

TOURISM BUSINESS ESSENTIALS



ONLINE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

*The essential guide for tourism businesses on how to
manage online customer reviews.*

Online Reputation Management

This guide explains how tourism operators in British Columbia can take control of, manage, and generate more business from online reviews and social media commentary. As a tourism operator, you will learn where reviews are being posted, when and how to respond to both positive and negative reviews, which measurement tools are available to determine how your tourism business rates online, and how to manage your online profiles to ensure information is current.

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Second Edition, September 2014

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Online Reputation Management Guide

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Introduction to Online Reputation Management

Just How Popular is Social Media?

Do you ever “Google” your name? It used to be considered a vain practice, but these days it makes good sense. People regularly search other individuals online—before a meeting, an interview, even a date. If they Google yours, you want to know what comes up, because it will shape their impressions of you.

Increasingly, profiles on social networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter appear within the results at the top of name searches. If you are active on these channels, you have control over some of this content—but not all of it. Some content is posted by others. It is probably important to you that the information is accurate and reflects you in a positive light. If any negative information appears, you undoubtedly want to address it.

This is online reputation management, and it’s crucial for your business. Online reputation now has a direct bearing on whether potential customers will purchase your product or service. The information people find will have a direct bearing on whether or not they purchase a business’ products or services.

Consumer reviews, in particular, can make or break the reputation of a business. These days, there are reviews on everything from cars to dentists to university professors to potential employers.

Reviews are especially popular in the travel industry. Why? Unlike a car, which you can take for a test drive, trips are often booked sight unseen. And there is a lot riding on trips, including money, time and relaxation. In the past, travellers may have been misled by glossy photos in brochures and exaggerated descriptions on websites. They want to be confident they are making the right choice. So they turn to the source they trust most: other travellers.

Social media facilitates this process by providing platforms for consumers to exchange information and advice with other consumers, via TripAdvisor, Facebook, Twitter, Yelp or another channel.

As a business, you have likely experienced the joy of a glowing online review and the sting of a negative online comment. At times you may feel frustrated or helpless; at other times grateful. In either case, the effect is amplified because a lot of social media commentary is public and, in some cases, permanent.

Whether positive or negative, social media feedback is a valuable source for guiding improvements and can be a powerful tool for spreading the word about a business.

Online reputation management is about adapting to changes in the way people research travel and share experiences online. It is the process of monitoring and engaging on the social web to drive higher awareness, customer satisfaction and revenue. And it is about harnessing the powers of social media to get customers talking about and recommending your business.

This guide will walk you through the steps involved in taking control of your online reputation.

Online Reputation Management

The process of monitoring and engaging on the social web to drive higher awareness, customer satisfaction and revenue to your business.

Just How Popular is Social Media?

Just How Popular is Social Media?

According to an eMarketer survey, nearly one in four people worldwide used social networks in 2013. That equates to 1.73 billion people, an increase of 18% over 2012. Of Internet users, 68% used a social network at least once per month in 2013. That figure is predicted to rise to more than 75% by 2016.¹

Canadians are some of world's most frequent users of social networking sites. According to a Media Technology Monitor survey, almost 7 in 10 Canadians used social media at least once a month, and 63% of these people used it daily. Facebook is by far the most popular social networking site, utilized by 93% of active social media users in Canada.² Though only one in five respondents reported using Twitter, this was an increase of 80% over the previous year.

At the same time, review sites continue to gain in popularity every year. According to a 2013 TripAdvisor survey, 69% of travellers worldwide say they visit travel review sites as part of trip planning.³

A Few Definitions

Before we get started, a few definitions.

Social media refers to web-based and mobile applications used for social interaction and the exchange of user-generated content.

Social networking is the act of using social media.

User-generated content is content—primarily text, photos and videos—created and shared by consumers as opposed to marketers, journalists, experts and other paid professionals (although they contribute to social networks). **Engagement** refers to interacting with users and followers on social media channels.

For the purposes of this guide, social media channels are divided into two categories: **review sites** such as TripAdvisor and Yelp, and **social networking sites** such as Facebook,

Twitter and Google+. Other social channels include blogs, forums and imagery-based sites, including YouTube, Instagram and Pinterest. By **communities**, we refer to users of a social networking site or review site, including fans, followers and members.

Googling refers to the act of entering keywords and phrases into Google's search engine to find information. The term also refers to this action on other search engines (e.g. Bing, Yahoo!), but for the purposes of this guide we will use the generic word "search" to refer to all search engines.

Throughout the guide, a key term appears in boldface when it is first introduced. You will find definitions in the **Glossary** at the back of the guide.

1 eMarketer. (2013). *Social networking reaches nearly one in four around the world.*

2 MacLeans.ca. (2013). *How do you compare? New report reveals stats about social media usage in Canada.* www.macleans.ca/general/how-do-you-compare-new-report-reveals-stats-about-social-media-usage-in-canada

3 TripAdvisor TripBarometer. (2013).

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Introduction to Online Reputation Management

About this Guide

This guide was developed by Destination British Columbia in cooperation with tourism businesses and regions across the province. It is written for owners, operators and employees of all types of businesses in BC's tourism industry, from B&Bs to large hotels, from restaurants to event venues, and from activity providers to attractions, as well as all destination marketing organizations.

Key Learning Objectives

The guide has three main objectives:

1. To help you understand and adopt the basic trends, principles and tools of online reputation management.
2. To provide insight into the challenges and opportunities presented by social media.
3. To show you ways to manage customer feedback in social media and use it to guide improvements and attract new and repeat customers.

Note that this guide is not a comprehensive "how to" manual for administrating social

media platforms. Rather, the focus is on managing reputation on the most popular channels used by travellers for researching trips and sharing experiences. These channels may change over time, but the guidelines and best practices presented in this guide are intended to apply to any channel, present or future.

If you require technical assistance, there is a wealth of information online. To assist with your search, refer to the list of resources in [Section 10: Additional Resources](#).

Key Principles

Three key principles govern this guide's approach:

1. Reputation can be managed in-house.

This guide explains how to set up an in-house reputation management program, prioritize channels and resources, and respond to all types of feedback.

2. Reputation management is a company-wide function.

Not just a marketing function, reputation management involves close cooperation and collaboration among departments,

including customer service, revenue management, sales and marketing, human resources and administration.

3. It is about being authentic and transparent.

Reputation management is not about trying to pass your business off as better than it is. That will only get you into trouble. It is about being honest and authentic about the products and services you offer and using customer feedback to guide improvements.

Key Principles

Online Reputation Management Training Programs

Destination BC was early to recognize the importance of online reputation management. The first edition of this guide was published in 2011 as part of the *Tourism Business Essentials* program.

Later that year, Destination BC presented an accompanying three-hour Introduction to Online Reputation Management. The workshop was presented. It has since been delivered in communities across the province, garnering rave reviews from participants.

In late 2012, a one-hour online webinar featuring highlights from the workshop was broadcast and recorded for on-demand viewing, and Destination BC introduced a three-hour Advanced Online Reputation Management workshop.

For more information about these workshops and other resources offered by Destination BC's Tourism Business Essentials program, visit www.destinationbc.ca/Programs/Guides-Workshops-and-Webinars.aspx

Destination BC and Social Media

Destination BC is a Crown corporation that works collaboratively with tourism stakeholders across BC to market the province as a tourist destination. Social media is a key part of this mandate.

"We view social media as a place to build and engage with a community of people who are passionate about BC, whether they're residents, frequent visitors or are just starting to consider BC as a vacation destination," says Leah Poulton, Manager, Social Media at Destination BC.



HelloBC Facebook Page www.facebook.com/HelloBC

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Introduction to Online Reputation Management

Destination BC and Social Media

“The main objective of the program is to inspire people to explore British Columbia while encouraging them to engage in conversation about BC on social media channels,” says Poulton. “Rather than tell people why they should visit BC, we prefer to show them via inspirational, experiential content such as photos, videos and blog posts. We want people to be able to picture themselves here.”

Destination BC is active on all major social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube as well as our own Explore BC blog. A key focus is user-generated content. “We encourage people to share their BC stories by featuring user-generated content across our social media channels,” says Poulton.

For one recent campaign, the “Explore BC Blogger Tour,” launched in the summer of 2012, four bloggers were sent on a “fan-powered” adventure around the province. They shared photos and blog posts from their trip in real-time, and Destination BC’s Facebook community helped decide what they should see and do.

“The results exceeded our expectations,” says Poulton. “Engagement skyrocketed, and the supporting ad-buy grew our Facebook community from 3,000 to more than 30,000 in several months. We were also left with a pool of great content from around the province that we are still using.”

Today, the Facebook page has more than 110,000 fans and an average of over 50,000 engagements (likes, comments and shares) per month.

Images are a key focus. “It’s no secret that British Columbia is visually stunning,” says Poulton, “and the channels that allow us to best showcase photography of that natural beauty—Facebook and Instagram—

have become home to our most engaged communities.” The YouTube channel has attracted more than 2,400 subscribers and 1,562,800 views.

How can the province’s tourism operators and communities get involved in Destination BC’s social media efforts? “By joining our communities and participating in the conversation, answering questions and sharing images of your own or sharing our images,” says Poulton. “Subscribe to the Explore BC blog and keep an eye out for content from your community or region.”

Poulton also recommends using the popular hashtags #exploreBC and #skiBC to connect with consumers and ensure Destination BC staff see your messaging.

“If you are running a social media campaign or have some content you think would be of interest to our community, reach out to us by posting on our Facebook wall or by tagging us on Twitter (@HelloBC),” advises Poulton. However, she notes, “We are far more likely to share experiential or visual content than special offers or other sales-related messaging.”

Click the links below to get social with Destination BC:

- Facebook: www.facebook.com/HelloBC
- Twitter: [@HelloBC](https://twitter.com/HelloBC) (consumer feed)
[@DestinationBC](https://twitter.com/DestinationBC) (corporate feed)
- YouTube: www.youtube.com/TourismBC
- Instagram: <http://instagram.com/hellobc>
- Pinterest: www.pinterest.com/hellobc
- Explore BC Blog: <http://blog.hellobc.com>

Top 10 Social Media Tips from BC Destination Marketing Organizations

- Educate yourself. Understand how social media can benefit your business and use the appropriate platforms to assist in achieving your goals.
- Build a personality for your brand on the social platforms you choose. Engage and respond frequently. Do not be afraid to have fun with it.
- Social media is not free. Good content and engaging stories take time and human resources to develop; be prepared to spend time building and managing your community.
- Make social media part of your daily routine. Create a plan and stick to it.
- To capture users' attention and increase engagement, include imagery in posts as much as possible.
- Supply imagery (or links to video) and content for regional and community social media channels and blogs to help promote the region and related events, activities and festivals.
- Play your part by exceeding customer expectations, participating in discussions about your region and encouraging travellers to share their experiences.
- Ensure your posts are engaging, informative, interesting and spark positive conversation.
- Include official Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) hashtags in relevant messages to ensure they see your messaging.
- Follow your local DMO on social media channels, share their content, and participate in their contests and social media campaigns.

2 Why Manage Your Online Reputation?

Managing your online presence and reputation requires initial and ongoing investments of your time. However, the payoff is high for businesses that generate positive reviews, high ratings and a stream of positive social media content.

Here are four reasons why managing online reputation is a critical function for tourism businesses:

1. *Social media has changed traveller behaviour.*

According to the Google and Ipsos MediaCT Travel Study, the Internet is the number-one source for planning travel.¹ The same report found that nearly half (46%) of respondents use social media to share travel-related experiences.

Social media has changed how travellers:

- **Research trips.** More travellers are using social networks to obtain trip information and advice from other travellers. Reputation is quickly becoming as important as price and location in influencing trip decisions.
- **Communicate with businesses.** Social media has emerged as an important customer service channel, fast becoming as indispensable as email or telephone. Increasingly, travellers turn to social networks to make inquiries of businesses and to provide feedback, and they expect a quick response.
- **Share experiences.** More travellers are using social networks before, during and after trips to share activities, impressions, reviews, photos and videos.



Franz Strasser @franzstrasser · 21 Dec 2012

Can't wait can hardly describe it. Only 5 more days: World's Best Ski Towns: Whistler, BC on.natgeo.com/TcMwyy



InterContinental SF @ICSF · 18 Jan 2012

@alicelee2003 Welcome to the hotel! We hope your meeting goes smoothly. If there is anything we can do to help, simply tweet us!



Robert Jones @TheMeFund · Nov 10

So far not so impressed with the service here... We'll see about the food. (@



Dirk Terpstra @OkDirk · 7 Jul 2012

@hgtourism I just came back from an amazing trip to Haida Gwaii and Haida House. Very inspiring! Can recommend it to everyone. #Canada

¹ Google and Ipsos MediaCT Travel Study. (June 2013).

