



# The Complete Online Reputation Playbook



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# Introduction

**What's the first step you would expect a prospective client to take when considering working with your firm? If you answered "search for us online," then you'd be right.**

It's 2023, which means that not only does the vast majority of buyer research take place online, but prospects are actively pursuing information on your brand in the form of online ratings and reviews from people like them — prospective clients or employees that have actually worked with you in the past. What's more, the online search powers-that-be (ahem, Google) are weighting their algorithms to prioritize "consumer-generated content" — ratings and reviews that they deem to be credible and relevant representations of your brand.

## What does it all mean?

Your online reputation plays a significant role in your firm's growth, impacting your effectiveness to attract new clients. It can also greatly influence your internal employee staffing efforts, helping you bring in highly qualified, experienced professionals to augment your team (and improve your business results).

Want to ensure your firm has the stellar online reputation it needs to see success? **This step-by-step playbook** can help.

## Actively manage your brand's presence on major ratings sites.

Make sure your firm has a presence on the major ratings sites where prospective clients and employees do their research. Here is a short list to help guide your efforts:

### Getting Started

These sites have the highest domain authority and will likely be the first ratings or reviews that populate when your brand is searched for online



**Google:** You may not be surprised to hear that the most powerful search engine in the world has a strong preference for serving up Google-owned content in search results. Which is why we always recommend that your online reputation strategy starts with claiming and managing your business' Google reviews. **Add or claim your Google My Business listing** to gain access to your firm's Google profile and manage reviews.



**Glassdoor:** This site changed the game for employers by allowing staff to leave anonymous reviews about their work experience. Glassdoor reviews are considered highly credible and tend to show up on page 1 when searching for a brand online. Given the high value that Google places on these ratings, it would be a mistake to assume that these reviews do not also influence a business' decision to work with you. **Glassdoor's Free Employer Account** gives you the access you need to manage your employer profile.



Company Reviews help job seekers make informed decisions about whether or not to apply for a job at a particular company. Employee contributions—reviews, salaries, and photos—to these pages are instrumental in educating job seekers who are looking to start a new career or catch a glimpse into the day-to-day experience of working for a given employer.



## B2B Third Party Rating Sites

Buyers (like your clients) have a smaller playing field when it comes to finding credible, validated reviews from their peers. Many online rating sites specialize in serving other audiences, leading to the rise of rating sites that specifically focus on informing purchase decisions made by buyers of business services.



G2 started as an online rating website for business software. Since then, G2 has expanded its focus area to also target feedback from clients of business service providers



ClearlyRated provides an online rating site that translates feedback gathered via survey into searchable online ratings. While star ratings on [clearlyrated.com](https://www.clearlyrated.com) do require your firm to survey clients through ClearlyRated's survey program, there are many benefits including a high quantity of validated ratings.

## Create a process for responding to reviews — both positive and negative ones.

Once you have identified the various online rating and review environments where you will manage your brand's presence, it's critical to build a process for responding to those reviews.

### Step 1: Determine who will respond to feedback

Set up notifications to help your team monitor activity on each platform. If a site is not enabled with notifications then assign a monitoring schedule to a member of your team to ensure that you're not letting a review sit for more than a couple of business days.

### Step 2: Monitor reviews (and set up notifications)

Understand how to respond to reviews on each of the websites you have committed your brand to. Which members of your team own which logins? What steps need to be taken to address a review on a given site? Mapping this out from the start will help to speed up the process when a review comes in.

### Step 3: Have baseline scripts in place

Have baseline scripts in place for responding to positive and negative reviews. Multiple scripts for each scenario are helpful to prevent you from sounding like a robot. Ensure that scripts have been approved ahead of time so that the team member tasked with responding feels that they have the autonomy to publish without waiting for approval (quick response time is key!).

