# RepCheckup ☑

## ONLINE REVIEW MANAGEMENT GUIDE

# ORM 101:
## Getting Started with Online Reputation Management

### WANT TO KNOW A SECRET?
It's not something everyone knows, but you'll want to get in the know.

### WHAT'S THE SECRET?
Most organizations already have an excellent reputation, but they don't have the time or knowledge to keep up with the ever-changing world of online reviews.

If they aren't keeping up with their online reviews, this means that they still don't have an effective online reputation management plan in place. And for everyone managing their online reputation, there are dozens more who are not.

If you're reading this, you likely find yourself in one of two categories:

1. You're already managing your online reputation, and you want to make sure you're up-to-date.

2. Or, you see the growing influence of online review websites, and you want to get started.

The following guide will give you the know-how to take control of your online reputation. Everything you'll learn here comes from a decade of experience managing reputations and my participation in the Google Local Guide program.

After reading, you should be comfortable managing your reputation daily, regardless of the level you're starting at.

**IN THIS GUIDE, YOU WILL LEARN:**

- **Concept of online reputation management.**
- **Importance of online reputation management.**
- **Trends driving the increasing influence of online reviews.**
- **Steps to creating an ORM plan.**
- **Tips for managing an effective, ongoing online reputation management campaign**.

At the end of this guide, you will even find a handy checklist of best practices you can use at your organization.

## LET'S GET STARTED WITH ORM 101:

How to Get Started With Online Reputation Management.

### Our first topic, "What is online reputation management?"

***What is online reputation management?***
What exactly does it mean when marketers and others say "online reputation management?"
You may have heard the term before in advertisements, or conversation.

There's often a lot of confusion about what online reputation management means. Let's start with a working definition and overview of what exactly it encompasses.

At RepCheckup, we define online reputation management (ORM) as:

A set of strategies and tactics used to ensure a positive representation of your organization online.

The goal of ORM is to make sure the offline realities of your organization get accurately reflected online. If there's a recipe for great online review management, it would be:

1. **one part branding**
2. **one part public relations**
3. **one part customer experience**

Four main components comprise an effective online reputation management campaign:

### Online review generation.
This includes asking customers in-person for a review or via email or text messages.

### Online review monitoring.
This involves checking your ratings and reviews online yourself or using monitoring software.

### Online review management.
This encompasses responding to and promoting reviews from customers.

### Social listening.
This includes monitoring what's said about your organization on social media. It also includes keeping tabs on any new reviews that may occur on a blog or YouTube channel.

Owning your online reputation is not only about complaints, feedback, ratings, and reviews. Many other touchpoints could also affect your online reputation.

For example, website directories that list your organization. These listings often have inaccurate or missing information. This could lead to customers heading to the wrong location or calling the wrong company.

Remember, ORM is not marketing fluff. You can gain valuable insights into your organization. Ultimately, these insights will help improve your customer's experience and your bottom line.
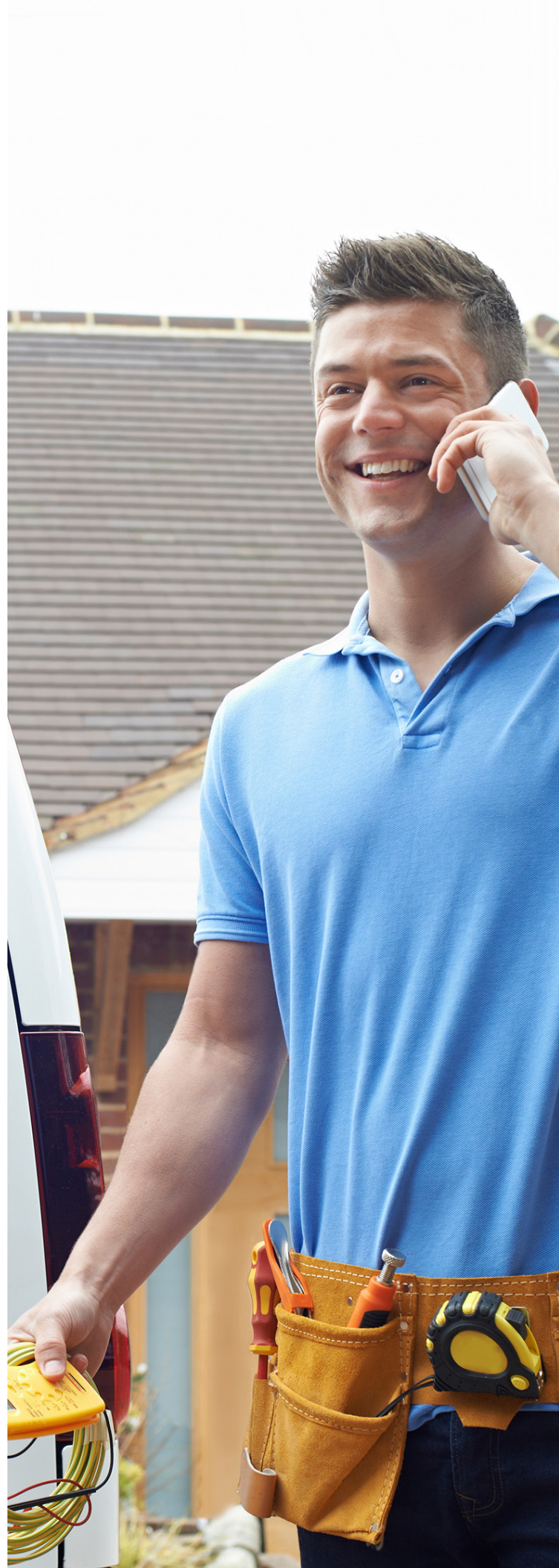
# Why Online Reputation Management is Important

Online reviews and review websites have opened up a wealth of new information that was previously restricted to conversations with family, friends, and colleagues. According to a recent survey, 92% of all respondents trusted online reviews as much as a recommendation from a friend or family member.

**What you see is what you get online,** what customers see is what they know of you and your organization. Chances are also good that they'll know more about you than you know about them when you speak for the first time.