2. Consumers trust other consumers more than any other advertising source.

According to Nielsen’s more recent *Trust in Advertising* survey, two of the top-three most trusted advertising sources are personal recommendations and online consumer opinions.² These sources are more trusted than emails from marketers, search engine results ads or print, radio and television advertising.

It is understandable that consumers trust recommendations from people they know, but why such a high level of trust for advice from strangers? Unlike marketers, consumers are not selling anything, and they do not stand to benefit from purchases.

This is not to say that paid advertising is a waste of money. Consumers are still

influenced by sources they do not fully trust; they simply keep researching until they are confident they are making the right decision. Rather, Nielsen’s survey suggests that to maximize effectiveness, marketers must shift more resources toward getting people talking about and recommending their business.

It is important to note the second most trusted source in the Nielsen survey is a **brand website** (i.e. an official website created by a business rather than a third-party re-seller like an online travel agency). Consumers are still highly influenced by brand website content, even though it comes from marketers. Social media does not completely displace traditional marketing activities.

Nielsen Trust In Advertising Chart, 2013

To what extent do you trust the following forms of advertising?	Trust completely or somewhat
Recommendations from people I know	83%
Branded websites	69%
Consumer opinions posted online	68%
Editorial content	67%
Ads in newspapers or magazines	60 – 61%
Emails I signed up for	56%
Ads in search engines results	48%
Ads on social networks	48%

2 Nielsen Trust In Advertising Survey. (2013.) *Under the Influence: Consumer Trust in Advertising*.

2 Why Manage Your Online Reputation?

3. *Business reputation is interdependent.*

In tourism, your ability to attract customers depends not only on the reputation of your business, but on the reputation of the businesses around you, your community or region, and the province as a whole. When everyone works together to strengthen reputation, individual businesses get stronger, as do their home regions.

4. *Reputation drives revenue.*

A recent study from Cornell University indicates there is a direct relationship between online reputation, demand and pricing power. Here are some highlights from a groundbreaking study conducted by Cornell University's Center for Hospitality Research in 2012:³

- The percentage of consumers consulting reviews on TripAdvisor prior to booking a

hotel room has steadily increased over time, as has the number of reviews they read.

- According to transactional data from Travelocity, if a hotel increases its review score by 1 point on a 5-point scale (e.g. from 3.3 to 4.3), it can increase its price by 11.2% and still maintain the same occupancy or market share.
- A 1% increase in a hotel's online reputation score can lead to a 0.89% increase in price, a 0.54 increase in occupancy and a 1.42% increase in revenue per available room (RevPAR).
- The benefits of a higher reputation score are not limited to online distribution channels, but also to reservations made through other channels, such as telephone reservations.

BC Business Spotlight: Archipelago Cruises

BC Business Spotlight: Archipelago Cruises

After years of hard work, Ucluelet-based Archipelago Wildlife Cruises has built a solid reputation for personalized tours featuring spectacular scenery, wildlife and gourmet meals.

"When we started this business my husband and I had the same vision," says Archipelago's Toddy Landry. "Our tours are unique, extremely personal, good value and we throw in a lot of extras. When at first things did not go as hoped, we never took any shortcuts or strayed from this vision, even when this meant borrowing (even more) money just to keep going during our first three years in business.

"Despite spending a lot of money on advertising, it was our customers that turned the tide for us, first through word of mouth but also through online platforms such as TripAdvisor and travel blogs," she says.

Today, Archipelago Cruises is ranked No. 1 of almost 1,000 activities in British Columbia on TripAdvisor. Landry says that TripAdvisor has become the single most important part of their advertising.

"Thanks to customer feedback, mainly on TripAdvisor, we are able to continue running our tours exactly the way we envisaged from the very beginning, the way we enjoy running them," she says. "Best of all, it is free."

³ Anderson, Christopher. (November 2012) The Impact of Social Media on Lodging Performance.

3 Setting Up an Online Reputation Management Program

Where to Find the Time and Resources

Many businesses jump into social media without having a clear idea of why they are doing it and what they want to accomplish. This can lead to wasted time, confusion and missed opportunities.

For the best results, take an organized, systemic approach to social media, focusing efforts on where you will reap the most rewards: reputation management.

The time and resources you dedicate will depend on the size and nature of your business, the amount of feedback you receive and other variables. However, regardless of how much time you dedicate, your overall approach should be the same.

The key steps to setting up a reputation management program:

Assemble the Team

Decide who will be involved. If you run a small business, it might just be you. If you run a large business, an entire team may be involved.

For example, in a large hotel, the reputation team may include the social media manager, front office manager, director of sales and marketing, public relations representative and general manager. Representatives from food and beverage, human resources, corporate office and ownership may also be involved.

Appoint a leader to champion your efforts, keep everyone on track, chair meetings, liaise with departments and ensure follow-up. This should be a senior manager with the authority to implement change.

You will also need a social media administrator to act as the “gatekeeper” responsible for monitoring, responding to and disseminating reviews and feedback. This might be a dedicated position, or duties that are added to an existing position.

Regardless of individual roles and responsibilities, managing reputation should be a team effort. Plan to meet regularly with your group to discuss recent reviews, ratings

and feedback, monitor progress toward achieving objectives, and ensure follow-up where needed.

Set Reputation Goals and Objectives

A **goal** is a broad, far-reaching outcome you wish to attain. It answers the question, “Where do we want to go?” A **strategy** is the approach you take to achieve a goal, whereas an **objective** is a specific, measurable step you take to achieve a strategy. A **tactic** is a tool used to pursue an objective associated with a strategy. Strategies and tactics answer the question, “How will we get there?”

To put it another way, goals and objectives identify what you want to accomplish; strategies and tactics identify how you will accomplish it.

The primary goal of this guide is to help businesses strengthen online reputation. The following objectives will contribute to this goal:

- Improve ratings and rankings on review sites
- Increase the volume of positive reviews
- Decrease the number of negative reviews
- Increase number of followers, and consumer engagement and advocacy

Be specific when setting objectives.

For example, specify the rating you wish to achieve on popular review sites (e.g. TripAdvisor, Google+ Local, Yelp) and, as applicable, online travel agencies (e.g. Expedia, Booking.com).

Here are the key strategies and tactics every business should implement to strengthen their online reputation:

- Manage listings and content on key review sites and social networking sites
- Monitor and analyze customer feedback
- Act on feedback
- Respond to feedback
- Build social media communities and advocacy

These strategies and tactics will be explored in the coming sections.

3 Setting Up an Online Reputation Management Program

Where to Find the Time and Resources

Allocate Resources

Next, ask yourself what resources will be needed to execute the strategies necessary to accomplish your goals. Many channels and tools in social media are free, but managing them can be labour intensive.

You may have to reallocate resources from other areas. This means asking some hard questions. Do current expenditures reflect the changes in how travellers research trips and make decisions? As more people go online to plan trips, have you adjusted your marketing efforts to ensure you are still reaching them?

At the same time, it is important not to over-compensate by shifting too many resources into social media. Social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, have yet to prove themselves as significant direct revenue channels. Most bookings still come through

traditional channels (e.g. brand websites, online travel agencies, travel agents, voice reservations).

To help you decide where to allocate resources, the next section will review the variety of channels, tools and resources at your disposal.

Create an Online Reputation Management Plan

Draft a brief reputation management plan that identifies roles and responsibilities, objectives, strategies and resources. Include it in your annual business plan and review it regularly. You will likely need to make adjustments over time.



Hiking, Clayoquot Sound, Vancouver Island

Where to Find the Time and Resources

Where to Find the Time and Resources

If you are wondering how to manage social media while juggling the needs and demands of your guests, take inspiration from Victoria's Abbeymoore Manor.

Despite having only a handful of employees, the seven-room property is highly active in social media, with a blog, Facebook page, Twitter feed and Pinterest page. Innkeeper Ian MacPhee says he also monitors reviews on Yelp, bedandbreakfast.com, iloveinns.com and TripAdvisor—both for his property and for competitors.

How does he find the time? "It is very tough, but the results speak for themselves, so it is a priority," says MacPhee. "We use systems and tools to automate where we can. I try and set aside some time each day. If I'm blogging I try and write several articles at once and publish them at different times."

To ensure a high level of service and a solid reputation, MacPhee says he invests more resources in staffing and online marketing initiatives than most innkeepers. "Yes, it costs money," he explains, "but a great website coupled with a solid online reputation brings business."

The hard work is paying off. At time of publication, Abbeymoore Manor was ranked No. 1 of 1,649 B&Bs and inns in British Columbia on TripAdvisor.

"The benefit is immeasurable in terms of driving guests to your website," says MacPhee, adding that he has also been able to command higher room rates.

However, he says, to reap the rewards you do not have to rank No. 1. Here he shares his advice for tourism operators:

- There's no use focusing on social media and online reviews unless you are confident the reviews will be very positive. Be sure your property is the best it can be and go out of your way for every guest.
- It all starts with your product. If you aren't providing a truly excellent experience, do not ask folks to share your mediocrity online. Reinvest and improve.
- Once your guest experience is solid, use tactics to increase review volume, such as TripAdvisor review widgets and review quotes in marketing activities. Most importantly, simply ask guests to take a moment and share their experience with the TripAdvisor community.
- Don't cheat or mislead. Writing your own reviews will get you in trouble. TripAdvisor calls this "Organized Boosting" and they are very sophisticated when it comes to weeding out those who try to "game" the system.
- Get involved with your local tourism organizations, destination marketing organization and area accommodation group. Be collaborative and help others do their best so that more tourists will visit your city.
- Typically guests look at the newest reviews, the worst reviews and the management responses, so it is critical to craft an appropriate response to all negative criticisms.

4 Managing Listings and Content

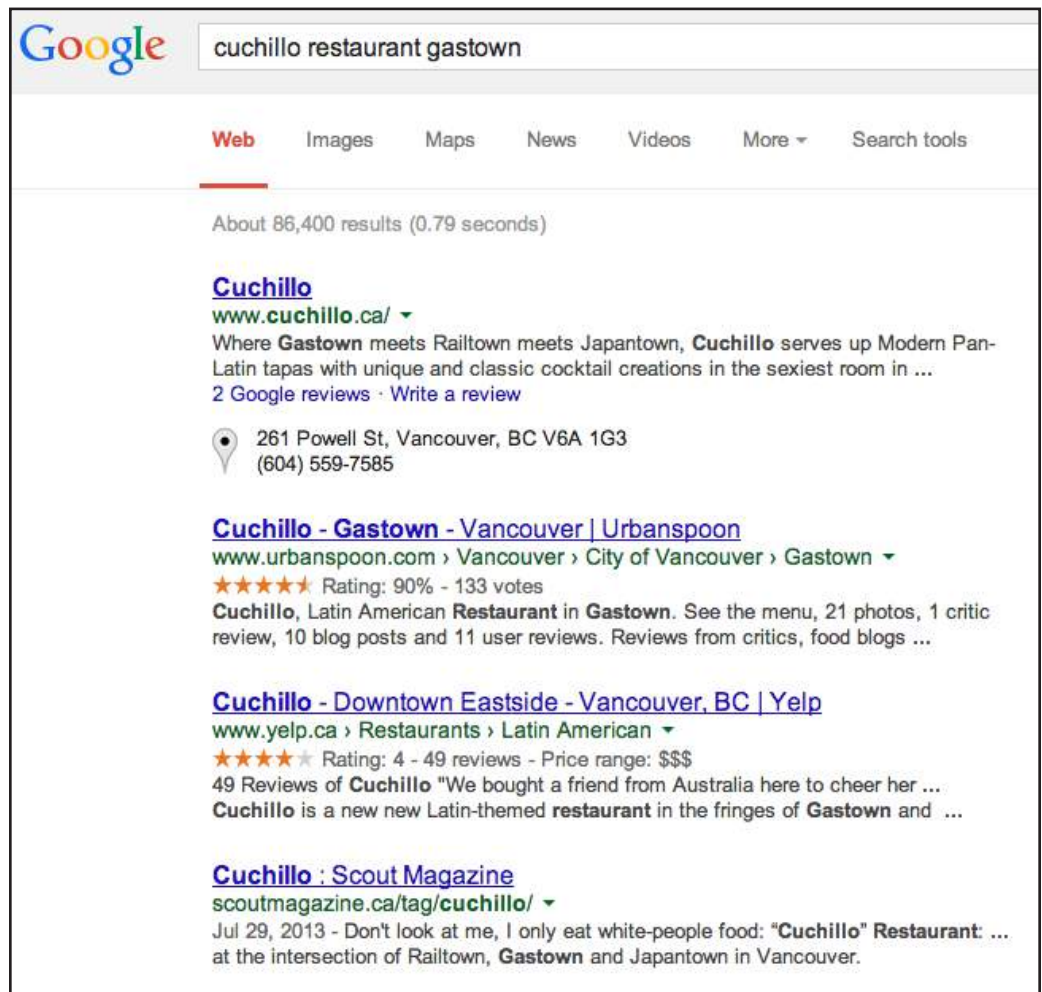
When travellers research online trips and activities relevant to your business, you want them to find you, and accurate, appealing information.

