

An analysis on the importance and implementation of an efficient online reputation management strategy throughout a company

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ABSTRACT

A few years ago, businesses could protect their reputations by managing the information that the public knew about them through carefully timed news releases and competent public relations personnel. Online reputation management has been added to reputation management as a result of the emergence of social media. The internet has experienced significant growth throughout the years, and more and more individuals have joined the hub. As practically everyone spends a lot of time online, there is a good probability that they will comment about you or your company there. If the conversations remain positive, it won't be a huge problem whether they are positive or negative. But if it does, the alarm will start to sound. Your internet standing is crucial role in your business and brand's growth. Over the due course of time, online reputation management is the way by which companies can deal with customer attacks on social media. That is why companies have to organize and execute an effective online reputation management. The paper will explain the and also the paper will provide the details about existing literature about online reputation management, extent the existing knowledge.

Keywords: Social media, customer attacks, Reputation damage, online reputation management, customer empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Businesses face both great potential and great risk as more and more people use the internet as their major source of information and research. On the one hand, companies may now connect with customers through new, focused internet channels. One of the newest methods firms may use to interact with potential clients and consumers is search engine optimization. Other recent methods include pay per click (PPC) marketing and social media marketing. On the other hand, compared to radio or television, the internet is a far more open medium. Practically anybody or any group may make their voice or opinion known with little effort or expense. There are minimal defenses and no access hurdles for those who would utilize the medium to attack rivals, sabotage competitors, or flaunt grudges.

In many instances, these angry customers, bitterrivals, or disgruntled former employees succeed in gaining as much more visibility online the people or companies they seek to disparage. With this immensely and immeasurably growing internet technology, the need for online reputation management (ORM) is also growing accordingly. Online reputation management is the process of positioning, monitoring, measuring, talking and listening as the organization engages in a transparent and ethical dialogue with its various online stakeholders. ORM proactively influences what information people will find. Online reputation management is not about managing content in search engines though. It's also about managing negative business reviews andencouraging happy clients to contribute more positive feedback.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Online reputation is formed constantly and anywhere in the world through the discussions about any organization and its products or services. While constructive criticism is always welcome, damaging information published through various internet channels can be destructive to the organization. Such information is spread by dissatisfied customers but also by competitors. The worst thing is that sometimes the organization doesn't even know about such attacks. Organizations therefore need to be informed about what is spread through the Internet about them.

Online reputation of every organization can be managed. Online reputation management (ORM) combines marketing, public relations and search engines. ORM enables organization to protect and manage its online reputation by becoming actively involved in the outcome of search engines results. The goals of ORM are high rankings in the search engines and appearance on all positive associated websites. Thanks to that, organization can gain visibility and good publicity. The result is an increase in organization's overall positive internet presence. Three steps of ORM are,

1. To monitor and track what is being said online,
2. To analyze how the visible information affect organization 's brand and reputation,
3. To influence the results by participating in the conversations and eliminating negative voices.

According to Wijngaard and Boermans, every organization does not have an online reputation, but it can get one. They described ORM as anything that a consumer might write about Organization. It is important for three reasons: organization gets information, organization has a chance to react, and organization can take control of the discussions about itself. ORM is about making sure the world sees the organization for what it truly is. With ORM, organization can get more internet referrals, better return on its marketing efforts and more time to focus on running its business. ORM was created because the Internet doesn't always tell the whole story.

In summary, positive reviews are the sanction of successful business. In practice, however, Things are more complex. All comments, no matters if they are negative or positive, are beneficial to organizations. That's why it is important to encourage all customers to give feedback online. Even more, it is important when organizations respond to criticism to provide the context. To emphasize the impact of ORM, Reputation.com created ORM methodology. It is divided into seven steps. These seven steps lead organization to acquisition of a strong online reputation. Online reputation consists of what people believe about organization, which is why external Stakeholders' endorsements make up the cornerstone of a good ORM strategy. The main factors that affect online reputation of every organization are listed below:

1. Presence: Organization has to claim and optimize its internet presence, including social media profiles, and make sure all its contact information is up to date.
2. Online reviews: Organization has to determine the place where it is being reviewed and then Monitor its reviews and track the trends that appear.
3. Social media: Organization has to have an attractive presence on each of the top social media
4. Sites by including only the information that is most relevant to its customers. 4. Surveying: Organization has to set up digital survey kiosks to collect feedback from Customers.
5. Analysis: Organization has to track new data and make regular reports.
6. Benchmarking & Scoring: Organization has to measure how well its competitors manage their online reputations, so it can look for clues on how to improve its own online reputation.
7. Location alignment: Organization has to coordinate efforts between its business locations and Collect the data centrally.

People use internet tools because they need a quick and easy way to decide which organization Can be trusted. Done right, ORM should open up organization's schedule, not give it extra tasks to do. Time and money of organization that gains a positive online reputation can be saved by acquiring new customers. Customers' time

can be saved as well, since there is no need for them to seek out a new organization to trust. Further, they can be assured that their money was spent wisely.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The need for online reputation management arises and many companies are starting to be conscious about the need to manage and monitor what is happening on the online world concerning their brands recently, especially after the introduction of new technologies. Eventually this online environment is significantly paying role in allowing communities to participate, collaborate and play its part in shaping the process of businesses. But lot of companies do not truly recognize the importance of ORM. This lack of knowledge and resources, and the ignorance's can cause reputation damage, which may affect the overall outcome of the companies. The questions asked in this study are: how do companies have to organize their online reputation management well, in order to prevent the company of customer attacks? How can companies react adequate when a customer attacks occur, in order to defend the company reputation damage? And what does the company learn from this customer attack?