Why's that? Customers today can go comparison shopping online for any company, product, and service imaginable. In fact, there are over 50 popular websites that show ratings and reviews from customers.

Millennials are particularly apt to share their experiences with products and services online. Even if they're not your target demographic, they're sure to pull through with their preference for online interactions as they age. This includes their loving embrace and dependence upon online ratings and reviews to make their decisions.

## CUSTOMERS DON'T RELY ON WORD-OF-MOUTH (THEY VERIFY)

Even if your organization relies on referrals and word-of-mouth to get new customers, these conversations happen on social media today. It's on Facebook – where asking friends for a recommendation generates first-hand experiences in your comments.

These recommendations from friends and family, however, are only the starting point. Regardless of how they heard about you, customers will continue their research online about you before contacting you.

Their next step? Pull out their phone, open a search engine like Google, type in your organization's name, and hit enter. Or they may fire up the Yelp app on their phone and look up what others have said about you there.

It's not only millennials doing this, either. Customers of all ages are using the Internet as their go-to source for information when making a decision.

## SEARCH ENGINES REWARD TOP-RATED ORGANIZATIONS

Google and other search engines strive to deliver the best search results to users. It makes sense, then, that the rating and reviews found for an organization would have an impact on their search visibility.

Since 2013, Google has been ramping up its focus on local ratings and reviews. First with its "City Experts," and now with their Local Guides program. Today, one of the factors Google takes into consideration when determining which results appear for a search query are ratings and reviews.

Many search engine optimization (SEO) experts reported that increasing the total number of reviews on a Google My Business profile resulted in improved search rankings. It makes sense. What better signal of quality exists than customer ratings and reviews?

Potential employees, business partners, and suppliers check reviews too
It's not only paying customers who take an interest in your rating and reviews. There's another potential customer interested in them: new employees. Most organizations tend to overlook this fact, but potential employees are researching what it's like to work at an organization before they even apply for an open role.

There's also strong anecdotal evidence to suggest that business partners and suppliers consult the internet when considering if they should do business with you.
I've heard dozens of stories from organizations about how partners had found them online, liked what they saw, and decided to get in

touch. I've also heard of suppliers using ratings and reviews as a reference. There are even banks using online reviews to determine an organization's credit-worthiness.

While this may not be the norm, it's worth noting given the critical role partners and suppliers play in your success.

In the end, managing your online reputation has many potential benefits. It not only ensures you look great, but it gives you a better chance of acquiring new customers. It also increases the chances of anyone in your ecosystem wanting to work with you.

If you're not convinced yet, maybe these facts about online reputation will help change your mind.

## THE SURVEY SAYS: YOUR ONLINE REPUTATION MATTERS

The growing influence of ratings and reviews on the customer decision-making process was well studied in recent years. This isn't one independent study or customer poll. There's an abundant amount of data available pointing to the influence that ratings and reviews play in the customer decision-making process. It's not exactly a secret either.
After all, 85% of organizations say that they check online reviews about themselves. The smart organization knows that their customers are online and that reviews affect their success.

Here's what else they know - and what you should too - about the impact of online rating and reviews on their organization:

**92% of consumers place equal weight on both online reviews and personal recommendations**
- *BrightLocal Consumer Review Survey*

**88% Of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations** - *Search Engine Land Consumer Review Survey*

**73% of consumers say positive reviews make them trust a business more.** - *Bright Local*

**62% of customers looking for new organizations use online reviews**
- *Vitals / SoftwareAdvice*

**A one-star increase in Yelp rating leads to a 5-9% increase in revenue.**
- *Harvard Business School Study*

**Only 10% of customers actually leave reviews online**
- *SoftwareAdvice*

**One single negative review can cost you 30 customers**
- *Convergys*

**Of customers looking for new organizations, 6 in 10 use online reviews** - *Vitals*

**100% of the people reading this have a personal or corporate persona to protect.**
- *The Guy Writing This*

Despite this, online reviews are still in their infancy. As time goes on, online reviews will only have a greater impact on your organization.
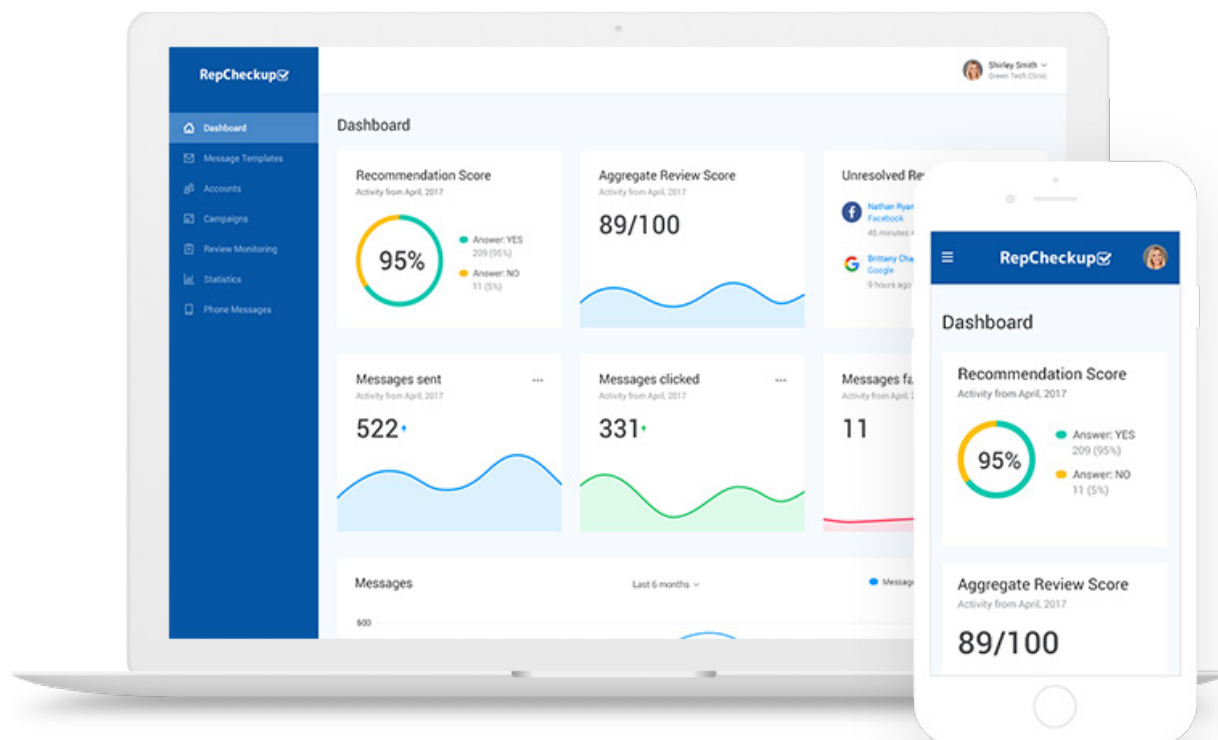
# WHERE PEOPLE ARE GOING ONLINE FOR REVIEWS