Review sites and social networks typically rank high in search results related to travel planning. Content, reviews and ratings from TripAdvisor, Yelp, Facebook, Google+ and Twitter often fall within the top-five organic search results. **Organic search results** are “natural” or unpaid results that are ranked by the search engine using an algorithm according to relevancy to the search term.

Online travel agencies (OTAs) such as Expedia and Travelocity rank high in both organic results and **paid search results**, which are purchased by an advertiser and marked by a shaded area or “Sponsored” label.

To maximize your online presence, having a brand website is no longer enough. It is important to maintain an active presence on major review sites and popular social channels.

In the next section, you will find the steps involved in optimizing your positioning on social channels.



The screenshot shows a Google search result for "cuchillo restaurant gastown". The search bar at the top contains the text "cuchillo restaurant gastown". Below the search bar, there are navigation tabs for "Web", "Images", "Maps", "News", "Videos", "More", and "Search tools". The search results are displayed below, starting with "About 86,400 results (0.79 seconds)". The first result is for "Cuchillo" with the URL "www.cuchillo.ca/". The description for this result says: "Where Gastown meets Railtown meets Japantown, Cuchillo serves up Modern Pan-Latin tapas with unique and classic cocktail creations in the sexiest room in ...". It also shows "2 Google reviews · Write a review" and a location pin for "261 Powell St, Vancouver, BC V6A 1G3 (604) 559-7585". The second result is for "Cuchillo - Gastown - Vancouver | Urbanspoon" with the URL "www.urbanspoon.com". It shows a rating of "★★★★★ Rating: 90% - 133 votes" and a description: "Cuchillo, Latin American Restaurant in Gastown. See the menu, 21 photos, 1 critic review, 10 blog posts and 11 user reviews. Reviews from critics, food blogs ...". The third result is for "Cuchillo - Downtown Eastside - Vancouver, BC | Yelp" with the URL "www.yelp.ca". It shows a rating of "★★★★★ Rating: 4 - 49 reviews - Price range: \$\$\$" and a description: "49 Reviews of Cuchillo 'We bought a friend from Australia here to cheer her ... Cuchillo is a new new Latin-themed restaurant in the fringes of Gastown and ...". The fourth result is for "Cuchillo : Scout Magazine" with the URL "scoutmagazine.ca/tag/cuchillo/". It shows a date of "Jul 29, 2013" and a description: "Don't look at me, I only eat white-people food: 'Cuchillo' Restaurant: ... at the intersection of Railtown, Gastown and Japantown in Vancouver."

Google search result of Cuchillo Restaurant

Perform a Reputation Audit

To understand how your business is positioned online, put yourself in the shoes of the traveller. Conduct a reputation audit by performing the following searches:

- Your business (e.g. “ABC Rentals Whistler”)
- Your top three competitors (e.g. “Whistler Recreational Equipment Company”)
- Your business type(s) and location (e.g. “ski equipment Whistler”)

If you do not have direct competitors, search for successful businesses like yours in other regions.

Pay particular attention to the top organic results; most searchers do not look further. Paid results are typically at the top and to the right of the page, are shaded, and are labeled “Sponsored” or “Ads.”

Answer the following questions and make a list of items to follow up on.

- Is the information about my business accurate and appealing?
- Am I happy with my ratings and rankings?
- What would I like to change?
- Where are my competitors listed that I’m not?
- How can I strengthen my online positioning?

It is important to regularly perform a reputation audit (at least once every three months), because results can change frequently. Note that information can be displayed differently on different devices, so perform your searches on both a smartphone and tablet, as well as a desktop or laptop computer. Furthermore, results can vary by search engine, so check the most popular search engines: Google, Bing and Yahoo.

4 Managing Listings and Content

Social Media and Search

The Internet is like the new telephone. People enter into search engines the questions they used to ask travel agents and businesses on the phone. For example, phrases such as “Family activities in Victoria in February” or “Greek restaurant Smithers” are routinely searched on browsers. If your business is relevant to the search, you want it to appear in results, and the higher it appears the better.

To learn about popular search terms related to your business, visit Google’s Keyword Planner.¹

Online, there are two major audiences: travellers and **algorithms**. In search marketing, algorithms are formulas that determine which content appears in search results and in what order. Google, Bing and Yahoo! run on algorithms, as do TripAdvisor and Facebook.

Algorithms are updated regularly to deliver the most relevant results to users. The details of search engine algorithms are kept secret to prevent businesses from gaming the system. However, there are typically two key ingredients to algorithms: relevance, which is partly measured by matching search terms to website content, and importance, which is partly determined by the amount of traffic a website generates as well as the number of links it receives from quality, popular sites.

With many search terms, such as those related to restaurants and hotels, location plays an important factor in results. A user may not include a location in the search, but if they have allowed the search engine to use their location information, it uses GPS data to provide results for nearby businesses.

Another relatively new factor in search algorithms is the use of “social signals,” which are reviews and ratings that indicate the quality and popularity of a business.

To effectively satisfy both travellers and algorithms, publish content to your website, blog and social media channels that answers the typical questions travellers type into search engines. For maximum effect include local information, add imagery and, when uploading it, ensure it is tagged, or labelled, with your business name, location and activity. To encourage sharing, add social share buttons—icons from Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and other social networking sites—that visitors can click on to share with their networks.

For example: if you publish articles on your website or blog, a calendar of events or a story about the region’s history, add social share buttons so that visitors can easily share the information on Facebook, Twitter and other relevant channels. Additionally, make sure you promote these on your own social profiles.

This marketing tactic is sometimes referred to as **inbound marketing**. Traditional marketing, also known as **outbound marketing**, involves interruptive or “push” tactics such as email blasts, direct mail, telemarketing, and TV, radio and print advertising. Outbound marketing tactics are considered less effective today because people can easily block or ignore messages.

Inbound marketing is less about *finding* customers than about being found by customers, primarily through search engines and social media. It can increase your visibility in searches, and drive traffic to your website and social channels. It also helps build trust with travellers, can increase conversions and, ultimately, will drive higher customer satisfaction.

¹ Google Keyword Planner is a free tool that helps you determine the popularity of keyword search terms. You will need a Google account to use it. For more information visit <http://adwords.google.com/KeywordPlanner>

Social Media and Search



The image shows a screenshot of a blog post on the website urbanmommies.com. The website's header features a pink background with a silhouette of a woman walking a dog and the text 'urbanmommies.com THE HIP MOM'S LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE'. Below the header is a navigation bar with links for Home, Reviews, Recipes, Kids, Babies, Pregnancy, Travel, Exec Mom, Health, Videos, and Tools. The main content area has a green banner with the title '5 TIPS FOR A FABULOUS FAMILY ROAD TRIP' and a photograph of a mountain landscape with evergreen trees. The text of the blog post follows, discussing family road trips and providing five tips.

urbanmommies.com
THE HIP MOM'S LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

Home Reviews Recipes Kids Babies Pregnancy Travel Exec Mom Health Videos Tools

5 TIPS FOR A FABULOUS FAMILY ROAD TRIP



When I was a child, our summer vacations were usually a three hour journey from our front door to the door of where we were staying. Most of the time we journeyed to our vacation destination via car and ferry. My sister and I loved that our parents were sharing with us all of the fabulous sites that our province had to offer whether we were camping by a lake, staying in a cottage by the ocean, or exploring the coast in an RV.

Now that I'm a mother myself, I am taking a page out of my parents' book. My husband and I alternate our family vacations between destinations that you travel to by plane with places closer to home that travel to by taking a road trip.

Our last road trip was an epic two day journey from Vancouver to Calgary in 30 degree heat with a 1 year old, a 5 year old, a 12 year old yorkie and two very cranky parents. I think the kids survived the road trip better than the parents and the dog did. Despite all of the "bumps in the road" we managed to have a great time, see sites both awe inspiring (Lake Louise) and entertaining (The Enchanted Forest in Revelstoke) and spend time bonding as a family.

After our trip, I put together 5 tips to make future road trips smoother. Pin them for easy reference for your next road trip.

5 Tips for a Fabulous Family Road Trip:

- 1. Make Your Road Trip About the Journey, Not The Destination-** It's so easy to get caught up in "We have to be to X destination by X day." When planning your next road trip try to throw your timeline to the wind and enjoy your journey. Not getting caught up in how long it's taking you to get from here to there will allow you to enjoy your stops more and not get so frustrated when the kids need an extra pee stop or chance to stretch their legs.
- 2. Be Flexible-** Children can be unpredictable. Sometimes naps happen and it's better to let sleeping children lie than wake them for a pre-scheduled activity and risk the crankies. Save the stop for your trip back home and continue on or take a road trip break, find a shady parking spot, roll down the windows and enjoy a good book. Be willing to be flexible depending on your children's moods. Making a trip to the history museum may not be the best plan if your kids are feeling cooped up and extra rambunctious. Being prepared to make unexpected changes depending on the moods of your passengers will lead to a much happier family road trip.

Blog post: Example of Urbanmommies blog post of family activities in Victoria

4 Managing Listings and Content

Three Types of Online Content

Online content can be divided into three categories:

Paid Content

This content is purchased by businesses. It includes display ads, cost-per-click advertising and listings on online travel agencies. Marketers control the messaging, but it has less influence on consumer decisions. (As noted in the Nielsen survey in Section 2, trust in paid advertising sources is lower than recommendations from other travellers.)

Owned Content

This is content that the business owns, such as its website, Facebook page and Twitter feed. As with paid content, marketers control the messaging, but it has less influence because trust is lower than recommendations from other travellers.

Earned Content

This content is posted by other people. It includes user-generated reviews and ratings, photos, videos, media and blogger coverage and social endorsements such as Facebook likes and Google pluses. Marketers do not control the messaging, but it has a higher influence because

consumers trust other consumers more than other advertising sources.

Traditionally, marketers and businesses have focused on paid and owned content because they control the messaging. Messaging is often more aspirational than totally realistic. But in online reputation management, the primary focus is earned content because it is more influential. And it is free—aside from the time invested.

With online reputation management, managing owned content is also important, particularly listings on review sites. (Paid content is also important; however, it falls outside the scope of this guide.)

For maximum reach, strive to combine all three types of content in marketing campaigns. For example, if your business posts an item on Destination BC's Facebook page to announce a contest you are holding, this is owned content. If you purchase an ad on Facebook to promote the contest, it is paid content. And if other people like, comment on and share the post, it is earned content. Working together, paid content can amplify owned and earned content and vice versa.

The screenshot shows a Google search result for "hotels in nelson". The search bar at the top shows "hotels in nelson" with a search button. Below the search bar, there are tabs for "Web", "Maps", "Images", "News", and "More". The search results are displayed below, with a "Showing results for hotels in nelson" message. The results are categorized into "PAID CONTENT" (ads), "EARNED CONTENT" (reviews), and "OWNED CONTENT" (hotel listings). A map on the right shows the location of Nelson, BC. The "PAID CONTENT" section includes ads for "Hotels in Nelson, BC - Relaxing Stay at the Villa Motel" and "75 Hotels in Nelson - Half-Price Hotels - booking.com". The "EARNED CONTENT" section includes a review from TripAdvisor for "Nelson Hotels: Check Out 8 Hotels, with 949 Reviews". The "OWNED CONTENT" section includes a listing for "BEST WESTERN PLUS Baker Street Inn | For Hotels in Nelson BC".

Price	Hotel Name	Star Rating	Reviews
\$109	Hume Hotel	3-star hotel	4.3 ★★★★★ (13)
\$95	Cloudside Inn	2-star hotel	3 Google reviews
\$79	Mountain Hound Inn	2-star hotel	3 Google reviews
\$87	Prestige Inn Nelson	3-star hotel	2 Google reviews

Google search result, Reknown, 2014

Managing Social Media Channels

The number of social media channels you actively maintain a presence on will depend on the size of your business, your objectives, the resources available and the results you see. Your reputation audit will help to identify popular platforms. As a rule, go where your customers are.

Your first priority will be to ensure you are listed on major review sites such as TripAdvisor, Google Places and Yelp. You might create a Facebook page, then a Twitter feed. After that, the sky is the limit. Bear in mind it is better to have a strong presence on a few key social media channels than a weak presence on many.

There are four main steps to establishing a presence on social channels:

Claim your space.