### A few messaging best practices include:

- **For positive reviews:** thank the reviewer for the time they took to provide a review and for their partnership.
- **For negative reviews:** be sure to address the client's concerns, offer to remedy the issue and, most importantly, tell them you are taking steps to prevent future mishaps. If possible, you may try to coordinate an offline conversation to ensure their problems are adequately understood (and resolved).

### Step 4: Communicate feedback internally

Relay the message to the appropriate members of the internal team. This step is critical to improving your online reputation efforts. If feedback is never translated back to the field than underlying issues are bound to go unresolved. Make sure you are communicating feedback internally!

## Ask your clients for online reviews.

One of the best kept secrets about online reputation management is the power of proactively asking for reviews from the people you serve – and not just the people you know are happy. It can be unnerving to ask for a “favor” – but your likelihood of building a library of ratings and reviews increases dramatically when you are regularly communicating the importance of that feedback to meeting your business goals.

### Step 1: Make it easy for your clients

Ensure you're making it as easy as possible for clients to review you on the sites that matter the most. It's best to provide a direct link to the site you would like that person to leave you a review and offer them a short preview of the experience (how many questions will it be, how long will it take, etc.). Additionally, it can be helpful to offer up a few prompt questions to get them thinking: What are they happy with?



**A very important point:** It is critical that you do not avoid asking for public feedback out of a **fear of receiving negative reviews**. It is far riskier to leave your online reputation to chance than it is to proactively ask for feedback. It is also risky to **ONLY** ask for reviews from raving customers. [Click here to learn all about review transparency, or review gating.](#)

## Step 2: Request feedback regularly

Request online feedback on a regular cadence – quarterly or monthly is best. Aim for a steady drip of ratings and reviews to be published across your online profiles rather than a surge-then-silence dynamic. Recency of reviews is a component of credibility that will work in your favor as prospective clients research your firm. But be careful to not inundate the same people with ongoing requests. Segment your ask so that clients are only being asked to leave a review once per year.

## Step 3: Thank your reviewers

In addition to responding to reviews publicly, be sure to personally reach out to each reviewer (if their identification is available) and thank them for leaving you feedback. Make sure they know how much you appreciate their help building your brand's online reputation.

## Step 4: Get the whole team involved

Get the field team involved. Make sure they know that they have permission to invite reviews from clients that they work with every day. Invite them to listen for satisfaction cues that might make for a more successful ask, and offer an email script for them to utilize.

## Invest in the client experience.

This may seem obvious, but your brand's reputation online is really just an extension of the client experience at your firm. If you want to cultivate a high volume of good ratings and reviews, it's critical you take a hard look at how you are servicing, meeting, and ideally exceeding the needs of your clients.

### Ask Yourself These Questions

- Do clients feel their goals are being met?
- Are you handling detractor responses in a timely manner?
- Are you prompt at responding to client requests?

One of the best ways to improve in the client experience at your firm is by taking steps to measure that experience. Gaining a realistic understanding of the perceptions held by your stakeholders about the service you provide is the first step towards building a service worth talking about. Consider surveying your clients annually (at least) to measure satisfaction and get ahead of retention risk. Utilize a universally recognized standard of measurement like

the Net Promoter® Score (NPS®) to **benchmark against other firms**, and ask a brief set of drilldown questions to identify areas for improvement.

**NPS survey question**

How likely are you to recommend our company to a friend or colleague?

Not Likely Extremely Likely

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Integrating these small touches into the client experience can significantly improve satisfaction with your firm and, most importantly, your shot at garnering positive online reviews and ratings.

### **Address issues before they become negative reviews.**

Nothing can disrupt your day like an unexpected negative review on an important rating site. When the worst inevitably does happen (it does, and it will), you will ideally have a plan in place to quickly respond to and, if possible, take action on critical feedback. But we would be remiss if we didn't also encourage you to take steps to proactively address issues before they ever land on a public website.



