



REPUTATION MANAGEMENT GUIDE

The Internet is an incredibly powerful and useful tool for businesses. But in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's especially important to tread carefully as you reopen in order to protect your business's reputation. Here are a few suggestions to help:

CHOOSE YOUR WORDS CAREFULLY

- The words you choose to use for your website and social posts can be interpreted politically in the current climate. It's important to consider unintended meaning before you post or go live. Review your language to try to envision how someone on either side of the reopening debate might interpret what you're saying and adapt your message accordingly.

SOCIAL MEDIA IS POWERFUL — USE IT WISELY

- It's always a good idea to keep an eye on what people are saying about your business on social media, so have a plan to frequently check for any fan comments, direct messages and reviews. When a response is warranted, do so promptly, politely and not defensively. Apologize if you need to, but don't get into online arguments. Wherever possible, deescalate the situation and take it offline to discuss. Be as honest and genuine as possible.
- Make sure your contact information is up to date on your social channels, as well as on your website, to avoid confusion among potential customers.
- However you choose to move forward with your business, make it clear in your social posts and be honest about your expectations for customers, as well as forthcoming about any new standards you are abiding by, in order to reassure them of their safety. Do not promise things you aren't actually doing, however. Be mindful that customers will make decisions based on the expectations you set. Customers have the opportunity to judge you—quickly and easily—online.
- And remember, the photos, videos and experiences your customers share online now can be halfway across the world in an hour, thanks to social media. What others see will influence whether they feel comfortable patronizing your business as well. Work to ensure the message you convey is a responsible one.

KEEP AN EYE ON REVIEW SITES TOO

- Those same experiences shared on social media will make their way to other review-based platforms as well, like Yelp, TripAdvisor and Google Reviews. Keep an eye on what's coming in, and as previously suggested, respond promptly and genuinely without escalating any situations. Leave a simple thank you for those who leave positive reviews. Remember, 90% of consumers say their decisions are influenced by online reviews, so you want to present your business as helpful and responsive.
- Word of mouth and testimonials are still the most trusted and used forms of marketing. Through mindful messaging and managing expectations, your customers can be your strongest advertising. Don't be afraid to ask them to share their positive experiences at your business. Their review, comment and post can be a powerful tool in your business recovery.