Register your business on a review site or social network. This may involve creating a new listing or taking control of an existing one. Many social media channels automatically create, or allow users to create, listings. You may have a listing without knowing it. By taking control of the listing you can ensure your profile information is accurate.

Next, go through a verification process to prove you are the owner or manager of your business. Even if you do not maintain an active presence on the channel, claiming your space will protect it from being claimed by others.

Complete your profile.

Typically there is no charge to create a listing and complete your profile on major social channels. There may be an option to pay to advertise or enhance your listing. By completing your profile, you will ensure that people can find you and the information is accurate. Depending on the channel, this may include adding a description, location and contact information, imagery and links to other social profiles.

Build and engage communities.

On social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Google+, creating a profile is just the beginning. It is vital to build and engage a community of followers. This is discussed in Section 8.

Monitor and respond to feedback.

Ensure you track any mentions of your business, and respond accordingly. The monitoring function is reviewed in Section 5; how to respond is reviewed in Sections 6 and Section 7.

Additional Resources

Tourism Business Essentials

Destination British Columbia has developed FREE easy-to-use tools that provide specific guidance on marketing issues for tourism. See the guides on *Ads & Brochures That Sell*, *Culture and Heritage Tourism Development* and *Travel Media Relations*.

For more information on other *Tourism Business Essentials* guides and workshops, visit the [Guides, Workshops and Webinars](#) section of the Destination BC website.



4 Managing Listings and Content

Review Sites vs. Social Networking Sites

As mentioned in the Introduction, social media can be divided into two main categories: review sites and social networking sites. When it comes to reputation, review sites are the first priority. They drive direct business and provide invaluable customer feedback.

Review Sites

TripAdvisor launched in 2001 and has since become the most-visited travel site in the world, with 260 million unique visitors per month. TripAdvisor reviews and content are syndicated to millions of other websites.

For travel businesses, TripAdvisor is undoubtedly the most important website (next to your brand website). A TripAdvisor presence can have an enormous impact on awareness, website traffic and demand for products and services.

TripAdvisor was originally an accommodation review site but has expanded to include restaurants, activities, attractions, tour companies and retail outlets. In addition to reviews and ratings, the site features photos, videos, maps, destination pages, traveller forums and paid advertising.

Once you register your business, you have access to the Management Center which provides a wealth of resources. There you can update your listing, respond to reviews, view visitor and performance stats, and access user guides and tip sheets. You can also download widgets and badges to display on your website, Facebook page and at your property's physical site.

TripAdvisor also offers a variety of tools and resources to help destination marketing organizations promote their areas. DMOs can add Visitor Centre information, photos, videos and editorial content to destination pages. They can also integrate TripAdvisor reviews and content on their destination website and can choose from a variety of paid advertising options.

Archipelago Wildlife Cruises

Whiskey Landing Marina, 1634 Cedar Road, corner Main & Cedar, Ucluelet, British Columbia V0R 3A0, Canada
250 726 8289 Website E-mail Update attraction details



Ranked #1 of 25 activities in Ucluelet
415 Reviews
Certificate of Excellence 2013

Type: Tours

Owner description For an unforgettable West Coast experience, join Al & Toddy Landry aboard their luxurious 53 foot motor yacht for a very personalized tour to view whales, bears, sea lions and other wildlife in comfort. More than just wildlife viewing, their interpretive tours include a scenic cruise through the sheltered waters of the Broken Group islands and a gourmet meal while at anchor. Romantic sunset cruises and private charters are also available. [« less](#)

Useful Information: Activities for older children, Activities for young children

277 visitor photos

TripAdvisor Listing: Archipelago Wildlife Cruises

Review Sites

HelloBC.com and TripAdvisor Reviews

Cedar Springs B&B Lodge

8106 Camino Dr, Whistler, British Columbia, V0N 1B8

Phone: 604-938-8007
Fax: 604-938-8023
Toll-free: 800-727-7547 (Canada & US)
Website: <http://www.whistlerinns.com>
Email: info@whistlerinns.com
<https://www.facebook.com/cedarspring...>

Cedar Springs Lodge B&B Whistler

Get pampered at our quiet, four season, destination bed & breakfast lodge in Whistler, BC. Enjoy sun decks, gardens. Adjacent to park, trails, playground, tennis/basketball courts. Walk to recreation centre with indoor pool, gym, squash & ice rink. Close to lakes/mountains. Eight clean, comfortable rooms with views. Honeymoon suite with balcony. Superior beds & duvets. Relax fireside in our living/dining rooms with complimentary tea/coffee. We will pamper you with gourmet breakfasts & afternoon tea - including home baking. Concierge services for all activities/all seasons. We will assist you with our local knowledge & experience. Amenities & services include hot tub, TV/VCR/DVD/Netflix, free WiFi, free parking & shuttle, bike rentals, concierge services. Close to local transit. Deutsch/Australian spoken. Book five or more nights in value seasons & receive a 15% discount.

TripAdvisor Traveller Rating:
Based on 75 traveller reviews

Most Recent Traveller Reviews:

- 19 Feb 2014: "Perfect b&b charm"
- 12 Feb 2014: "Unbelievable service and food"
- 3 Dec 2013: "Great stay"

[Read reviews >>](#)

© 2014 TripAdvisor LLC

Book This Accommodation

Arrival Date: 2/25/2014

HelloBC listing showing TripAdvisor review widget: Cedar Lodge

If you have visited the HelloBC website recently, you may have noticed a new feature on business listings: a live feed of TripAdvisor reviews.

"We believe that displaying recent and relevant user-generated content is a consumer benefit, making travel planning easier," explains Kathleen Harvey, Manager, Product Services at Destination BC.

"Once a tourism business enrolls in the HelloBC Listing Program we create a link to their TripAdvisor listing," says Harvey. The feed is integrated into listings for all sectors: Accommodations, Activities & Attractions, Golf, Ski & Snowboarding, Transportation, and Festivals and Events.

"The only exceptions are suppliers who do not yet have a listing or any reviews," says Harvey. Her team conducts regular audits to capture any enrolled businesses with a newly acquired presence on TripAdvisor.

"We encourage businesses to ensure they have a TripAdvisor listing, to solicit reviews and to comment on those they perceive to be positive or negative," said Harvey.

For information about the HelloBC Listings Program, visit www.DestinationBC.net.

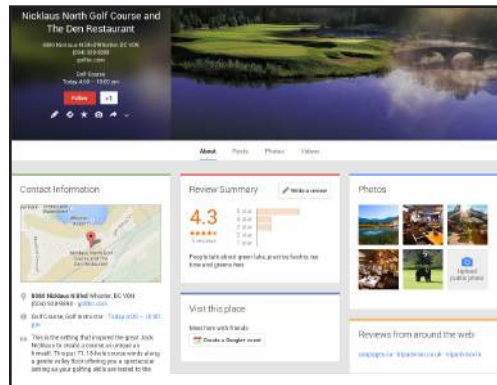
4 Managing Listings and Content

Review Sites

Google Places

Google Places is an online directory of local businesses that features user reviews, maps, photos, videos and related information. All types of walk-in businesses are listed, including restaurants, hotels and retail shops.

Google Places is not a dedicated website like TripAdvisor. Instead, its content—reviews, ratings, descriptions and imagery—is integrated into a variety of popular Google products, such as Search, Maps, Google+ and HotelFinder. Therefore, a presence on Places can increase your visibility throughout the Google network.

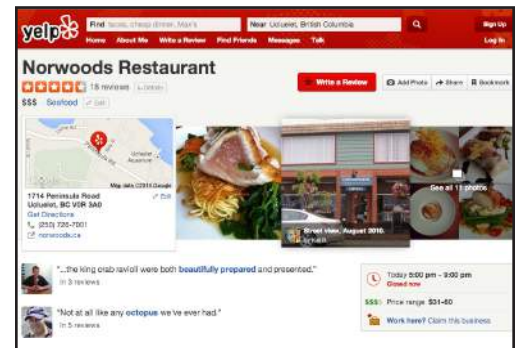


Google Places listing: Nicklaus North Golf, Whistler

Yelp

Like TripAdvisor, Yelp features listings of all types of local businesses, including restaurants, hotels, and retail shops. However, Yelp is popular with locals as well as travellers. Listings include descriptions, reviews, maps, photos and related information.

The recent integration of Yelp reviews and ratings with Apple's mobile maps application has substantially boosted traffic. An average of 108 million people per month visited Yelp during the third quarter of 2013.



Yelp listing: Norwoods Restaurant, Ucluelet

Other Review Sites

While TripAdvisor, Google Places and Yelp are the three most important review sites for travel businesses, there are many others that specialize in specific business sectors.

For example, VirtualTourist, Get Your Guide and Viator are popular for tours and excursions, whereas OpenTable and DineHere are popular for restaurants. Online travel agencies (e.g. Expedia, Hotels.com, Priceline) feature reviews and ratings for a range of travel businesses. Your reputation audit will help you determine which reviews sites are popular within your business segment.

Social Networking Sites

It is not as easy to draw a direct line between activity on social networking sites and bookings as it is with review sites. However, social networking sites are increasingly popular with travellers who enjoy sharing experiences and making recommendations.

They can also be effective marketing tools to build awareness and are important channels for engaging communities, providing customer service, and building customer loyalty and advocacy.

Social networking sites typically require higher maintenance than review sites; maintaining an active presence demands frequent monitoring and content management.

Facebook



Facebook page: Valemount Visitor Centre

The most popular social network in the world, Facebook has over 1.1 billion active users worldwide. By maintaining an active business page you will build awareness, promote products and services, and establish and engage a community of people who share an interest in your brand.

The Facebook “like” button is now a standard feature on brand websites. As discussed, it can be used to encourage users to share content throughout your website. Applications can be added to your Facebook page to cross-promote your presence on other channels such as TripAdvisor, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest.

Recently, Facebook introduced several features relevant to tourism businesses:

- **Graph Search.** This feature turns Facebook into a search engine for friend activities and interests. From the search bar users can search for destinations their friends have been to and businesses friends have liked, checked in to, and tagged photos of. Because everyone has a different network of friends, search results for every user are different.

To increase the likelihood of your business showing up in relevant searches, optimize your Facebook content for Graph Search, much like you do when optimizing website content for Google search.² Complete your About page with a good profile description and applicable categories, tag all of the imagery you upload and encourage users to like, and check in to and tag photos of your business.

- **Ratings and Reviews.** In late 2013, Facebook began adding star ratings and review boxes to business pages, allowing visitors to rate and review the business. Given the volume of Facebook users, monitoring and managing Facebook reviews is now an important part of reputation management.

- **Nearby Places.** This mobile application allows users to search, check in to, rate, review and upload photos of local businesses from mobile devices. Since these activities show up in the user’s newsfeed, they help spread the word about your business to Facebook users.

² For tips on how to optimize your Facebook page see this infographic:

www.insidefacebook.com/2013/07/17/infographic-optimizing-your-small-business-page-for-facebook-graph-search

4 Managing Listings and Content

Social Networking Sites

Google+



Google+ Page: Echo Valley Ranch

Not to be confused with Google Places, Google+ is a social networking site similar to Facebook. Launched in 2011, Google+ now has more than 350 million active users, making it the second most popular social network (after Facebook).

Unlike Facebook, however, much of the activity on Google+ takes place outside the network. Google+ content is integrated into other Google products (e.g. Search, Local, YouTube) and the “plus” button appears on many websites.

Google+ offers a number of unique features including Circles, which allows you to segment your contacts into different groups, and Hangouts, which enables you to hold live video chats with customers.

If you create a Google+ page, merge it with your Google Places page.³ This creates a central hub for your business on the Google network, where users can find descriptions, location and contact information, read reviews, view imagery, and interact with your business all in one place.

Twitter



Twitter profile: Grape Escapes, Pentiction

Twitter is a social networking site that allows users and businesses to create a profile, build a network of contacts, and share content and messages with other users. Messages, or “tweets,” have a 140-character limit.

Twitter is the third most preferred social network, with over 230 million active users. It is especially popular on mobile devices and for **real-time** messaging—relaying what the user is doing or thinking right now.

These qualities make Twitter especially important as a customer service tool. By monitoring Twitter and responding quickly when people mention your business, you can connect with customers, find ways to enhance their experience and resolve issues before they escalate.

