yourself to your industry trades, see what outlets are covering your competitors and make sure you're getting in front of them as well, share your business point of view on trending topics with relevant editors. Pitch yourself!

### **4. Show gratitude.**

One of my firm's clients is a business that's entirely focused on spreading gratitude in the workplace. Their business proposition is based on a deceptively simple yet incredibly relevant concept: in business, relationships are everything — and everyone likes to do business with someone who appreciates them. Gratitude isn't just for your personal well-being. It's a critical part to business success and growth — more so than many realize. Find ways to connect with your audience while showing appreciation, spreading goodwill and saying thank you (especially when it's not expected). Gratitude powers more closed deals, more referrals, more engaged employees and better customer retention. It makes you likable, and it most certainly boosts your reputation quotient.

## **5. Get involved in your community or with a cause that's meaningful.**

This doesn't mean slapping your business name on a cause and calling it a day. As your business sees success and you grow your reputation, giving back to your community and to causes that align with your company values is a surefire way to keep spreading the kind of message that will support your growth. Whether your company prefers to jump in and support groups that need it as events arise or you seek out a partnership with a key organization you believe in, charitable giving isn't just good for your reputation; it strengthens your relationship with your community. Giving back supports relationships with your current customers while garnering the attention of new ones.

### **Final thoughts**

A great reputation begins with growing credibility, showing authenticity, gaining recognition and connecting with your audiences in meaningful ways. Having a reputation management strategy in place with specific tactics will better protect your business if your reputation is ever questioned in the future. Building reputation isn't just about bringing in new customers or crafting your public image; it's about connecting with your audiences in a way that meets the tricky questions they'll toss your way, their concerns, their needs and their challenges.