METHODOLOGY

The paper is a critical literature review about the existing literature in the field of online reputation management in dealing with reputation management on social media. Therefore, the scope of the literature review is to use possible theories that add value in dealing with social media. These possible theories come out of scientific articles, which have all their own perspective on the subject of online reputation management. The critical literature review will be strengthening by some additional real lifecases. The classification of the online reputation management theories will be carried out by a concept-centric approach. The concepts will be determined in order to organize the framework of the review. The critical literature review will end with an overall conclusion about how companies have to organize and execute an effective online reputation management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The reputation management changed the last decade by the rise of Social Media, because the concept reputation management has expanded with online reputation management. 'Historically, companies were able to control the information available about them through strategically placed press announcements and good public relations managers. Today, however, firms have been increasingly relegated to the sidelines as mere observers, having neither the knowledge nor the chance- or, sometimes, even the right – to alter publicly posted comments provided by their customers' (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Companies have no advance notice or time to reflect. When traditional battles were brewing, companies have at least a flicker of warning and a modicum of control over how events will unfold. When a new-style sniper attacks, they do not (Gaines-Ross, 2010). For now, the important role of the Social Media for the life of many people is one of the main reasons for companies to pay attention to this relatively new phenomenon (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). However, companies have to recognize that the consequences of the rise of Social Media are significant, especially for the reputation of companies. According to (Kietzmann et al, 2011); 'with the rise of Social Media, it appears that corporate communication has been democratized. The power has been taken from those in marketing and public relations by the individuals and communities that create, share, and consume blogs, tweets, Facebook entries, movies, pictures, and so forth'. This process is accelerated by mobile devices, which are of great importance for accessing these Social Media platforms (Anderson & Wolff, 2010). Now, almost everyone with a proper connection to the Internet has access to all kinds of information by the use of the World Wide Web; the international market becomes almost completely transparent. Therefore, costs in order to get access to information, called transaction- and intermediation costs, nearly disappeared. 'In addition to these reduced transaction and

intermediation costs, customers and suppliers adopting the internet for business may be able to overcome time, distance and location constraints, in international markets' (Pires, Stanton, & Rita, 2006).

The reduced transaction- and intermediation costs in order to get access to information have significant influence on the power of customers, called customer empowerment. Customer empowerment requires mechanisms for individuals to gain control over issues that concern them, including opportunities to develop and practice skills necessary to exert control over their decision making (Pires, Stanton, & Rita, 2006). The international market becomes almost transparent, due to the free access to information, which strengthens the customer empowerment. Hence, people have nowadays more mechanisms and practice skills to control their decision making. From a customer perspective, access to more information about the market is complemented by larger choice sets due to the global reach of the Internet, by the ability to exchange information and opinion with peers, to change their own perceptions and behaviour in a rapid and largely unchecked manner, and to define brand on their own (Morrissey, 2005). Besides that, consumers of media and marketing are now more intelligent, organizing, and more trusting of their own opinions and the opinions of their peers (Karpinski, 2005). It is through the use of search engines that most internet users find out about a particular web site from which they purchase.

ONLINE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT STAGES / CONCEPTS

In dealing with customer attacks, online reputation management can be divided into three stages.

Stages 1: Before a customer attack: prevention against a possible customer attack. Stages 2: During a customer attack: the reaction of the company on a customer attacks. Stages 3: After a customer attack: the learning and evaluation part after customer attack. In order to do a critical literature review about the knowledge in this area, a classification of existing online reputation management literature will be carried out by a concept centric approach.

Stage 1:

Social media is a two way street and if you are going to build a brand there, you would better be ready for rotten tomatoes as well as bouquets. Prevention is the best treatment (Gillian & Gianforte, 2012). Preparation is the basis; companies need to be trained in their new media tool kits so that they can sue them quickly and without friction. With prevention; companies do not have to react on an attack. So reputation damage will in that case certainly not happen. Most of the social media attacks can be diminished or averted if organizations simply prepare for the prevention methods. If a company is subject of customer attack, a well-organized social media policy defines clearly which employees have to react; the role and responsibilities are clear. In this way, companies can deal more efficiently with content of people in social media.

Stage 2:

If a company is subject of customer attack, the reaction is of great importance on social media. It is possible for companies to disable people of posting content at their platform. Deleting messages and attacks of customers are the worst kind of reactions companies can do. Companies have to interact with people by engaging in conversations. Even if a customer attack occurs, it is in most cases wise to engage in discussions about the reason of the attack and to find a possible solution for the attack. Companies must stay always in contact with the customers. Companies have to spend time to every complaint, but be careful of overreaction; companies always maintain and execute online reputation management freely.

Stages 3:

After a customer attack, a company has to learn and evaluate what went wrong and what went right in preventing and reacting on the customer attack. Companies have to change if it went wrong and have to

identify the cause of the attack. In this stage companies evaluate the reaction on the customer for weaknesses and potential improvements, demonstrate the willingness to change. If a problem is systemic, then consider addressing the problem and solution in public so that further customer attacks have been averted. Successful companies have learned to not only live with complaints but embrace them in the spirit of improvements.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the benefits of online reputation management based on analysis of related case studies. According to case studies, it is possible not only to monitor, but even to manage organizations online reputation. Today with the rise of social media; reputation management has been expanded with online reputation management. Now days, when people launch an attack on social media, companies have no control and reputation damage can be the result. Reputation damage may have significant influence on the overall results of companies in the future. That is why companies have to organize and execute an effective online reputation management. The paper provided the management of companies can effectively organize and execute their online reputation management. Overall, online reputation management is a new field of science, in which knowledge is relatively scarce. New knowledge and perspectives have to be generated in order to obtain a more sophisticated and complete view in reputation management. Companies always has to rethink their reputation management and knowledge; by changing the mindset, adopting new tools, and taking the principles of reputation, companies can protect their business from the worst of the snipers attacks in the future.

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