Online Reputation Management (ORM) Guide
“Engage with Customers | Convert them to your Brand Ambassadors”

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Online Reputation Management (ORM) Guide

Your customers and users will continue to talk about your brand and your competition. To listen or not is your choice! How do you do that? Moreover, how about turning your customers into your brand ambassadors? Interested? Check out the followign articles!

1. Beware of the Unhappy, Web Savvy Customer
2. How to Nurture Your Online Reputation

All of these articles in this guide were originally published at Wall Street Journal India by Chief Mentor: Pradeep Chopra
Beware of the Unhappy, Web Savvy Customer  
(Originally published at Wall Street Journal: Chief Mentor)

I once had a problem with ICICI Bank. I visited the branch three times to get it solved but nothing happened, even after three months. I tweeted about my case and the problem got solved in two days. The branch manager even visited my home to resolve the issue.

Here is the tweet that got their attention:

“ICICI bank’s customer service sucks. 3 visits to the branch and the problem is still there. Worst, they don’t even care about calling back.”

In December of 2007, my Apple Macbook started giving me problems. Plastic was chipping off near the keyboard and the battery would suddenly stop functioning. I gave it to an Apple service centre in Delhi. They promised to resolve the issues in three to four days but couldn’t, even after 15 days and despite my frequent follow-ups. They wouldn’t even take responsibility for the delay. Finally, I wrote a review on MouthShut.com and sent it to the head of Apple in India.

Looking at the popularity of the review – today it has a view count of more than 58,000 – he offered me a new laptop. However, even with the new machine the problems persisted. Finally Apple had to refund my money, even though I had been using the computer for two years.

These two personal experiences teach us two things:

1. The consumer really is king today – With the tools like Twitter, review sites and other social networking sites, an ordinary consumer has
got many easy options to let hundreds or even thousands of others know his opinions and experiences.

2. **Brands can’t ignore their customers** – More and more people are going to express their experiences about products and services with the other people in their lives. Brands need to monitor and leverage the new tools and technologies to continuously serve and satisfy their customers. They must start to listen and take responsibility.

According to a [report by SMC Capitals](http://www.digitalvidya.com), there are over 3.1 crore active Indian users on social networking sites. According to a report on retailing by FICCI’s B2B directory website, over 60% of India’s population is under the age of 30, which means they are more likely to take their thoughts and complaints online.

As these numbers are only expected to grow, keeping track of and caring about what’s being said about a brand in the digital world is increasingly important. Companies can spend millions of dollars to promote their brands, yet a single negative post can damage their reputations.

Earlier companies only had to worry about bad publicity in conventional media such as print. Today, the power of media also lies in the hands of regular people. The shift from **conventional media** to **social media** makes every individual a potential journalist.

The key to transforming customers’ experience in this open world is ‘listening’. With tools such as **Google Alerts** and **Twitter Search** a brand can continuously monitor conversations about it. If you really want to leverage the opportunity of social media to transform your customer’s experience, start to listen before it’s too late.

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How to Nurture Your Online Reputation?
(Originally published at Wall Street Journal: Chief Mentor)

Continuing on my previous article ‘Beware of the Unhappy, Web Savvy Customer’, in which I talked about the importance of managing your online reputation, I would like to leave you with few ways to manage and nurture your reputation in the digital world.

I would like to start by again directing your attention to ‘listening’, which is the most important part of online reputation management, or ORM. Without listening you can’t begin your journey to build your reputation online.

Fortunately, there are numerous tools such as Google Alerts and Twitter Search, which simplify the job of monitoring the conversations about a brand. For examples at Digital Vidya, we track conversations related to us by searching for keywords such as digital vidya, digitalvidya, social media workshop, and Pradeep Chopra using these tools.

First setup the structure to monitor conversations about your brand, your competition, key executives and employees. Then your job is to take timely and appropriate actions according to what you find.

Here is a list of the key tactics to build and nurture a company's reputation.

1. Don’t be Defensive:
Defending a mistake when someone genuinely expresses his or her dissatisfaction is the worst thing to do. A dissatisfied customer really wants the experience of ‘being heard’ more than anything else. My experience is that the moment we acknowledge our mistake and promise to take action, the person who has expressed that concern gets quiet. If you can’t do that then be prepared to encounter a never-ending war of words. The smart thing to do is respond promptly and take responsibility.

Nestlé was recently attacked by Greenpeace which posted a video clip suggesting the key ingredient of Nestlé’s KitKat Bar (palm oil) is a leading cause for the destruction of rain forests and deaths of orangutans. Nestle tried to curb this video but instead it got a growing number of people who raised their voices against it.

2. Be Easy to Reach:

If you have a clearly communicated and easily approachable channel for your customers to reach you, the chances of them contacting you first for the resolution of their problem is higher. Direct 2 Dell, an online community by Dell to have direct exchange with its customers is a classic example. In the India, ICICI Bank is doing a good job of creating a similar channel through its ICICI Bank Care account on Twitter.

3. Be Involved in Social Media:

Given that more and more people are going to express their opinions on social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter, it is important that a brand is actively engaging with its customers on these channels. It will help the brand in fulfilling various objectives like, listening, resolving a problem and leveraging search engine optimization, or SEO.

4. Use Satisfied Customers as Brand Ambassadors:

Your satisfied customers are the best people to help you build a strong reputation online. Although you should always be on your toes to deal with negative conversations about your brand, you also have to encourage satisfied customers to spread their positive opinions. This would include highlighting live testimonials on various social media.
5. Leverage Search Engine Optimization:

SEO is the process of getting your website or other online channels ranked high on search engines when people search for relevant terms related to your organization. A brand can leverage SEO to get better results about it ranked high on search engines. However, please note that SEO can help only when you employ the other tactics successfully.

My friend Arjun Anand, the founder of Verist Labs, captured the essence of SEO in ORM through his recent post on Facebook:

“The difference between SEO guys doing ORM as opposed to ORM guys doing it is that SEO guys try to hide negative comments whereas ORM guys resolve them.”

For a brand to do a good job in successfully executing these tactics, it needs to assign these responsibilities to their communication and PR teams. It also needs a simple but documented process which includes principles and policies on how to communicate with people.

I hope you now understand the importance of listening about your brand and taking care of the conversations so as to continuously transform the experience of your customers. Feel free to share your experiences, post your questions and opinions, as comment and I will be glad to hear and respond to them.
Please keep in mind that your customers will continue to talk about you and your competition, the choice of listening to them is yours.

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