³ For help managing your Google Places presence visit www.google.ca/business/placesforbusiness

Social Networking Sites

Foursquare

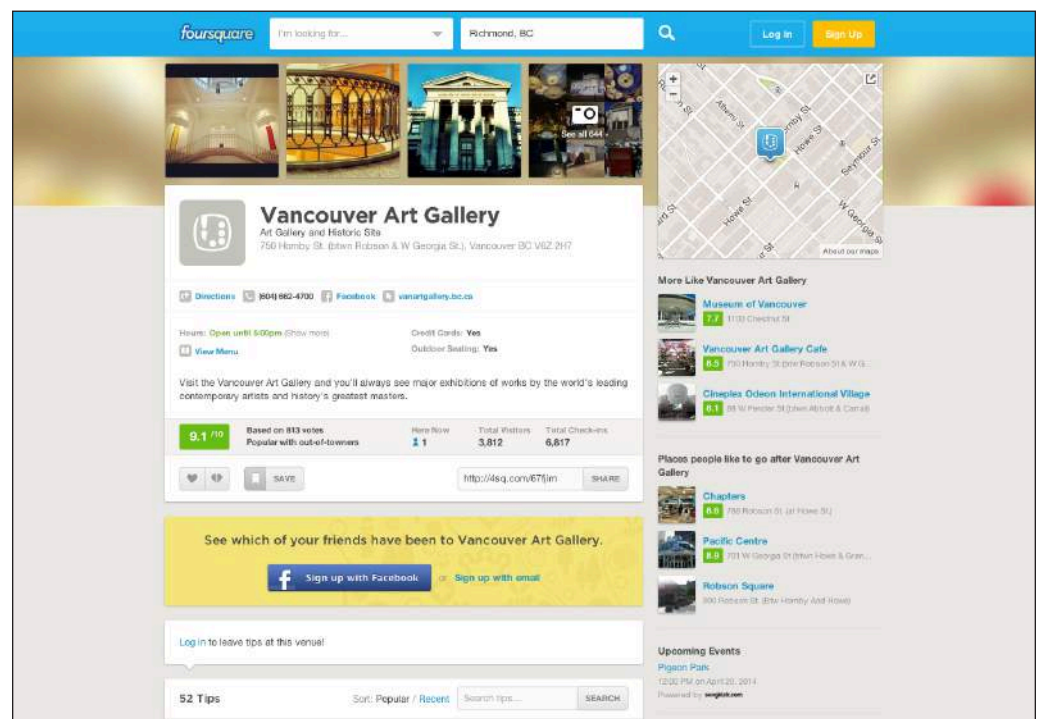
Like Facebook Nearby Places, Foursquare is a location-based mobile social networking site. It is particularly popular in North American urban centres. Users can browse local businesses, check-in and share their location with their friend network. They can also rate businesses, share tips and earn points and badges.

Once you have claimed your space and updated your profile, you can monitor ratings, tips and check-ins. Offering discounts, promotions and incentives to Foursquare users is a good way to reward frequent customers and attract new ones.

Other Social Networking Sites

There are countless other social networking sites, from photo-based sites (e.g. Instagram, Pinterest, Flickr) to video sites (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo, Vine). These sites combine two of the most powerful aspects of social media: images and sharing. They can also be influential when travellers are seeking trip ideas and inspiration.

As with other social networking sites, you can create a profile, build followings and share imagery related to your business and destination. Be sure to monitor imagery tagged with your business name.



FourSquare Screen Capture

4 Managing Listings and Content

Blogs

Blogs are popular with travellers seeking information on specific topics such as travel, food and recreation. Blog content can be more influential than other marketing content because it is typically more personal and less promotional.

Blogs are a highly effective inbound marketing activity. There are two ways to manage reputation with blogs: working with third-party bloggers and administering your own blog.

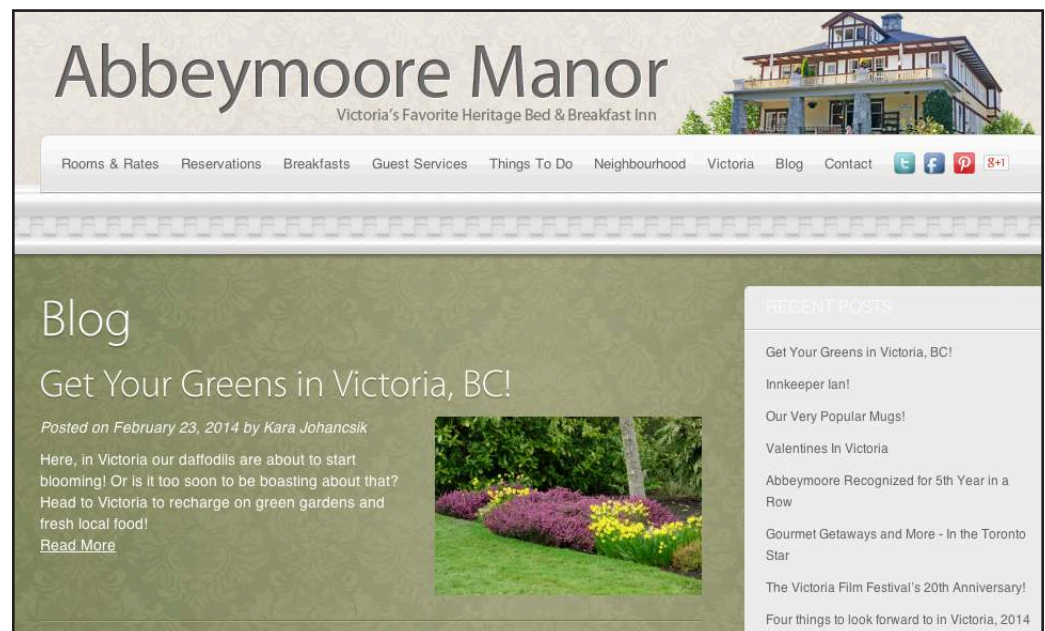
Many businesses manage blogger relations much like media relations. By engaging third-party bloggers, you can encourage them to generate content about your business and backlinks to your website.

A company blog can increase your visibility in searches, and drive traffic to your website.

Your posts can help travellers plan trips, learn about your business and find answers to questions about your destination. You can show the personality behind your brand and share photos, videos and stories to get travellers interested in your business and destination.

As with your website and other social channels, be sure to optimize content with descriptions, tags and keywords, and add social share buttons to posts.

Maintaining a blog is a significant long-term commitment. Make sure you have the talent and resources at hand to do it well, and plan in advance with an editorial calendar.



The screenshot shows the website for Abbeymoore Manor, a heritage bed & breakfast in Victoria. The header features the name 'Abbeymoore Manor' and the tagline 'Victoria's Favorite Heritage Bed & Breakfast Inn' next to a photo of the building. A navigation menu includes 'Rooms & Rates', 'Reservations', 'Breakfasts', 'Guest Services', 'Things To Do', 'Neighbourhood', 'Victoria', 'Blog', and 'Contact'. Social media icons for Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, and Google+ are also present. The main content area is titled 'Blog' and features a post titled 'Get Your Greens in Victoria, BC!'. The post text reads: 'Posted on February 23, 2014 by Kara Johancsik. Here, in Victoria our daffodils are about to start blooming! Or is it too soon to be boasting about that? Head to Victoria to recharge on green gardens and fresh local food! [Read More](#)'. A photo of a garden with purple and yellow flowers is shown. To the right, a 'RECENT POSTS' sidebar lists: 'Get Your Greens in Victoria, BC!', 'Innkeeper Ian!', 'Our Very Popular Mugs!', 'Valentines In Victoria', 'Abbeymoore Recognized for 5th Year in a Row', 'Gourmet Getaways and More - in the Toronto Star', 'The Victoria Film Festival's 20th Anniversary!', and 'Four things to look forward to in Victoria, 2014'.

Blog:Abbeymoore Manor, Victoria

Forums

A forum is an online community where people seek and share information and advice on various topics. Typically, a forum is a section of a website where users post and answer questions from other users. For example, TripAdvisor and Yelp have popular forums dedicated to specific regions and topics.

Forums are a valuable resource to learn what questions people have about your destination. Check them regularly for topics relevant to your business. On TripAdvisor, frequent and valued contributors may be designated “Destination Experts,” and on Yelp they are designated “Elite” status. Your reputation audit will help you find other forums popular in your sector and destination.

When posting messages on forums be open about who you are. Do not directly promote your business as it may be off-putting for other members.

439 topics from our community Ask a question

1-20 of 439 topics « 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 ... 22 »

Topic	Replies	Last post
6 Nights in Okanagan Valley to long?? by jjmurphy	13	21 February 2014 by MuftiMixandm...
Rental cars by onesa	2	24 January 2014 by abigllama
which part of Kelowna to stay in by TAMember1234	15	15 January 2014 by gibee44
Vancouver to Kelowna by bus by jmack525	14	14 January 2014 by kalev33
Kelowna 2014 Victoria Day week-end group accommodation? by Andaw50	5	11 January 2014 by Andaw50

TripAdvisor Forum, Kelowna

4 Managing Listings and Content

Your Website: Make It Social

Your website remains the primary channel for promoting your business online. As noted in the Nielsen survey in Section 2, brand websites are the second most trusted advertising source for consumers.

To ensure your website stays relevant and appeals to both travellers and algorithms, keep content fresh and up-to-date. Add local information, social sharing buttons, links to social profiles and widgets showing followers and recent activity. Consider creating a “social hub” page—a single page where all of your social media content is displayed.

Ensure the content on your website is thorough, up to date, accurate and easy to navigate. The expectations you create through your web content will have a direct impact on guest reviews.

An increasing number of businesses are choosing to display TripAdvisor review widgets on their website. This can keep visitors from leaving your site in search of reviews, add credibility through third-party “earned” content, and increase conversion rates. TripAdvisor offers a variety of free widgets in its Management Center for displaying recent reviews, ratings and awards.



Facebook Like 403
Twitter Tweet
Google+ 52
Pinterest

recommended on
tripadvisor

**TOP RANKED
TOFINO HOTEL**
[why?]

BEACH BLOG
TOFINO'S ECO-FUTURE
Learn how the proactive efforts of Raincoast Education Society are helping to preserve the natural magnificence of Tofino and the surrounding area.

Social Website, Pacific Sands Tofino

Mobile: Decisions on the Go

In recent years, the growth of mobile devices has been explosive. Increasingly, people perform functions on smartphones that used to be reserved for desktop computers. This includes researching trips, searching for local businesses, making bookings, planning mapping routes and sharing experiences.

Most social channels have a mobile application and website that make it easy to view content on any type of device. Since information can be displayed differently on different devices, it is a good idea to check them to see how your content is displayed.

For example, on TripAdvisor's mobile application, only the five most recent reviews of a business are displayed. Users can click to see more reviews, but for people on the go this may be all they need to make a decision.

As for your website, a mobile-compatible design will ensure that visitors can easily

navigate content and make a booking regardless of the device they are using. This will help ensure mobile users do not abandon your site.

There are two ways to approach mobile compatibility. First, build a separate site for each type of device. This ensures a high level of customization and usability but can be expensive and difficult to maintain.

For most businesses, a more practical solution is responsive design. This is a process in which a website is designed to read the user's device, and formats content to fit the screen, whether it is a desktop, smartphone or tablet. It is less expensive and easier to maintain than having a separate site for each device.

Regardless of the solution you choose, make sure you have a prominent click-to-call option. Many people prefer to directly call a business to make a booking.



4 Managing Listings and Content

BC Tourism Business Profile: Ziptrek Ecotours

BC Tourism Business Profile: Ziptrek Ecotours

Since opening in Whistler in 2002, Ziptrek Ecotours has established itself as a global leader in zipline-based adventure ecotourism. Today the company ranks No. 1 in activities in Whistler and within the top 10 of nearly 1,000 activities in BC on TripAdvisor.

In this interview, co-founder David Udow and director of marketing Warrick Hubbard share some of the secrets to their success.

How did you achieve top 10 rankings in BC on TripAdvisor?

David Udow, co-founder and director: For many years we didn't have a TripAdvisor strategy; our customers did it all for us. Our ranking is testament to having a really good product and a critical mass of customers who want to talk about it. Great staff, great product and great service lead to positive reviews.

Today, everyone in our company is aware of the importance of our TripAdvisor ranking. We are incredibly focused on the guest experience. We're hands on with guides and guest services staff. Our policy is not to ask guests for reviews, but to allow it to be completely organic. We have enough customers who love our product, so we do not need to ask them.

How has this ranking helped your business?

David Udow: Putting reviews and certificates from TripAdvisor, Yelp and Foursquare on our website gives people the confidence to book us. As great as it is to be featured in the *New York Times* or *Daily Telegraph*, people are really interested in hearing from users and friends. People hear about us, check us out on a review site, and then book.

There are also recruitment benefits. People want to work with a winning team that takes really good care of customers and has a strong reputation.

We also use reviews as a mechanism to reward staff—sometimes verbally, and sometimes with rewards and prizes. On the rare occasion when we get a negative review, we have a system in place to respond.

Which other social media platforms do you find to be effective?