There are several websites you should know about when it comes to the online reputation of your organization. These are the websites that customers (employees, partners, and suppliers too) are most likely to see when doing research. Sure, customers may not visit them all, but none of them should go ignored (unless they for an unrelated industry).

## GOOGLE MY BUSINESS

Today, when a customer conducts a Google search for your specialty, the results they see are powered in part by Google My Business (GMB). Searches for your industry or trade are not the only actions that will pull up your profile. When a customer searches your name, Google displays information from your GMB profile on the right-hand side of the results page.

Many organizations focus on Google My Business for its SEO value, but customers can also see reviews left by other customers. These include reviews left on your GMB profile. It also includes aggregated reviews from other websites, such as Facebook, that Google embeds in your GMB profile.

Google My Business is the most important to manage out of all the review sites. Since customers go to Google first when looking for something new, it should be #1 on your list.

## FACEBOOK

After Google, Facebook is the most visible of the online review websites. It's essential that your Facebook recommendations reflect the great work you do. Almost everyone in the world has a Facebook profile!

Many customers are using Facebook to get recommendations from friends and family. They are doing this when they need a product, service, or solution to their problem. Customers are also using the platform to spot check what others have said about you.

Be careful not to hide your reviews and recommendations, which Facebook allows you to do. Turning off your reviews and recommendations is often a major red flag for those researching your organization. You don't want them to think you have something to hide, do you?

## YELP

Last, but certainly not least, there's Yelp.

You know Yelp. You hate Yelp. You love Yelp. You want to Yelp about Yelp.

Yelp, best known for restaurant and retailer reviews, also has a section for many other verticals. Customers leave reviews on your profile based on their satisfaction with their experience. You know… they Yelp.

Like Facebook and Google, Yelp is a large review website, so it's important to monitor your organization's Yelp profile. However, you should think twice before making a heavy investment into Yelp.

Yelp has not developed a reputation for being pro-business over the years. They were accused of filtering the reviews of those who stop advertising. They even discourage you from asking customers to leave a review on your Yelp profile.

Too bad Yelp doesn't have a profile.

## AMAZON

Although most people don't think of Amazon as a review website, it's actually one of the largest. Amazon has tens of millions of reviews across the products they sell. A number that only continues to grow every year, as users continue to leave reviews at high rates.

These reviews influence millions of customers every day. This gives Amazon the kind of reach only Google and Facebook can match. Similar to Google, Amazon even uses ratings and reviews when determining which products to show first for search queries (sound familiar?).

Amazon reviews have come under fire as of late. Thanks to the rise in fake product reviews and paid review programs, the legitimacy, and trustworthiness of Amazon reviews have been called into question.

Even still, if you're selling a physical product on Amazon, or plan to start, you'd be smart to pay attention to your reviews. They may play the most important part of your success selling on the platform.

# Bing

## BING PLACES

While Bing is a distant second in search traffic to Google, it still has a ton of influence over customers. As the de facto search option for all Microsoft products, Bing is used millions of customers each day. Depending on your target demographic, Bing could be even more influential than Google for your organization.

Bing Places is a free service. It gives organizations the ability to create a profile for each of their locations. These profiles help power search results pages and populate Bing Maps.

Bing Places offers similar functionality to Google My Business. This includes the ability to add basic details, showcase images, and videos. Of course, customers can also leave reviews on your profile.

Bing may never catch Google as the dominant search engine, but that doesn't mean you should ignore it. Make sure to claim and make full use of your Bing Places profile.

# tripadvisor®

## TRIPADVISOR

TripAdvisor is the leading destination for travelers and those planning (or currently on) vacation. Many other sites may have ratings and reviews in the hospitality and travel, but none compare. TripAdvisor's focus and quality of reviewers makes them stand out from the rest.

TripAdvisor allows organizations to create and manage profiles for their locations. You can upload pictures and manage the details that get displayed on your profile page. Like other sites, users can leave reviews on your profile, and you can respond to from the page admin area.

If you're in hospitality and tourism, it should be high on your priority list of review websites to track.

# Angie's list.

## ANGIESLIST

AngiesList started as a way to find a home-services contractor. Over time, it has grown into a leading destination to find reviews for almost any type of business. Now a publicly-traded company, AngiesList has become more than a review website. But that doesn't make the reviews on this site any less influential.

AngiesLists has profiles for organizations across many industries. These profiles often appear on the first page of search results for an organization's name. This is enough visibility to make your AngiesList profile of high importance.

Since AngiesList is a publicly-traded company, don't expect to get much for free. Creating a profile might still be free, but expect for sales reps to contact you to upsell lead generation and marketing services!

# glassdoor®

## GLASSDOOR

It may seem like every review website is for customers, but that's not always the case. Meet Glassdoor, the review site for employees. Started in 2007, Glassdoor has become the leading destination for employees looking to review their employers. It's also the place where potential employees go to learn what it's like to work at your organization.

