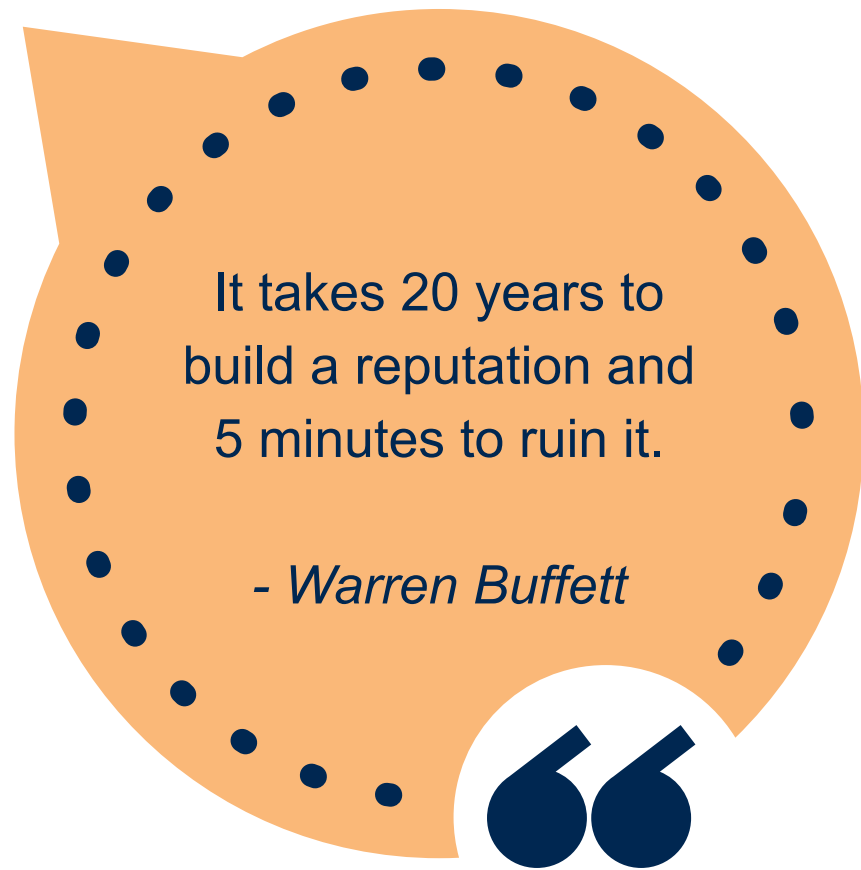


PinMeTo report:

Why you should care about reputation management

A report covering the current state of multi-location reputation management, emerging trends, and best practices.





What is online reputation management?

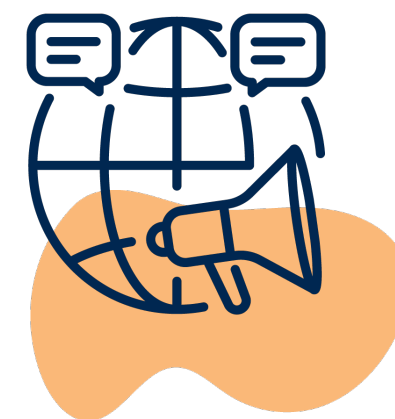
Online reputation management involves building and maintaining a reputable opinion of a brand on the online space.

Your brand's reputation is formed by two parts: what you say about your brand, and what others say about your brand. The key to managing reputation is to bridge the gap between these two by turning statements into conversations.

This report covers...