Warrick Hubbard, director of marketing: We've focused our energies on the primary ones—Facebook, Twitter and YouTube—but we also dabble in Instagram and Pinterest. Facebook and Twitter allow us to broadcast messages and information instantaneously, which is hugely beneficial. But they also allow our guests (both pre and post tour) to get to know a bit more about what we're all about.

How do you use video to promote your business?

Warrick Hubbard: We have our own YouTube channel. We typically upload content there first and then embed videos in our site. We've produced our own "corporate video" to promote and showcase the company, but we rely on user-generated content to profile our tours for a more authentic view.

Our business lends itself well to video and photos. In previous years video helped people visualize exactly what Ziptrek was all about (keeping in mind zip-line tours are only a decade old in North America, we being the first!). Today, devices like iPhones make it all the easier for people to capture content—and the quality has improved.

On sites like HelloBC and TripAdvisor, we take advantage of the option to showcase video content. For any special events we've been a part of (Super Bowl, Grey Cups, Stampede, San Francisco), we've uploaded video content early to garner exposure and awareness and archive it on our main site for people to reference.

How has your blog helped your business?

Warrick Hubbard: Our blog was started primarily to drive a deeper understanding of the company and our offerings, but it also clearly has beneficial Search Engine Optimization (SEO) aspects as well. Being a smaller, private, entrepreneurial company, we have some resource limitations, but we want to publish relevant and quality content rather than a bunch of random posts.

David Udow: Our blog is a vehicle for getting people interested in topics related to our business such as sustainability and taking care of the planet. Even though they might not visit us often, our fans and Facebook friends are receptive to and interested in these types of topics.

Any advice to share with other BC tourism operators?

Warrick Hubbard: Look for ways your customers can be advocates for your company. Social media is an obvious one. Encourage feedback of every kind—certainly on review sites. But we also email out our own Net Promoter survey post-tour in order to acquire feedback on the overall experience, perceived value, why they chose Ziptrek, best and least favourite parts, and whether they would recommend us. A business can learn a lot from listening to customers.

Find out more at www.ziptrek.com/whistler-canada.

5 Monitoring Activity and Measuring Performance

Sometimes we are so eager to get our messages out, we forget the most important part of social media: listening. By listening to and monitoring activity, you learn about customer tastes and preferences, the strengths and weaknesses of your business and your competitors, and opportunities to attract new customers. It is also an opportunity to identify and resolve issues, and enhance the customer experience.

Given the number of social channels and the volume of content shared daily, monitoring activity can be a daunting task. In this section we review five areas to focus on to most effectively monitor social channels and measure performance.

1. Appoint a Gatekeeper

As discussed in Section 3, an individual should be designated the official “gatekeeper” responsible for monitoring social channels and disseminating feedback to appropriate staff. Depending on the size and structure of your business, this may be a designated social media administrator, an administrative coordinator or a senior manager.

However, even a dedicated gatekeeper will find it challenging to keep tabs on all social media activity. Fortunately, there are tools that help save time and create efficiencies, from basic alerts to comprehensive reputation management tools.

2. Utilize Timesaving Tools

There are three main types of social media management tools:

- **Monitoring Tools.** These tools help you track and organize mentions of your business and other keywords specified by you, even when you are not logged on to the social networks.
- **Management Tools.** These tools allow you to administer multiple social networks and profiles from one dashboard. You can segment feeds, schedule posts and distribute content on multiple channels.
- **Analytics Tools.** These tools track, measure and benchmark social media activity by providing data and analysis related to followings, demographics, customer sentiment, achievement of objectives and competitive performance.

Most social channels, including TripAdvisor, Facebook, Google+ and YouTube, offer free basic monitoring, managing and analytics features.

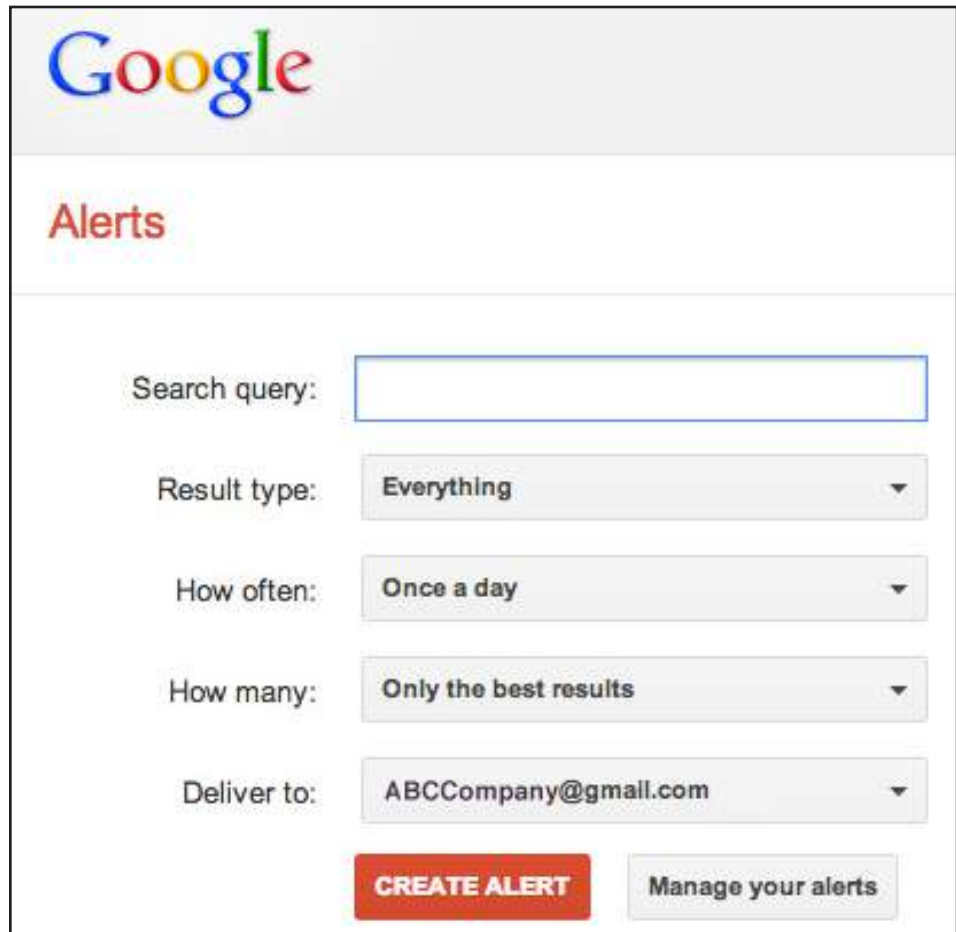
Alerts.

Alerts are the simplest, most popular monitoring tools. They notify you via email or text message whenever your business or designated keywords are mentioned online. Rather than you searching for mentions, they find you.

We recommend setting up the following alerts:

- **Google Alerts.** To be notified of public mentions across the Web, including websites, review sites, blogs and open forums.
- **TripAdvisor and Yelp Alerts.** To be notified when someone posts a review of your business.
- **Facebook and YouTube Notifications.** To be alerted to user activity on your page or channel, e.g. when someone “likes” your content, posts to your page, subscribes to your channel or sends you a message.
- **Twitter Notifications.** To be notified of activity on Twitter such as mentions, retweets, favourites and new followers. You can set up a Twitter profile and alerts even if you do not maintain an active Twitter feed.

While alerts are free, they will not catch everything. It is still good practice to regularly visit these channels to check for reviews and mentions. You can also invest in a paid **monitoring tool**, which will do a more thorough job of tracking mentions and providing more in-depth analytics.



Google Alerts

5 Monitoring Activity and Measuring Performance



Hootsuite feeds

Here are a few popular monitoring options:

- **Hootsuite, SocialMention and SocialOomph** offer a combination of monitoring, management and analytics functions. You can opt for a free basic version or pay to upgrade to a premium version with advanced features.
- **Radian6, Sprout Social, Topsy, Trakur and BrandWatch** are paid tools that offer a combination of monitoring, management and analytics functions.
- **ReviewPro, Revinate and TrustYou** are three tools that specialize in online reputation management for hotels and restaurants. TrustYou also serves destinations.
- **TweetDeck**, owned by Twitter, is a free tool for monitoring and managing Twitter activity.
- **Twellow and WeFollow** are Twitter directories that help you find users by interest, profession, expertise, region and other attributes.
- **Klout, CrowdBooster and PeerIndex** assess social media influence.

3. Determine Keywords to Monitor

The number of keywords you can monitor on social channels is virtually unlimited, but you will need to do some experimenting to generate the most relevant results. At a minimum, monitor your business name and any associated brand names such as an affiliate restaurant, gift shop or rental company.

Additionally, track names of senior managers, competitors, key clients and topics related to your business, destination and tourism in general.

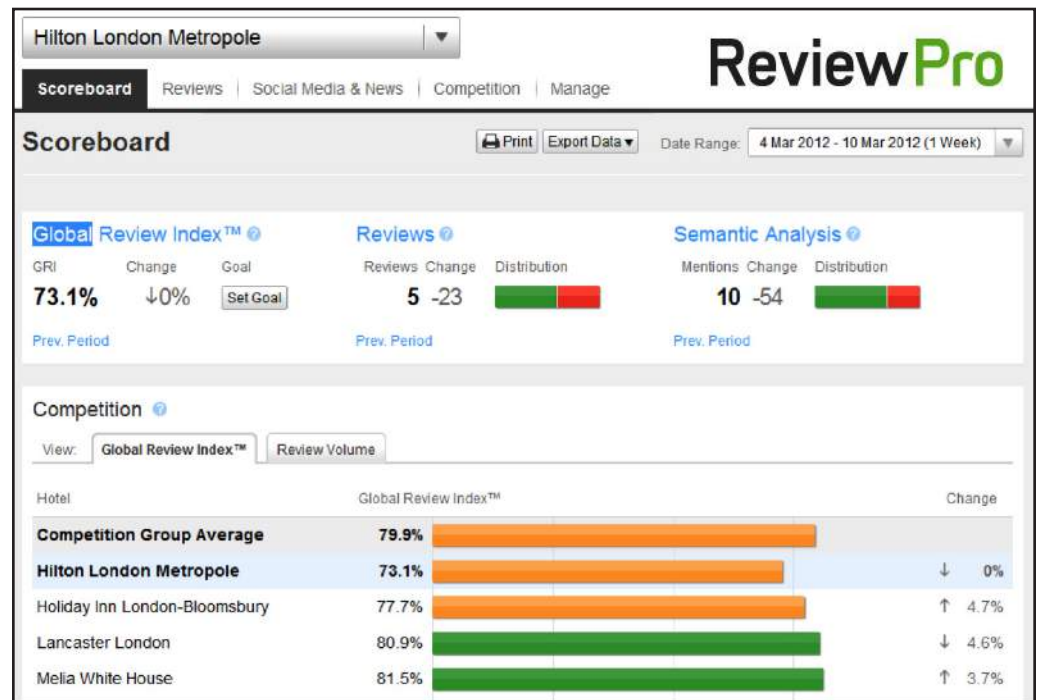
Try different keyword variations to see which ones produce the best results. If your search term is too broad, such as “travel British Columbia,” your inbox may be flooded with irrelevant alerts. If it is too specific, such as “ABC whale-watching tours and excursions Ucluelet BC,” you may miss relevant mentions. A more fitting term might be “whale-watching tours Ucluelet.”

4. Measure Performance

To assess your progress toward achieving objectives, measure performance over time. This will determine which strategies are working and which are not. Demonstrating results will help you gain buy-in from colleagues and approval for resources.

Key Performance Indicators (KPI) are the most important measures of a business' success in reaching its objectives. Here we look at KPIs for three main areas of performance measurement in social media: Review Performance, Social Networking Site Performance and Website Performance.

A) Review Performance



ReviewPro dashboard www.ReviewPro.com

5 Monitoring Activity and Measuring Performance

By monitoring and measuring performance on review sites, you will gain an understanding of customer likes and dislikes, how you are performing relative to competitors and local businesses, comparative strengths and weaknesses and where there is room for improvement.

Review performance is fairly easy to measure: review sites require customers to rate businesses as part of a review, typically on a scale of 1 to 5. Some sites also allow reviewers to rate attributes such as service, quality and ambience.