Like other review websites, Glassdoor offers organizations the ability to create a profile. It also provides tools to help both increase and manage your reviews. Given the importance talent plays in every organization, having a Glassdoor profile that shows your organization in a positive light is essential. This makes Glassdoor one of the most influential review websites for any organization.

## HEALTHGRADES

Healthgrades is a website that allows patients to search for reviews of medical providers and hospitals. It's also the largest and most trafficked doctor review website. In 2013, Healthgrades was the first stop for 43 percent of customers searching for providers, according to a Software Advice survey.

Doctors and practices can create free profiles on Healthgrades. Patients can then find these profiles when looking for a provider. After an office visit, patients can rate the provider on Healthgrades. Healthgrades allows patients to rate their experience in many areas of care and leave a review. When a patient searches for a provider on Healthgrades, the provider with the best reviews and ratings is often listed at the top of the search results page.

Since it's still the number one site with patients, Healthgrades should be a top priority for your online reputation efforts if you or a client are in the healthcare space.



## AVVO

Founded in 2006, Avvo is a review website that helps you find the best legal representation. For lawyers, reputation is everything. What's said about a lawyer online impacts if a client will select them to be their legal representative. For a client, picking the right lawyer makes all the difference in winning or losing a case.

This makes Avvo the most important review website for anyone in the legal space. Clients can ask questions and post reviews of their experience with different professionals. Lawyers can also showcase their capabilities via their profile, and their answers to questions asked.

If you or your client is in the legal space, Avvo must be on your list of review sites to manage and monitor.

# G² CROWD

## G2 CROWD

G2 Crowd is an emerging online review website that focuses on the software and technology industry. Started in 2012, G2 Crowd focuses on customer sourced reviews of software as a service (SaaS) solutions.

G2 Crowd works differently than many of the other review websites. The website often works with the SaaS companies to generate reviews for their service. They have even been known to incentivize users to leave reviews on the site.

While this may seem aggressive and a safe haven for spam, G2 Crowd uses fraud detection and crowd-sourced voting to thwart bad actors. With over 1 million reviews, G2 Crowd is doing something right, making them the clear leader when it comes to software reviews.

# This just the beginning

The above list of online review websites is by no means exhaustive. In fact, there are dozens of online review websites. Each is competing for the eyeballs of new customers and the reviews of existing ones. As you create your ORM plan, take the time to research the most important review sites to your organization. Then, find out if you already have a profile there.

# How to create an online reputation management plan

The above list of online review websites is by no means exhaustive. In fact, there are dozens of online review websites. Each is competing for the eyeballs of new customers and the reviews of existing ones. As you create your ORM plan, take the time to research the most important review sites to your organization. Then, find out if you already have a profile there.

### 1. ASSIGN A POINT PERSON TO MANAGE YOUR ONLINE REPUTATION

Assigning a point-person in charge of your online reputation management will ensure that your strategy gets executed. If you're a company of one or part of a small team, that could be you. If you have the luxury of staff, give this responsibility to someone. It will help to ensure your plan gets implemented.

Regardless of your situation, the best strategy is the one that gets implemented. You can't improve or increase your online reviews without action!

### 2. FIND AND CLAIM YOUR PROFILES ON RELEVANT REVIEW WEBSITES

There are dozens of review sites that customers use. A few like Google My Business, Facebook, Yelp, and Bing Places are essential for managing your online reputation.

These aren't the only ones. The first step in online reputation management is claiming your profile on these review websites and the relevant ones for your industry.

After this, you will also want to spend time finding and claiming your profiles on business directory sites. These sites include SuperPages and YellowPages.

Chances are you already have a profile on these sites. If you don't claim your profiles, you won't have any say in what appears there. Claiming your profiles will instantly give you more control over your online reputation.

## 3. ENHANCE AND OPTIMIZE YOUR ONLINE RATING AND REVIEW PROFILES

With your profiles claimed, you now need to enhance and optimize them. This will allow you to get the greatest benefits from them. Often, what is currently posted about your organization also happens to be inaccurate.

To start, make sure you have accurate information and updated images. After this, make sure to check products, location, hours, payment methods, contact info, and any other important details. Note that you should update your profile's anytime there's a change at your organization.

You can find, claim, and update your profiles one by one, or use a software option. Software, such as RepCheckup, can make the process easier. With hundreds of different places on the web where you might have a listing, ORM software can be a major time and cost-saver in the long run.

## 4. TRAIN STAFF ON HOW TO ASK AND RESPOND TO REVIEWS

With your review profiles claimed and enhanced, it's now time to shift your efforts towards getting more reviews. This means training your staff or team (if you have them) to ask for reviews - and respond to them when they start to come.

The easiest way to do that? Start by sharing this guide with them! This will allow them to learn the basics of ORM and gain an understanding of what is required for success.

Besides reviewing this guide, carve out time to do some role-playing. This is an excellent way for staff to practice asking for reviews. This is especially helpful in getting them to perfect their review pitch. Remember, asking in-person can be awkward for some. So, the more practice, the better.

You should also train your team to use approved responses to reviews. Do this for any electronic messages that might get sent to customers asking them for a review.

## 5. IMPLEMENT IN-OFFICE SIGNAGE AND CALLS TO ACTION

There's a lot you can do inside your walls to support your ORM efforts. Your retail space, waiting rooms, and other public areas are all great spots for review signage.

You can let customers know where they can leave reviews via posters on the walls, and flyers on tables. You can even hand out

business cards and other materials during checkout. This material lets customers know that their feedback is valuable. It also makes it easier for them to leave a review online.

Of course, your signage should encourage customers to speak to someone in person if they had a bad experience. Speaking directly to a customer is an excellent opportunity to turn a disgruntled customer into a lifelong one.

## 6. AUTOMATE REVIEW GENERATION WITH SOFTWARE

Don't stop with in-office signage. After a customer walks out of your office, they're unlikely to spend the time to give you a positive review online. You can combat this reality by implementing ORM software such as RepCheckup. ORM software automates following up with customers to make sure they were happy with the service they received. They also encourage customers to share their experiences online via a review.