The importance of managing your reputation



The big trends in reputation management



Best practices

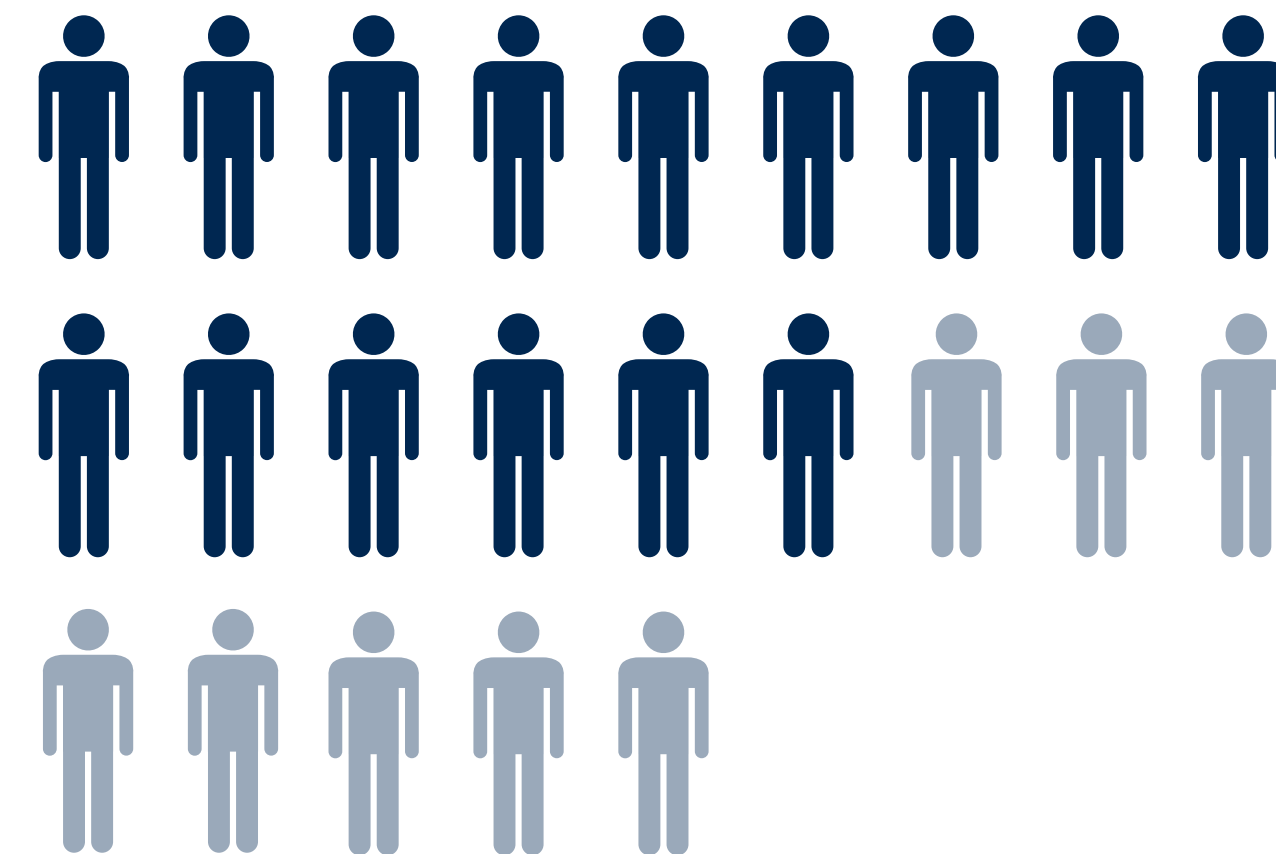
Why reputation management matters.

▮ The power of reviews

You can't measure brand reputation the same way you can tally up sales or count the likes on a social post, but the reputation of your brand will have a measurable impact on your brand's success.

The most obvious role that reputation plays in attracting customers is that good reviews will encourage potential customers to buy from your brand. A [2019 survey](#) showed that 82% of people read online reviews for local businesses before using them, and that on average customers read 10 reviews before feeling able to trust a business. [Another study](#) claimed that 94% of its respondents had avoided a business because of a negative review.

82% of people read online reviews for local businesses before using them.



Why reputation management matters.

Positive vs negative reviews

“Have a lot of reviews, and make sure they’re positive ones” – that’s not exactly a revolutionary concept, is it? Interestingly, though, you won’t want to have *only* good reviews, because while potential customers are wary of going to businesses with low ratings – [this 2019 study](#) says 47% of customers avoid businesses with fewer than 4 stars – they also might be suspicious of businesses with perfect star ratings.