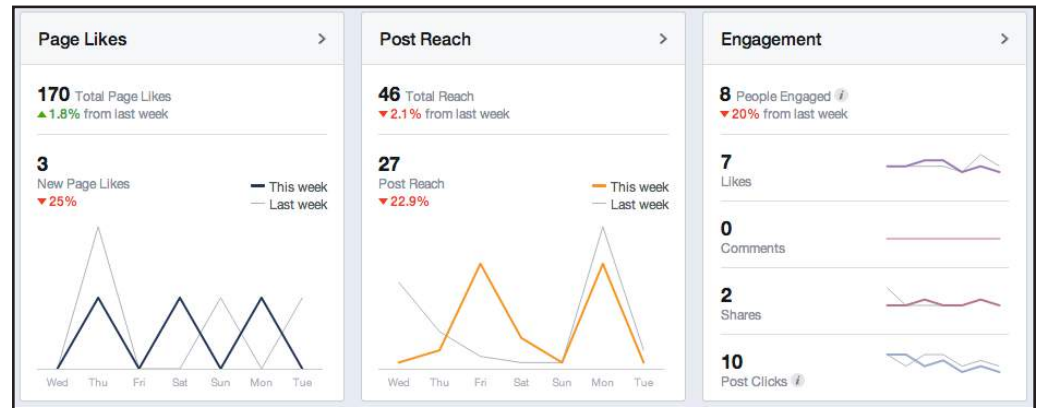
Analyzing the commentary in guest reviews is more complex. Like comments on social networking sites, text in reviews is freeform and unstructured, often containing both positive and negative remarks. You will gain insight by reading review commentary, but it is difficult to quantify this content.

A social media analytics tool such as Revinat performs **sentiment analysis**, a process whereby review comments are analyzed for meaning, and words and phrases are classified as positive, negative or neutral. When a large number of reviews are analyzed, patterns emerge to help you decide how to act.

For review performance, key performance indicators may include:

- Ranking and rating on individual review sites
- Aggregate score from combined review sites (this data can be provided by a reputation management tool such as ReviewPro or Revinat)
- Department ratings
- Volume of reviews
- Review sentiment (e.g. the number of positive and negative reviews)

B) Social Networking Site Performance



Facebook Insights

Measuring performance on social networking sites is not as simple or straightforward as on review sites. It is difficult to quantify progress toward achieving broad objectives like awareness and customer satisfaction, and to draw a direct line between social networking activity and revenue.

Numbers tell us part of the story, such as the number of fans and followers. However, fans have value only if they are truly interested in your business. A more helpful metric is engagement.

As previously discussed, engagement is a customer's interaction with you on social channels. It can be measured by the number of likes, shares, comments, mentions, retweets, favourites and pluses you receive, as well as the number of people who check in to your business from social channels.

For social networking sites, key performance indicators may include:

- Reach (number of fans and followers)
- Engagement (e.g. likes, comments, shares)

- Demographics and psychographics (where your followers are from, as well as their activities and interests)
- Conversions (bookings and/or revenue generated)
- Campaign performance (the above measures tracked by campaign or post)

The number of conversions or revenue generated might be low or even nonexistent. This is, in part, due to the difficulty of drawing a direct line between social media activity and bookings, but also because social networking sites are rarely used as direct booking channels.

However, social networking sites still have value. By helping to build awareness, increase customer satisfaction and advocacy and build long-lasting customer relationships, social media generates new and repeat business and contributes to the bottom line in ways that are not always quantifiable.

5 Monitoring Activity and Measuring Performance

C) Website Performance

Social Network	Visits	↓	Pageviews	Avg. Visit Duration	Pages / Visit
1. Twitter	403		550	00:00:49	1.36
2. Facebook	218		285	00:01:39	1.31
3. LinkedIn	201		494	00:02:23	2.46
4. WordPress	166		266	00:01:40	1.60
5. Google+	76		89	00:00:25	1.17
6. HootSuite	20		32	00:01:25	1.60
7. Pinterest	15		81	00:08:41	5.40
8. Blogger	12		20	00:00:24	1.67
9. Netvibes	12		23	00:00:36	1.92
10. SlideShare	12		37	00:02:02	3.08

Google Analytics Social Referrals

Google Analytics is a powerful free tool that can help you understand the interplay between your website and social channels. It will tell you how many visitors each channel drives to your website, what the visitor activity is, and which content is shared on social channels via sharing button activity.

If you set up e-commerce tracking features on your booking engine, Google Analytics can also track bookings referred by social channels, the pages people visit on the path to conversion, and the amount of revenue generated. You will need to assign booking and tracking codes to measure the results of campaigns and overall performance.

For your website, key performance indicators related to social media may include:

- Referral traffic from social channels, including number of page views and visit duration
- Social plug-in activity
- Conversions (bookings and/or revenue generated)
- Campaign performance (the above measures tracked by campaign or post)

5. Report Performance

Finally, once you have determined your key performance indicators in each area, set targets related to your objectives and create a weekly or monthly report to track them.

Share the highlights with staff to cultivate the team approach to reputation management discussed in [Section 3](#). Integrate the setting of targets and performance evaluation methods in your annual budgeting and planning.

Online Reputation Management: Delta Hotels and Resorts

Online Reputation Management: Delta Hotels and Resorts

In 1962, Delta Hotels and Resorts opened its first property at the Vancouver International Airport; today they are one of the leading hotel brands in Canada. The company operates more than 40 hotels, including nine properties in British Columbia. It is fully Canadian-owned and has been ranked as “one of the 50 Best Employers in Canada” by Aon Hewitt for 14 years.

Online reputation management is an important part of Delta’s success. Here Ricardo Nicholas, Director, Brand Performance, discusses the company’s approach.

Tell us how Delta Hotels and Resorts manages its social media and online reputation management functions.

As a brand we have always encouraged guests to speak with us through numerous channels (telephone, email, our website, electronic surveys, correspondence, etc.). We have a longstanding program called the “Voice of the Guest” that allows guests to contact us at any time through any of these channels. All guest feedback is a priority and is acknowledged and responded to within a defined timeframe.

We have introduced a similar approach to managing social media, with individual properties monitoring and responding to online reviews on a daily basis. As a safety net we monitor reviews and comments to ensure that responses reflect the tone of the brand. All of this is structured and measured to ensure compliance to our brand standards.

Do you subscribe to a reputation management tool?

While we have been responding to various online reviews over the last few years at the property level, we were looking for a more structured and measured approach to managing this space. Social media now, more than ever, is a platform for consumers to share their experiences (positive and negative) and this plays a key role in influencing and shaping travel decisions and choices. As a brand we developed our social media program as a means of better understanding and managing our reputation in this space.

Through extensive research, we sourced a management tool that would allow us to accomplish a variety of objectives. We chose Revinat because, in addition to allowing us to track and respond to guest feedback in a quick and easy fashion, we also have the ability to measure public satisfaction and sentiment toward our brand while at the same time monitoring the various trends of both our brand and our competitors. Our overall objective was to be able to quickly and effectively engage with our guests within the social space, creating a positive online reputation.

What are the benefits of a reputation management tool?

The tool we employ is user-friendly and easy for individual hotels to engage with minimum training as well as to respond quickly to guests. The reporting features provide both property-specific trending and direct competitor benchmarking. Revinat also provides an overall brand perspective through its centralized dashboard as well as additional trending and measurement features.

5 Monitoring Activity and Measuring Performance

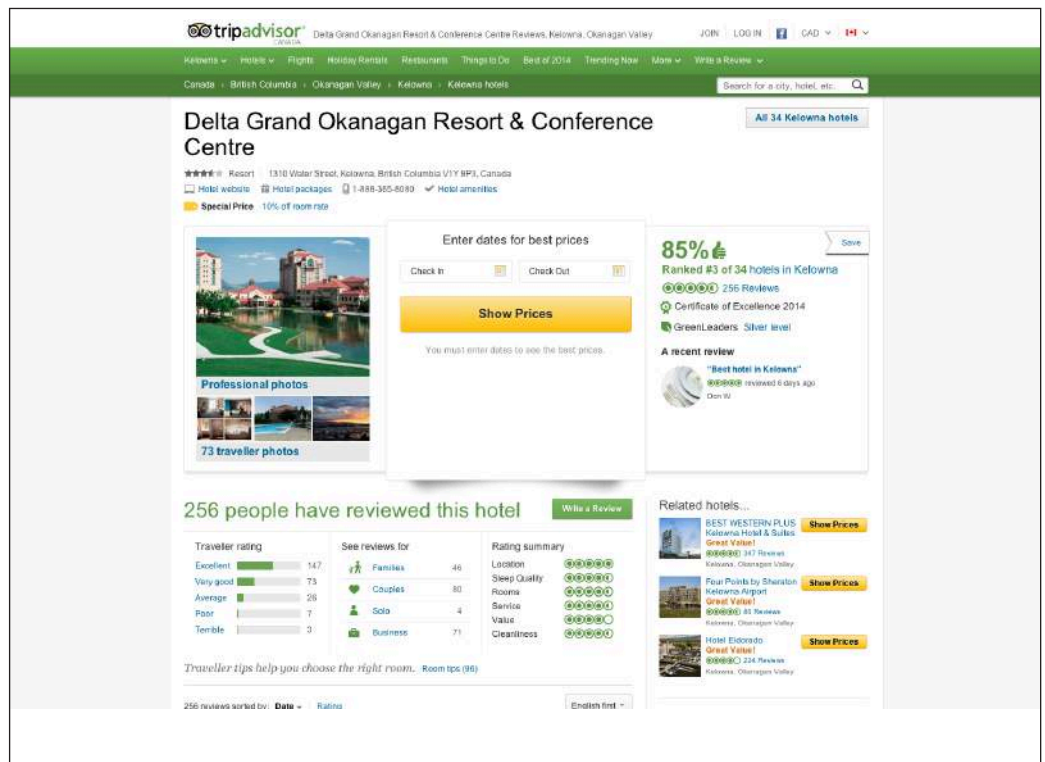
Online Reputation Management: Delta Hotels and Resorts

Do your hotels respond to online reviews?

Currently all of our properties are expected to respond to all online reviews within a defined response timeline. This is based on the time the reviews first appear on Revinate. Our brand guidelines outline that a personalized response is required and not a scripted response.

Do you have any recommendations for other tourism businesses that want to better manage their reputation?

Use every opportunity available to truly listen and honestly engage with your customers, and utilize the feedback to create meaningful relationships and lasting improvements to your brand.



TripAdvisor

6 Acting on Feedback

An integral part of your reputation management program does not take place online; it takes place on-site, at your business. The way you react to guest feedback will have a direct impact on your ability to attract new and repeat customers.

There are two aspects to responding to feedback. The **internal response** is how you communicate feedback to staff and determine which actions to take. The **external response** is how you publicly reply to feedback. This section focuses on the internal response. The external response is addressed in the next section.

Ten Steps for Managing Customer Feedback

Here are 10 ways to internally manage feedback in ways that increase customer satisfaction, boost employee morale and build guest loyalty and advocacy.

1. Welcome Feedback of all Kinds

Social feedback provides valuable insight into ways to improve your business and stay ahead of the competition. Businesses used to hire mystery shoppers to evaluate services; now travellers do it for you and pay for the privilege. Furthermore, review sites expose your business to a volume of travellers you could never hope to reach through your own marketing efforts—at no charge.

That said, raw feedback can sometimes be hard to take. Social media gives voice to all types, from the easily impressed to the seemingly impossible to please. Sometimes criticism is fair, sometimes not. However, there is always something to learn. Listen to the feedback, take appropriate action, then let it go.

Most travellers do not expect perfection, but they do want to know what to expect, and they want businesses to deliver on those expectations. The occasional negative comment is not likely to deter them. In fact, a variety of feedback can add credibility and filter out people who might not be the best fit for your business.

2. Analyze Feedback to Determine Action

When reading feedback, answer the following questions to determine the best course of action:

- Is the information accurate?
- Is this a one-off incident or is there a pattern?
- Who needs to know about this feedback?
- What can we learn from this feedback?
- What actions can we take to prevent recurrence? Or, in the case of positive feedback, how can we encourage this type of commentary?

3. Share Feedback with Staff

Depending on the nature of feedback, sharing it with staff can be an effective way to motivate them, and to show them ways to correct the type of behaviour that elicits negative comments.

Use positive feedback to recognize employees for a job well done and motivate them to continue to exceed guest expectations. Make a copy of select reviews to display on your staff bulletin board, distribute them to staff by email and read highlights at staff meetings. When employees are mentioned by name, recognize them in person or by letter and place a copy in their personnel file.

Sharing negative feedback is more challenging. Staff need to hear what guests are saying, but it is important not to demoralize or demotivate them. These matters must be handled with care and sensitivity.

As a rule, praise in public and criticize in private. However, rather than criticize, constructively use the feedback as a learning tool to help the employee understand the guest's perspective. Ask the employee how he or she might have prevented the incident and turned it into a positive outcome. If a behavioral pattern emerges, take corrective action. Document feedback and discussions.

6

Acting on Feedback

4. Show Leadership

When discussing feedback with staff, avoid saying anything negative about reviewers; do not question their motives or denounce them as irrational or “impossible.” Staff will take cues from your behaviour and may interpret it as license to not take any feedback seriously. Demonstrate leadership by always being professional and showing respect for all reviewers.