A text message or email a day after a visit to your office with a reminder to leave a review will result in more reviews.  One business owner increased the number of positive 5-star reviews on her Google My Business profile by over 50% in the first month she used RepCheckup. And that improvement occured without her having to spend any time asking her customers in person.

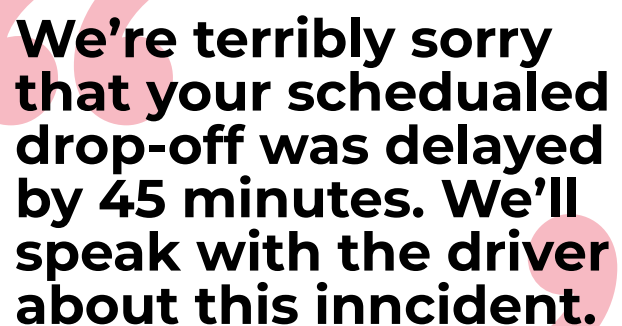## 7. CONTINUALLY MONITOR YOUR RATING AND REVIEW PROFILES

ORM software can also save you a tremendous amount of time monitoring your online profiles. Using software such as RepCheckup, you can get around-the-

clock monitoring for new reviews, with instant notifications sent anytime someone leaves a rating or review. This allows you to respond to any feedback – positive or negative – quickly.

Again, you can't control the information that's posted about you online. However, by continually monitoring your rating and review website profiles, you can keep a pulse on what's getting said about you. This puts you in a position to be ready to react should a negative review get posted.

## 8. CREATE PRE-APPROVED REVIEW RESPONSES

ORM software helps increase the number of reviews you have and decreases the time spent monitoring your profiles. But, you still need to respond to the reviews customers leave for you online. And yes, this includes both positive and negative reviews.
To speed up the process and make responding easy, create pre-approved responses. These are responses that anyone at the office to post on behalf of the organization. Keep in mind that the point of this step isn't to cut and paste the same canned response. The responses act as basic templates that change for each individual review.

> "We're terribly sorry that your schedualed drop-off was delayed by 45 minutes. We'll speak with the driver about this inncident."

> **Thank you for the review! We hope to see you and your family again next year on your summer vacation.**

> **We're glad the technician who was sent out was able to get the job done in a timely manner.**

### 9. SHOWCASE YOUR REVIEWS ON YOUR WEBSITE

Most customers will indeed see your online reviews before they get to your website. That's not enough, especially if you've got glowing online reviews. Given the trust customers have in reviews, you should take advantage of this. The best way is to display your online reviews is on your website.

The most straightforward way to execute on this is to create an entire page for your reviews. You should also include your ratings and reviews on product and service pages. Your homepage, if the design allows for it, is also a good spot for reviews. Remember, online reviews that no one sees are no good!

### 10. PROMOTE YOUR REVIEWS IN ADS AND ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Besides featuring your online reviews on your website, you should use them in your advertising campaigns and on social media. Resharing reviews is a good way to amplify their visibility. Heck, some organizations have even gone as far as featuring their negative reviews.

When it comes to promoting your reviews, there are a ton of options. You could make the review the star of your next ad campaign, or add them to your packaging. Or create a video that loops through your positive reviews from around the internet.

## Bonus:
### Consider publishing customer feedback

Finally, don't forget about the customer rating and review data that's not generated online. The internal customer survey data you collect can also play a part in your online reputation. It's another way to use customer ratings and reviews to better reflect your offline realities, online.

# Online Reputation Management Plan Template

The steps above are not the only thing you can use to guide your efforts. You can use this ORM plan template to help guide your efforts on an ongoing basis. It has everything you need to gain approval and buy-in at your organization.

## BEFORE YOU GET STARTED: Tips that make online reputation management easier

At this point, you're getting excited to begin your ORM efforts. Before you drop this guide and get started, there are a few tips I wanted to share with you to help make your life easier.

How to get more online reviews
The end goal for most online reputation management efforts is to get more glowing reviews. Unfortunately, achieving this simple goal is often made needlessly complex. In reality, there's a simple path you can follow to getting more five star online reviews.



*You'll find the Online Review Management Plan Template pages provided at the end of this booklet.*

## 1. PROVIDE A GREAT PRODUCT OR SERVICE

When it comes to getting more online reviews, providing a great experience is the best way to get them. There are a lot of organizations that forget a 5-star review is the result of a 5-star product, service, or customer experience.

Many organizations look to shortcuts and tricks in to get more reviews. This might work in the short term. In the long run, it never does. The best way to improve your reviews and reputation is to do things worth discussing.

## 2. JUST ASK

If you already have a great offering or experience, the next best way to get more reviews is to ask. Customers know that reviews are important. Yet only a small fraction of them will leave a review without getting asked to do so. Remember, they're as busy as you are.

Note that you don't even have to invest in a tool to do this. You can ask customers in person as they're checking out, finishing a session, or leaving the building. Don't be afraid to ask - it works well!

### 3. SEND EMAILS AND TEXT MESSAGES

Some of you may find asking customers for a review in-person a little awkward or even unbecoming. That's okay! There's a solution for you: use a software tool like RepCheckup!

Tools like RepCheckup allow you to send review requests via email and text message. Today, customers are comfortable with getting these types of messages. They also tend to respond at a high rate.

Next to asking in person, sending customers text messages has proven to be the most effective way to get reviews.

### 4. DON'T FORGET BLOGGERS AND INFLUENCERS

Your customers are not the only ones you want to court for a review. Local bloggers and industry influencers should also be on your radar. These "leaders" have blogs, channels, and followings that can help drive awareness and visibility for your business.

While the majority of customers may head to a review site to learn more about you, don't forget about blogger and influencer reviews. These endorsements can play an essential part in your ORM efforts. This is especially true once you've covered the basics.

### 5. GETTING ONLINE REVIEWS TAKES CONSISTENCY

Getting more online reviews is not a one-time effort or push. It takes ongoing, consistent efforts from your organization to be successful. You may want to take a shortcut or use a trick to get ahead, but these won't get you far.