Any business is going to get negative reviews, and it isn’t the end of the world when it happens – in fact, that’s where much of the “management” part of “reputation management” comes in.

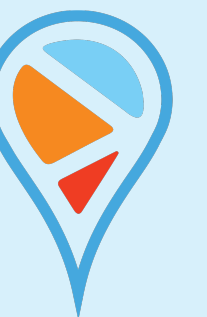
“A negative review doesn’t have to be a final statement on your business: it can be the beginning of a conversation.”

47%

of customers avoid businesses with fewer than 4 stars.



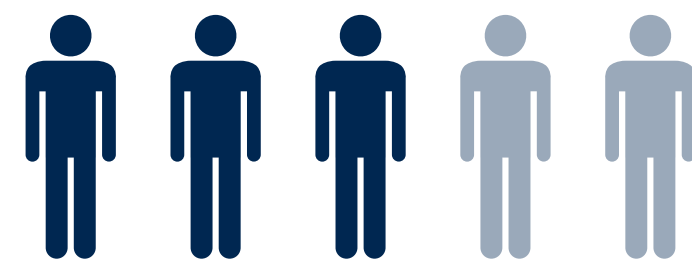
A [2016 report](#) made the more specific claim that 4.2 - 4.5 is the ideal star rating range for purchase probability. Does that mean that if you have a 4.8 star rating, you should lower the quality of your service and hope for a few low ratings? We can’t say – but let us know how it goes, if you try it!



Why reputation management matters.

Reviews for improved SEO

While potential customers are interested in reading others' experiences of your brand, they're also interested in reading what your brand is saying in response. [This 2019 survey](#) showed that, of people who read reviews, 97% of them read businesses' responses to reviews. In fact, [2018 data](#) shows that more than half of reviewers expect businesses to reply to reviews – though 63% of them say they've left reviews which have gone unanswered.



...more than half of reviewers expect businesses to reply to reviews



High-quality, positive reviews from your customers will improve your business's visibility and increase the likelihood that a potential customer will visit your location - *Google*



Plus, responding to reviews boosts your SEO. You don't have to take our word for it, [Google confirmed it in 2019](#):

While we're talking about SEO, it's good to know that it's not just your replies to reviews, but also the customer reviews themselves, that factor into your SEO. Google is famously secretive about how its algorithms work, but [a 2018 study](#) found that reviews make up approximately 15% of how Google decides to rank businesses in search results. [Another study](#) claimed that the second-most influential factor in determining if a business would turn up in Google's "Local Pack" was whether its reviews included the searched-for keyword.



Trends in reputation management.

Now that we've covered the current state of reputation management, let's take a quick look at some industry trends, so you can prep your multi-location brand for the future.

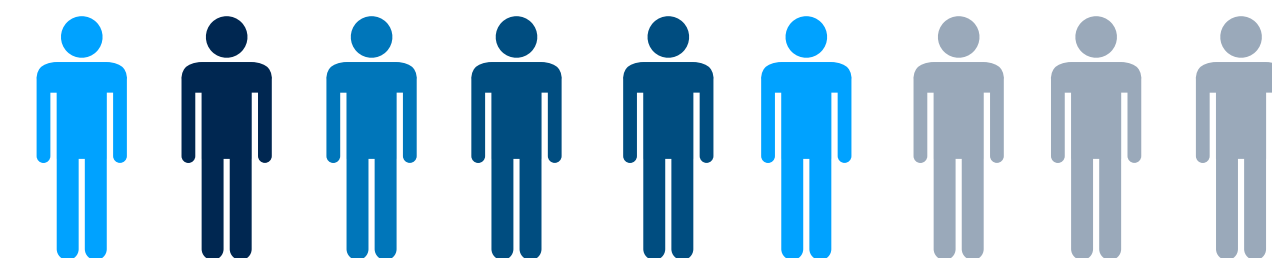
1

Google is dominating the review sites

A [2018 report](#) says reviews are shifting away from review-specific sites, like TripAdvisor, toward sites like Google and Facebook. [Another report](#), also from 2018, states that a majority of customers – 63% – claim that their review site of choice is Google.

