

How has increased use of web sites by firms caused image management to increase i...

[Business](#), [Management](#)



The emergence of globalized trade, increase in foreign investment and cross-border transactions have put many businesses under pressure to find innovative ways to continue to market their products and services.

Increasingly, companies use social media websites (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. ) in their marketing, recruiting, relationship-building and communication efforts. The world has embraced Websites as a versatile communication tool. The Internet has become the information superhighway for the buying public.

As a result, the Internet has become the most powerful selling tool with millions of people using the Internet to search for products and services, small businesses can penetrate other markets at a fraction of the cost of traditional marketing methods, many online businesses have therefore resorted to the use of engines, blogs, pop-up ads and other online marketing tools to let customers know about new products or services as well as provide information relevant to their respective industry. The benefits of this strategy are two fold.

Marketers can effectively heighten brand awareness for relatively new products on the market whilst strengthening customer relationships, with shorter time frames. Internet has become popular reaching to the common man; it has made it possible for the people to access the websites or the web pages from the comfort of wherever they are. Because internet is available to all and sundry, information about companies thus spread very fast.

Internet user the sources of information Image A corporate image refers to how a corporation is perceived.

It is a generally accepted image of what a company stands for. Marketing experts who use public relations and other forms of promotion to suggest a mental picture to the public. Typically, a corporate image is designed to be appealing to the public, so that the company can spark an interest among consumers, create share of mind, generate brand equity, and thus facilitate product sales.

Every organization has a corporate image, whether it wants one or not. When properly managed, a company's corporate image will project positively reating the desire for clients to patronize whatever is being offered by such a company. Everything an organization does, and does not do, affects the perception of that organization and its performance, products, and services. These perceptions affect its ability to recruit the financial resources, people and partnerships it needs to attain its goals and objectives. Corporate image is a major strategic concern that can have a direct impact on the level of success the organization achieves through its other marketing and management efforts.

Since the World Wide Web has become one of the mediums of projecting the image of companies, companies have increasingly paid more attention to online brand management. Online brand management Companies are embracing brand reputation management as a strategic necessity and are increasingly turning to online monitoring in their efforts to prevent their public image from becoming tarnished. Online brand reputation protection can mean monitoring for the misappropriation of a brand trademark by fraudsters intent on confusing consumers for monetary gain.

It can also mean monitoring for less malicious, although perhaps equally damaging, infractions, such as the unauthorized use of a brand logo or even for negative brand information (and misinformation) from online consumers that appears in online communities and other social media platforms. For example a simple message on a social media platform about the solvency state of a bank is enough to run that bank down whether or not the information is true.

Image management has as first goal to get negative results off of the first page of web pages, as it is popularly known, ' you cannot make a first impression twice', image management therefore seeks to project a positive impression on customers even at a glance of a company's name on net.

Internet image management is a methodology that assists companies in the capture, comprehension and acting on of negative web-based conversations, discussions and publications associated with their business, services, products or brand that have occupied places on the web space.

It is about curbing the negatives about the company by heightening the search engine visibility of the positives and taking other proactive measures.

It is also about ensuring that public opinion is in the company's favor and that it enjoys a positive brand image. Companies manage their reputation usually by using Micro Sites, Social Media, Videos and other media, Business profile linking, Blogging, RSS feeds and Wiki-Site . Also Search engines like Google, Yahoo, and Bing are where the corporate battles for consumers are being waged on a daily basis.

The race to claim a top ten/first page ranking on Google, for instance, now draws an ever increasing slice of company advertising budgets as they reduce spending on less efficient and untraceable advertising venues like traditional media. . Companies that cannot afford the expenses required to push themselves up in search engines rankings are increasingly resorting to more underhanded methods to knock down the image and reputation of their more well-funded competitors.

These methods include smear campaigns; the spreading of false rumors, misleading information, and anything else that may damage a company's image to the point where it puts doubt in the minds of consumers considering the purchase of that company's products and services. A well run campaign will continue to add negative commentary over time to make it appear that there is some sort of growing movement against the targeted company. The commentary can be posted on blogs, forums, in articles, or any place else where it can be seen by consumers on the internet.

Search engine optimization of the negative content can draw more viewers to it and increase its " believability" regardless of it being poorly written or its inaccuracies. The damage done, those consumers are then steered toward the sponsors of the negative content. It is undeniable that these types of campaigns put a company's revenues, brands and reputation at risk and must be countered immediately with a reputation management defense plan because campaigns of this nature rarely stop on their own volition.

Conclusion Companies cannot afford to ignore content intended to damage their brands and their reputation whether that content appears to be generate professionally or by regular posters on the internet. Attacking that content with an organized and efficient strategy is by far the best way to protect a company's image and its brands online especially because more and more people all over the world get to know companies virtually through the internet and the world wide web.