Of course, proactively addressing issues requires that you know they exist in the first place. As you've seen from earlier strategies in this playbook, a satisfaction survey program can be your best friend here. Beyond a formalized survey, train your team to recognize signs of waning satisfaction and encourage a reach-out when these signals appear.

Perhaps a client becomes sporadic or inconsistent in their communications, or misses a scheduled meeting. More nuanced, you may also pick up on general apathy to next steps and action plans. Whatever the common warning signs are, discuss them internally, train your team to be sensitive to them, and give them permission to inquire about the overall health of the relationship. Proactively addressing issues offline can help prevent a damaging negative review, and may even foster **more long-term loyalty** in the end.

#### **Common warning signs of client dissatisfaction:**

- Sporadic or inconsistent communication
- Missing scheduled meetings
- Hesitation to next steps or action plans
- Voices complaints more frequently
- Compares you to competitors

## **Shine a spotlight on the feedback you receive.**

It would be a mistake to assume that the only “plays” that matter when it comes to online reputation are the ones that help you cultivate ratings and reviews online. In fact, what you do with your feedback once it has been published (or gathered internally as a part of a satisfaction survey) is equally important to the overall health of your firm’s reputation.

**One of the most costly mistakes we see from businesses of all shapes and sizes is assuming that the only purpose for online ratings and reviews is to provide information to someone who has searched for your brand online.** No doubt, that’s a powerful use case for this type of client-generated content, but it’s by no means the extent of the value that this feedback has to offer! It’s up to your firm to make sure that you are shining a spotlight on the feedback you receive and drawing attention to online ratings and reviews not only internally, but with your prospects at large. Here’s why:

- Making noise about client feedback — whether online or via survey — reinforces the value placed on the voice of the people you serve. Your team will not only understand that they should care, but they will see that the business cares and invest more wholeheartedly into the exercise of building a client experience worth celebrating.
- Showcasing client reviews throughout your marketing and sales deliverables validates the importance that you are placing on the experience of the people you serve, while also providing critical information that your prospects are hungry for. Your ability to back up claims of service excellence with tangible, credible proof is a powerful opportunity to set your firm apart from the competition.





**“Marie was quick to respond to any issues or questions and the process was well executed.”**

- Sample client testimonial



**“The team is always professional, very nice to work with and do a thorough job in providing what we need - for recruitment and temporary staffing**

- Sample client testimonial

## Here are a few ideas for building momentum and creating visibility with your client feedback:

### Step 1: Recognize feedback internally (regularly)

Set a cadence (monthly, quarterly, etc.) to round up the feedback your brand has earned online and through surveys, and share it with your entire organization. Recognize any team members or specific actions that garnered customer praise.

- Call attention to any areas where there might be room for improvement.
- Consider setting service improvement goals based on the feedback you receive — both as an organization and for individual team members.

### Step 2: Share reviews publicly

Build a communications calendar to spotlight positive reviews that have been shared with your firm, either online or through your survey efforts.

- Share your clients' words on social media. Consider posting a review as an image (on your favorite social media channels) and link back to the review site where the review is housed.
- Highlight reviews and testimonials in company e-newsletters — be sure to share with your existing clients as well as your marketing database!
- Find opportunities to showcase client feedback throughout the in-office or remote experience— think screensavers, wall posters, zoom backgrounds, and slides at company-wide meetings.

### Step 3: Use feedback as “proof points”

When working to earn a new client, offer up client feedback as “proof” of the experience that a prospect can expect to have with your firm.

- Link to online ratings or review sites from proposals and in your email signature.
- Offer up reviews and testimonials that speak to the specific problem that you will be helping the prospect solve.
- Demonstrate the breadth and depth of your reputation by showcasing the total number of reviews and accompanying ratings across sites that they care about.

# Related Resources

**Blog:** [Online Reputation Management 101: Protecting Your Brand's Image](#)

**Blog:** [Learn 7 Things to Know About Doing Online Reviews Right](#)

**Podcast:** [The 5-Star Experience and How to Achieve It](#)





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