You should stick to the basics. Provide a great product, service, and/or experience. Then don't forget to ask your customers to leave a review online - whether individually or using a software tool.

# How to respond to negative reviews

If you are in business long enough, you're going to get a negative review from a customer.

We're all human. We have bad days, make mistakes, and cause stress for others more often than we'd like to admit. When you, your staff, or your customers have a bad day, make a mistake, or miss the mark, the result is usually a negative review.

No organization is perfect. No one likes to hear they didn't do a great job. Or that their customer is not happy. It may feel good to give the reviewer a piece of your mind. Unfortunately, it'll do little to help and will actually hurt you far more than you could ever imagine.

Responding to negative customer reviews on review websites takes more than emotional control. It requires accountability, empathy, and action. Here's how the best handle responding to negative reviews when they occur.

## 1. OWN THE RATING OR REVIEW

You can be the best organization in the world and still have a negative review hit you at the worst time. We see it every week at RepCheckup. A great accountant, dentist, lawyer, or plumber gets a poor review from an upset customer.

Whether the customer has a valid reason for leaving a complaint or not should have no bearing on the way you should handle it. The fact is that the review is tied to your name and that makes it yours.
Ignoring it will be of no benefit to you. If you

get a new review – any kind of review – it is your duty to respond to and address it.

Yes, you should even thank those customers who leave a positive review.

## 2. EMPATHIZE WITH THE REVIEWER

Notice that I said "Own it" not "Fight it" or "Deny it." Showing empathy for the customer's experience with your organization goes a long way. Both with the upset customers and others who may come next and see the review.

The reason the customer leaves a review may have little (or nothing) to do with you. But you want to acknowledge the fact that they didn't feel they got the best treatment. You want to show them that you hold high standards and want to delight customers with a great experience.

> **We're terribly sorry that you had that experience with our receptionist. That's not indictative of our auto shop and how we value our customers at TireLot.**
>
> **If you choose to return to our business, please accept this offer of '4 Free Oil Changes/Tire Rotations' on us.**
>
> **-Greg, head mechanic/owner**

Mistakes do happen, and no one is perfect. Letting the customer know you hear them and you want to use this as a way to get better works well. It creates a bridge that usually results in the review getting taken down by the customer. I've even seen the rating or review updated to positive review after the customer's new experience.

## 3. TAKE THE ONLINE REVIEW OFFLINE

No one wins when you fight with a customer online. Negative reviews can be annoying and infuriating. When you respond, you have to remain calm and remove your emotions from the situation. Otherwise, you run the risk of alienating a customer. Oh, and hundreds of other potential customers who may catch your public fist-a-cuffs.

If there is something that needs action taken, you should handle it in private. It doesn't make sense to get more details about what happened in the response. The best way to do that is by contacting the reviewer via a direct message, email, or phone call.

## 4. MAKE IT RIGHT WITH THE REVIEWER

You know what happens when someone leaves a wound untreated. It festers and gets worse. Sometimes, it could be deadly.

Don't leave a negative review alone. It can turn into more negatives on other profiles or kill the good name of your organization. Once you are aware of the problem, do everything you can to make it right.

If you reach out to your customer, you may feel it's appropriate to make an offer to them to repair the damage or issue. Making it right with the customer gives you the best chance of them removing or updating the review.

Often, when you right a wrong, the end result is better than if the review had been positive!

## 5. FIX THE ISSUE OR PROBLEM THAT CAUSED A NEGATIVE REVIEW

One of my favorite pieces of advice from a business owner is that a problem never happens once. This is why you should use customer feedback and reviews to help guide positive changes. A negative review caused by a problem you don't solve will become another 1-star rating.

More often than not, negative reviews have to do with the customer's experience. An issue with the way staff treats a customer is the biggest reason they leave a negative. These are "people problems" that you can fix through better processes, procedures, and consistent coaching.

## 6. HANDLING NEGATIVE REVIEWS ARE A REALITY OF ONLINE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

Negative customer reviews are not going anywhere. It's one weapon every customer knows they have in their arsenal should they need to go to war. Even the best and biggest organizations in the world get negative reviews. They can only do the same thing as you: own it, fix it, and prevent the same issue from happening again.

# How to spot fake reviews

If you spend any amount of time managing your online reputation, you're going to come across fake reviews. Fake reviews are a growing issue. Since customers have more trust in reviews than ever before, there's more incentive for people to cheat.

It can be difficult to be 100% certain that a review is fake. This is especially true since fake reviewers and networks work to stay one step ahead of the rest of us. Fortunately, there are many red flags you can look for that point to a fake review.

## Let's take a look!

### 1. THE REVIEWER IS NOT A CURRENT CUSTOMER/ CLIENT/PATIENT.

When you think you have received a fake review, the first thing to check is whether this is an actual customer.

You might be able to view the reviewer's profile, which can help you determine the identity of the person. You can use the name and other details to see if it matches to someone in your records. This is a quick and easy way to find out if the person behind the review has actually done business with you.

If it turns out that the person has done business with you, then your next step is to respond to the review. You can then reach out in private to the reviewer and resolve any issues behind the review.

In some cases, the reviewer may not use their full or real name. The might use a handle, which makes hard to determine who is behind the review.
If you can't determine if the person has done business with you, you have a few options.
You can respond to the review and live to fight another day. Or, if you feel the review is fake, the best next step is to flag or report the review on the review website.

## 2. THE REVIEW ITSELF IS OVERLY DRAMATIC, OR DETAILED

It may seem counterintuitive, but reviews that are too specific should also raise a red flag for you. This can sometimes be to dissuade customers or make them want to do business.

Why? Reviews that go to the extremes of explaining an experience are trying to influence the decisions making of others. They go to these lengths because people think a long, in-depth, review does not get the scrutiny of short ones.

A study conducted by Max Woolf found the average length of a review on Amazon is 100-150 characters. One can assume that the length is similar on Google, Yelp, and other review sites.

For example, check out the review below. It's a great example of this. So, how do we

know this review has a high chance of being fake? Not only is the review above long, but it's also way too specific and dramatic. In combination, this trifecta is a giant red flag that points to a high likelihood of this being a fake review.