So, in case you needed reminding, [make sure that you have Google listings for every one of your locations](#), and that those listings are accurate and frequently-updated.

63% of customers use Google as review site



2

“No-click” searches are increasing

As Google refines its results pages to show more relevant data, the SEO aspects of reputation management will become even more important. Before, potential customers had to click the link to your website to find info about your company. Today, “no-click” searches are increasingly common, where the searcher can get all the info they need solely from the results page – info like address, opening hours, reviews, even current offers.

Therefore, multi-location brands need to both make sure that they’re keeping their info updated on Google and also being proactive about responding to reviews, because potential customers are seeing it, even if they’re not clicking from Google onto brands’ sites or location listings.



3

Positive reviews are rising

It used to be thought that unhappy customers were most likely to leave reviews, but a 2018 study claimed that the motivation for leaving reviews was shifting from sharing bad experiences to sharing experiences, good or bad. This number has been rising, and we expect it to keep going up.

Though don't take this to mean brands giving bad experiences won't get bad reviews: that same study showed that 30% of reviewers will still take to their keyboards to leave a negative review after a bad experience.



Some expert advice.

One of PinMeTo's location marketing experts, Malin, answers some common questions about reputation management.



How can I improve my brand's damaged reputation?

The first step is to listen to your unhappy customers. What are the negative reviews about your brand saying? Are there things that keep coming up over and over again?

Once you've done a thorough review of what's not satisfying your customers and have started working to fix those issues, it's time to begin the conversation by replying to reviews, especially negative ones.

How should I respond to negative reviews?

You'll want to start by acknowledging that you've heard them, and you understand their issue. It's best to be personal in your response, so they don't get the feeling you're giving a copy-and-paste statement. Then you should tell them what you've done, or will do, to fix the problem. Basically, a good negative review response has a lot in common with a good apology: you'll want the offended party to feel heard, and to feel reassured that their bad experience won't be repeated.

How long will it take to fix my brand's reputation?

Reputation management is sometimes more like an art than a science, so you can't really count on a definite timeline. If somebody tells you "I can boost your star rating by 5 every month" then they're probably trying to sell you something. But don't let that discourage you. Though large-scale changes, like your star rating, can take time to happen, you'll see small-scale results as soon as you start working with reputation management. For example, replying to negative reviews can cause the reviewer to change their mind about your brand – and update their review accordingly.

Best practises.



Ask for reviews

Asking your customers for reviews is a good way to boost your review numbers while also ensuring that you aren't only getting customers who leave reviews after a bad experience. The best way to do so is to [provide direct review links](#).



Respond to reviews

As we've covered above, responding to reviews not only addresses your customers' concerns, but also has a positive impact on your SEO. [Here's our guide for how to respond to reviews](#).

Don't "gate," offer incentives, or ban negative reviews

"Gating" refers to the act of only asking happy customers to leave reviews. You might have encountered some form of it where you're asked by a company if you're happy with the service, and if you say you are then you're sent to a third-party review site. Google has banned gating, and [a 2019 study](#) found that gating doesn't have a big impact on star rating, but drastically lowers the amount of reviews companies receive.

In [2019](#), 24% of customers said they were offered incentives to leave reviews, like gifts, cash, or discounts – that's gating. This practice is actually [illegal](#) in some countries, including the US.

And, on the subject of illegal review practices, it's also illegal to contractually ban customers from leaving bad review. Yep, that's something [some companies have actually tried to do](#).



Take your customers from search to action.

For multi-location brands, managing lots of locations – each with lots of sources of reviews – can get really complicated really fast.

PinMeTo's reputation management tool will collect your reviews and let you manage them all from one place.

Want to see how we can help you maximize your online presence, while minimizing your effort?

Get your free demo today!

