How To Improve Your Personal Online Reputation

Tracy Samantha Schmidt | July 05, 2012

Just as your credit score follows you everywhere, so does your online reputation. Like it or not, you'll be increasingly Googled in the years ahead, which makes it essential to understand and manage your personal search results.
If someone has posted something negative about you online, it's imperative that you know immediately and take action. To stay updated, sign up for free emails at Google.com/alerts and SocialMention.com.
When and if you do discover something negative about yourself, take a deep breath and decide if responding publicly will only worsen the situation. If it's an obscure blog post or comment, it's probably best to ignore it.
If many people are talking about the negative item, respond directly on that site or your own site, if you have one. Your response should be concise and graceful, demonstrating that you're in control of the situation and have class both online and off.

When to hire an SEO consultant
In a worst-case scenario, you may have several negative blog posts or even news articles associated with your name. Every time someone Google's you, these blog posts and articles appear at the top of the page. In this case, consider hiring a professional SEO consultant who can design a strategy to create other content that will bury those negative search results. A word of caution: this process is expensive and can take many months to work – if it works at all.
Fortunately, most people will never have to deal with negative search results. Most likely, they'll have few, if any, search results for their name.

Creating positive content
But what if you want to improve your search results? Maybe you're looking for a new job or are seeking new opportunities, such as invitations to speak at events or join philanthropic boards. In this case, you want your personal search results to reflect your accomplishments and expertise.
The simplest, most effective way to improve your personal search results is to complete a LinkedIn profile. LinkedIn is a free social network in which users upload and share their resumes. The site has many other useful

features, including groups that let users talk with each other both publicly and privately.

LinkedIn is highly optimized for search engines; this means that if you have a profile on LinkedIn, the profile will be at or near the top of your personal search results. However, that's still only one search result.

To increase your personal search results, consistently create online content that includes your name. Search engines like Google feed on fresh content such as online articles, blog posts, tweets, photos and videos. In short, more content equals more search results. The more times your name appears online, the more times it will turn up in search results.

Of course, your content should be quality content; this is your personal reputation, after all. Everything you post online should be free of spelling and grammar errors. It should demonstrate your professionalism and command of specific subject areas. Most importantly, it should be factually correct information.

Making time for social media
You may be thinking, "How do I make time for this?" If you're going to blog, consider blocking out a few hours on the weekend and writing your posts for the week ahead. Free blogging platforms likeWordPress.com let you schedule posts in advance.

If you plan on using social networks like Facebook and Twitter often, look at free social media dashboards like Hootsuite and Tweetdeck. Both of these platforms allow you to manage multiple social profiles from one central place, which syncs across all of your devices (PC, phone, tablet, etc.). Managing your online reputation does take time. Search engines can take 60 days or longer to capture and analyze your new content. Be patient, be proactive and you will see the results – literally.