## 3. THE REVIEWER HAS MANY NEGATIVE OR POSITIVE REVIEWS FOR SIMILAR BUSINESSES

Let's continue with the example review above, from John Brian Irfan. We know it's long, specific, and emotional – but what other red flags can we find beyond the review itself?

One step that you'll want to take is to check out the review history of the account you suspect has left you a fake review.

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**J** **John Brian irfan**
8 reviews

★★★★★ 2 months ago

Please do yourself a big massive favor avoid this guy and the please he works in at nyu Langone the facility has all learner student doctors no one is a professional .this guy who I won't even call a doctor left me a scar for life on my hip that is long long 12 inches , he suppose to shave my hip femor and that was it instead he cut my trochanter placed 2 long screws 2"inches and now I can't even walk for 1bloack before I had pain walking bone to bone rubbing now he did shave my femor but screwed me with trochanter. He didn't tell me that he cut my trochanter and put screws before surgery and after surgery and took me 2 years after surgery cus I'm in pain dying and miserable losing my life and worst after this operation so much physical therapy . So I went to pick up my records and MRI scans after surgery and before X-ray I see 2screws in my trochanter bone . WTH!!! I hope god punish you for this!! He's Russian lier!! I seen another doctor he mention pain from screws and I have taken out with him he's older doctor experience and professional and I'm not even sure yut if the shaving operations is good bcus I just taken screws out and I'm recoverings from this operation with screws I couldn't even put my leg weight down it was pain trigger point. All the doctors there are training they have no experience I learned that after and the operate on ppl to learn and for experiment using ppl bodies. This guys is a fraud when I went back to him he told u still have pain?? And brought rest of the students in the room and told me what you want me to do cut you up again!!? You evil devil I hope god punish you . im suing him with the new doctor. He is no doctor robot face!! Please PLEASE RUN AWAY BEWARE OF HIM!

👍 Helpful?

You can gain further insight into the legitimacy of the review by looking at their other reviews. A few things to look for:

- **Has the reviewer left only positive or negative reviews?**
- **How many reviews have they left?**
- **How often do they post reviews?**
- **Are the reviews left for businesses in a central area, or are they spread across the country (or the world)?**

When you do this, you may come across a profile like our example with John Brian Irfan, who has left only negative reviews... Negative reviews that all read the same. And, most importantly, the majority of their bad reviews are for similar businesses.

**Take a look:** This profile is full of negative reviews for doctors in the same area of New York. More, this user has left negative reviews for two of the same doctor's locations. This should be a red flag. It's unlikely one patient visited several doctors in the same area in the last four months.



### 4. THE REVIEWER SPEAKS IN BROAD GENERALITIES

Chances are a review that is too general, but also negative and accompanied by a 1 or 2-star rating, is a fake. Think about the last time you had a bad experience and had to speak to a manager. Did you say "I'm upset because I had a bad experience" or "That waitress dumped boiling water on my lap"?

The same goes for a real negative review online. Odds are that they're going to address why they didn't find your service up to par. The same thing that goes for a positive review. If a person had a great experience, they're going to have specific points out what they found to be so great.
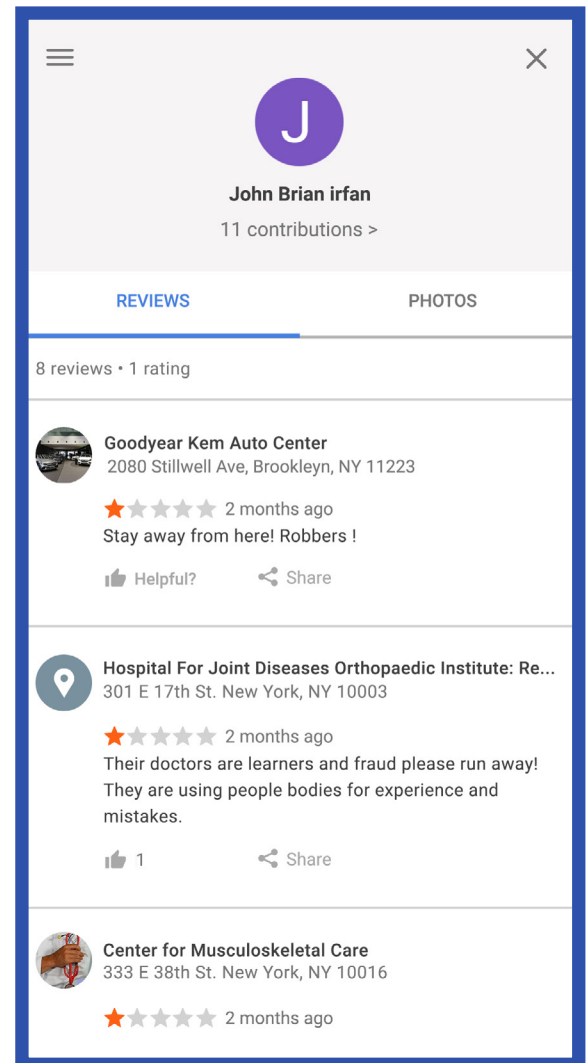
### 5. THE REVIEW IS POORLY WORDED OR WRITTEN

Another red flag that you want to look out for is the way an online review is written. Why? Many of the companies that sell fake reviews are in foreign countries where English is not the primary language. This often leads to the reviews they leave using poor English, including grammar and spelling errors.

In the example below, you can see that this review is long, specific, and dramatic. The writing is poor, and it doesn't make much sense.

It seems that the reviewer was also in a hurry, as the review darts from one sentence to the next. Since this is a positive review, one may not think its fake. But, after further investigation, it sure looks suspicious... especially since we confirmed that this person is not a patient.

## 6. THE REVIEWER'S ACCOUNT HAS NO PHOTO AND USES A HANDLE

The majority of people leaving reviews use their names and image on their profiles. This is because most people have nothing to hide. Thus, they have no reason not to use a picture of themselves and their real names.

If you get a new review, but you don't recognize the reviewer's name, and the reviewer has no profile picture, it's time to do some extra investigation.

On the same front, look out for profiles that use the name and likeness of a celebrity. We have come across many fake review profiles that use the names and headshots of newscasters, politicians, athletes, and even movie stars. These are dead giveaways that the account and the reviews from it are fake.

## 7. THE REVIEWER'S ACCOUNT HAS TOO FEW REVIEWS

If you get a negative review from a reviewer with only one review (yours), this profile may likely be fake. More often than not, one-time reviews get left with malicious intent. Or the intent to make an organization look better than they are.

## 8. THE ACCOUNT HAS A LOT OF NEGATIVE REVIEWS

Another way to spot a fake reviewer account is the number of negative reviews they've left. In general, people are more likely to leave a positive review. So finding an account where the reviewer has had nothing but negative experiences is a red flag. The same goes for profiles where all the reviews are negative, positive, or for organizations in a single industry.

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**Taneen Swindell**
1 review

★★★★☆  in the last week -

From a little girl, I've always loved life, so being active as always brought me so much pleasure. I admired my big brothers so much & I tried everything he did. Hoever, once warried with kids his life slowed down but not mines! I loved my mobility & used it EVERY SINGLE CHANCE I GOT! That was until October of 2015. As I was embarking on a higher level of employment, I noticed a pain in my left hip. Initially, I assumed the pain would subside, but I was wrong. After several months passed, I finally put my fears aside & went into my pcp. The news almost shook me to the core. He told me I had osteoarthritis & I would need hip replacement surgery. To my knowledge, this was an old persons disease... How did I get it? I was only 41 years old & no one connected to me had ever had it! So I went home to try and get rid of it "without" surgery. After countless hours of researching the web, the only information I came across was how to keep some of the pain at bay. The thought of this type of surgery really scared me!

## 9. ALL THE REVIEWS ARE AIMED AT ONE PERSON

Fake reviews often try to bring down a single person. These reviews tend to be angry, include personal insults, and may even contain curse words.

In these cases, it's important to check the name associated with the review. Then, chat with the person about details from review before doing anything further.

Ex-employees or even ex-spouses of employees often leave reviews like the one above. That's right – old employees who didn't leave on a high note and even an employee's ex-lover can drop a fake review on you!

## 10. THEY'RE SO FAKE, THEY'RE OBVIOUS

Now, this may seem like an obvious point to make – but many online reviews are clear fakes.

These reviews have nonsensical comments. Strange compliments. Even curse words aimed at an employee. The reviewer may also make outlandish claims without any evidence. Check out the review below to see what I mean. This reviewer left the review for shock-value. It's intended to dissuade a patient from making an appointment with this doctor.

After all, a doctor who "pays people in Craigslist to fake their reviews" and has "zero business ethics" shouldn't be trusted, right?

If this practice doesn't respond and handle the situation, it's possible that patients may go elsewhere. Given the other red flags, it's safe to say that the review above falls into the "fake online review" category.

**Leanne Wright**
1 reviews

★★★★★  11 months ago

This company pays people on craigslist to post reviews on yelp and google. Zero business ethics.

👍 2

**forplay da poet**
1 reviews

★★★★★  4 years ago

very nice neighbors, the doctor moes my snow.
;0

👍 Helpful?

# Your Online Reputation Management Checklist

Now, you are armed with all of this new knowledge about the importance of online reputation management. It's now time to take the next step and implement an online reputation management program at your organization. If you're ready to take control of your organization's online reputation, here's a checklist of items to complete to get you heading in the right direction.

## Administration

You know the total number of reviews you have across all of your profiles with reviews

You know your aggregate review rating across all profiles with ratings

Your profiles on major search engines (i.e. Google, Yahoo, Bing) are claimed and accurate

Your profiles on major review websites (i.e. Yelp, BBB, etc) are claimed and accurate

Your profiles on industry review websites (ex. Avvo, Healthgrades, HomeAdvisor) are claimed and accurate

Your profiles on major social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) are claimed and accurate

## Planning & Strategy

You have a strategy and plan in place for improving and increasing your reviews

You have a point person in your organization responsible for monitoring and managing online reviews

Staff has been trained on the importance of reviews and their impact on the business

## Review Monitoring

You are currently monitoring your profiles for new ratings and reviews on a daily basis

You are sharing online reviews left on profiles internally on a weekly, and or monthly basis

## Review Management

You are asking for reviews on a daily basis, either in-person and or using software tools

Your management team is meeting frequently to discuss customer reviews and put in place plans to improve based on them

Staff is rewarded for efforts and service that results in positive online reviews

You have pre-approved responses to positive and negative reviews that are left on your profiles

You have a process for addressing and escalating negative online reviews when they occur

## Review Promotion

All or some of your online reviews are clearly displayed on your website

You are promoting your reviews on social media, and other outlets such as YouTube

You are using your online reviews within your marketing and advertising campaigns

# Online Review Management Plan Overview

**COMPANY**

**PERIOD**

**OWNER**

**GOAL**

| PERFORMANCE METRICS | DESCRIPTION | TARGETS |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

**STRATEGY**

# Tactics

| OWNER | EXECUTION OVERVIEW |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |

# Deliverables

| OWNER | OWNER | OWNER | OWNER |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |

# Timeline

| MONTH 1 | MONTH 2 | MONTH 3 |
|---------|---------|---------|
|         |         |         |

# Budget

| CHANNEL | TYPE | ORGANIZATION | ONE TIME | MONTHLY | YEAR | PERCENTAGE |
|---------|------|--------------|----------|---------|------|------------|
|         |      |              |          |         |      |            |
|         |      |              |          |         |      |            |
|         |      |              |          |         |      |            |
|         |      |              |          |         |      |            |
|         |      |              |          |         |      |            |
| **TOTAL** |    |              |          |         |      |            |

# Milestones

| DATE | DELIVERABLE |
|------|-------------|
|      |             |
|      |             |
|      |             |
|      |             |
|      |             |
|      |             |