5. Recognize and Reward

Offering incentives and rewards in cash or prizes is a great way to recognize staff achievements and encourage them to go the extra mile for guests. Recognize departments for positive feedback and ratings to engender healthy competition among departments. Celebrate important milestones such as the achievement of your targeted TripAdvisor ranking. Consider including reputation goals as part of management incentive plans.

6. Fix the Problem

In the age of social media, it is impossible to sweep things under the carpet. Issues need to be addressed, especially if they elicit frequent complaints. Fixing some issues may be as simple as changing policy and procedures, whereas others may require a significant investment.

If you do not have the resources to fix every issue, prioritize them according to the frequency and severity of feedback. Use the feedback to build a case with ownership to provide the resources required to resolve problems.

7. Train and Empower Staff to Resolve Issues

Some problems cannot be fixed. You may have recurring complaints about an inconvenient location or outdated furnishings that you simply do not have the resources to replace.

Even then, all hope is not lost. Online complaints are often less about the problem than about an employee’s response when

the problem was brought to their attention. Comments such as, “We told the front desk, but they didn’t do anything” and “They didn’t seem to care” represent a lost opportunity.

A key part of reputation management involves employee training and empowerment. Do your employees understand your business’ shortfalls, why they cannot be fixed, and how to explain them to guests? Are they empowered to offer options to compensate for disappointments and ensure guests do not leave dissatisfied?

With expert handling, employees can overcome shortfalls, but it is particularly difficult to overcome bad service. With training and empowerment, employees can prevent on-property issues from escalating to online complaints.

8. Use Feedback to Guide Decisions

As previously discussed, social media is not just a marketing function; it is a company-wide, brand-wide function that requires close cooperation and communication among departments. Every employee needs to know how your business is performing and how they contribute to that performance.

Here is an overview of the role of key departments in managing reputation:

• Sales, Marketing and Reservations

These employees play a key role in establishing expectations for customers. Ensure you are setting realistic expectations in your promotional messaging, advertising and marketing materials, and sales and reservations communications. Use guest feedback to adjust messaging as necessary.

• Operations

Whereas sales, reservations and marketing staff set expectations, operations staff are responsible for delivering on expectations. These departments must work closely together to ensure your business is under-selling and over-delivering rather than vice versa.

Use customer feedback to guide decisions related to staffing levels, services and amenities, and quality. For example, housekeeping staff must be alerted to cleanliness issues, and kitchen staff must be aware of comments related to menu items.

- **Revenue Management**

As the Cornell study discussed in [Section 2](#) demonstrates, reviews have a direct influence on demand for products and services. If your business receives high ratings, you can charge more. If you receive low ratings, you will have a harder time selling products and services, even at a discount. If guests complain about lack of value, you will need to either improve quality or lower prices to stay competitive.

- **Human Resources**

In addition to using customer feedback to recognize employees and determine training needs, use it to guide recruitment decisions. If you are not confident a job candidate will consistently meet or exceed brand expectations—keep looking. Moreover, many job-seekers check out review sites before deciding where they want to work. A strong reputation will help you attract star candidates.

When orienting new employees, share guest feedback and reputation goals to demonstrate how customers perceive your business and what your expectations are.

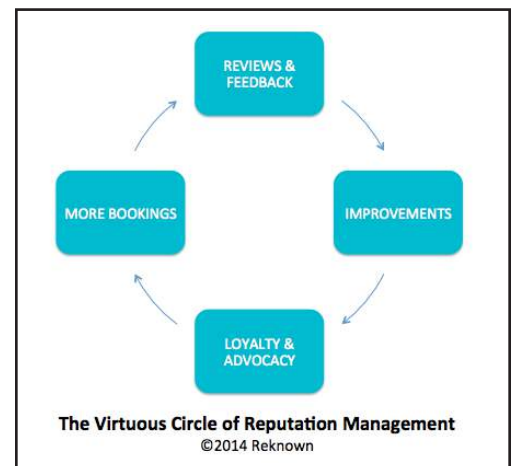
- **Senior Management and Ownership**

Support of upper management and ownership is critical to convey the importance of reviews to employees. Moreover, it is up to upper management to make available the resources necessary to achieve reputation goals, whether through capital upgrades, training, staffing, improved services and amenities or technology upgrades.

9. Create a Virtuous Circle

By listening to guest feedback and using it to guide improvements, you will increase customer satisfaction, receive better reviews and attract more customers. In turn, you will attract more revenue and, in turn, more feedback. This creates a virtuous circle that can be very healthy for your business.

Alternatively, if you ignore feedback, you risk receiving negative reviews that will frighten off prospective customers and decrease revenue. This creates a vicious circle that can be very damaging to business.



10. Respond to Feedback

As discussed in the next section, responding to reviews and social media commentary shows that you are listening and that customer feedback is important to you.

6 Acting on Feedback

WorldHost® Training Services

Some tourism operators are reluctant to invest in staff training due to the high turnover that is typical of the industry. “What if I train them and they leave?” they ask. Well, what if you don’t train them and they stay?

WorldHost Training Services, a division of Destination BC, offers internationally recognized training solutions to meet the needs of the tourism industry. A variety of customer training products are available, from self-directed online learning courses to customized training programs. Recently, WorldHost introduced a series of online courses entitled Remarkable Service in the Age of Social Media.

For more information, visit www.WorldHostTraining.com.

The screenshot shows the homepage of WorldHost Training Services. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'HOME | ABOUT US | CONTACT US' and a search icon. Below the navigation bar is a large banner image showing a woman in a patterned jacket talking to a man in a suit in a hotel lobby. Underneath the banner are five service categories: 'WorldHost Workshops', 'WorldHost Network', 'International Licensing', 'Customized Training', and 'WorldHost Online Training'. The main content area features a heading 'World-Class Customer Service Training for Tourism & Hospitality' followed by a paragraph about the program's history and a list of services. A video player is embedded, showing a man and a woman. To the right of the main content is a sidebar with various interactive elements like 'Register for Training', 'Subscribe to WorldHost e-News', and 'Become a WorldHost Recognized Business'. At the bottom, there is a 'Tweets' section showing a tweet from Ed Gavine.

WorldHost

Tips from TripAdvisor's Top-rated BC Restaurants

Tips From TripAdvisor's Top-rated BC Restaurants

When it comes to managing reputation, restaurants have several unique challenges. Typically, customers arrive with high expectations and stay for a short time, leaving a small window in which to impress them—or to turn things around if something goes wrong.

With the popularity of mobile devices, restaurant customers often post comments, reviews and photos on social networks while at the dinner table. In addition to TripAdvisor, Yelp, Facebook and Twitter, there are dozens of restaurant review sites, including CitySearch, Urbanspoon and OpenTable.

Given the challenges, we asked a few BC restaurants how they manage to stay on top of social media and achieve top rankings on review sites.

“Hire good staff and keep them!” recommends Richard Norwood, owner of Norwoods in Ucluelet, rated #6 of more than 12,000 restaurants in BC (#1 in Ucluelet) on TripAdvisor at time of publication. “Use quality products and above all always put yourself in the guest’s shoes. It is hard to screw up if you do that.”

Without his core group of staff, achieving his TripAdvisor ranking would have been impossible, says Norwood. “We are a small restaurant (just 28 seats), so the setting is intimate. Also the kitchen is completely exposed, which creates a certain honesty between guests and the kitchen brigade.”

Norwood says that generating reviews for his restaurant is an organic process. “Having guests submit reviews is not something we push.” However, he does keep a sharp eye on review sites. In addition to TripAdvisor, he monitors reviews and commentary on Urbanspoon, Chowhound, Facebook and Yelp.

At Allegra Restaurant in Cranbrook, staff invite customers to write reviews. “We do this by including a TripAdvisor business card with the bill,” says owner Thomas Nay. “We also encourage our customers to ‘like’ our Facebook page.” In addition, the restaurant displays a TripAdvisor review widget on its website.

Nay says that success comes down to pleasing customers. “I don’t think the ranking can be influenced in any other way than by providing an exceptional product and great service.”

6 Acting on Feedback

Tips From TripAdvisor's Top-rated BC Restaurants

Cedar House Restaurant in Golden, which often ranks in the top 20 of BC restaurants on TripAdvisor at time of publication, also displays a TripAdvisor badge on its website and invites patrons to submit reviews. However, proprietor Darrin DeRosa attributes the success to exceeding expectations.

“The food has always been incredible and we use as much organic [ingredients] as possible,” he explains. “We all work as a team ... I am involved in every aspect of the business, including being on the floor serving and in the dish pit at the end of the night.”

How have high ratings and rankings affected revenue? “The effect on our business has been substantial,” says Norwood.

Nay agrees. “The results so far are fantastic,” he says. “We get a lot of comments from travellers who say they decided to visit our restaurant based on reviews. In the highly competitive restaurant industry, social media is a way to help spread the word. I find it a must to have as much exposure on such sites as possible. It might be a bit time consuming, but it is worth it.”

Asked if he has any advice for BC restaurateurs who desire similar success, Nay replied, “Above all, every customer needs to be viewed as a potential critic.”



Destination British Columbia

7 Responding to Reviews and Social Media Commentary

The previous section reviewed the internal response to social media feedback. In this section we will look at the external response.

Given the public nature of social media, responding to customer feedback can be a daunting task. If you say the right thing, you will reassure travellers and attract business. If you say the wrong thing, you may anger the reviewer and frighten prospects away.

In this section we address common questions that tourism businesses have about responding to reviews, to give you the knowledge and confidence you need to respond effectively to feedback. Every business will have a different approach, so adapt the guidelines to fit the unique personality of your company.

Responding to Reviews: Answers to Common Questions

Why should we respond?

Whether a comment is positive, negative or mixed, responding will show that you are listening and you care. It is an opportunity to change impressions, to reassure travellers and to highlight the positive.

Responding to negative feedback is especially important. If you do not respond, travellers will draw their own conclusions, and that may be “I guess it is true” or “Management doesn’t care.”

It is also a good practice to respond to positive feedback. This is an opportunity to show you are listening, to emphasize the positive and thank your advocates.

In a 2012 survey of TripAdvisor users conducted by PhoCusWright, 57% of respondents agreed that seeing a hotel management response to a review made them more likely to book a hotel. In turn, 84% agreed that an appropriate management response to a bad review improved their impression of the hotel.¹

Who should respond?

To show how seriously you take customer feedback, responses should ideally come from a senior manager.

Which reviews should we respond to?

It is up to you, but you should not feel obliged to respond to all reviews. Reply when you have something of value to add to the conversation. Prioritize reviews that call for an apology, a clarification or a thank-you.

In certain cases, such as when the reviewer is clearly irrational or vindictive, you might choose to not respond. Travellers will read between the lines, and others may spring to your defence. In other cases you may want to contact the reviewer directly, by email or telephone. If you do not have the contact details, TripAdvisor, Yelp and Booking.com allow direct messages.

In any case, if you are sincere, reasonable and professional in your approach, the reviewer might revise or remove the review.

Some review sites do not allow management responses. At time of publication, TripAdvisor, Yelp, Google Places, Expedia, Hotels.com and Travelocity allow responses.

¹ TripAdvisor. (2012.) *Survey finds half of TripAdvisor users will not book a hotel that has no reviews.*

7 Responding to Reviews and Social Media Commentary

Responding to Reviews: Answers to Common Questions

In any case, if you are sincere, reasonable and professional in your approach, the reviewer might revise or remove the review.

When should we respond?

The sooner the better, ideally within 24 hours. The longer a complaint lingers unacknowledged, the more travellers it may frighten away. Investigate first to ensure you understand what happened. If you are feeling angry or bitter, draft a reply and sleep on it, then ask a colleague to read it over before you post it.

What should we say?

Most reviews contain a mix of pros and cons. If the negative comments are minor, focus on the positive. If the negative comments are significant, acknowledge the positive first, then the address the negative.

Be brief, and focus on the key points. Travellers skim reviews and may skip over a lengthy response. Thank the reviewer for the feedback, apologize if something went wrong and indicate how you are following up. If the reviewer was mistreated, readers will be looking for reassurance that the same thing will not happen to them. Provide a brief explanation if appropriate, but no excuses.

Readers will be put off by “canned” responses, corporate speak and overt promotion. Keep a database of responses to save time, but personalize each answer by speaking to the specifics of the review. Be careful not to say anything to provoke, as the reviewer may take the matter up elsewhere.

How should we say it?

Social media calls for an informal, conversational tone, but always be professional. Use “I” to express personal concern and “we” to express the collective concern of staff. Personalize your reply with your name and title rather a generic “The Manager.”

As the voice of your business, your responses should demonstrate the same professionalism and attention to detail that you provide on-site. Avoid excessive punctuation and capital letters, and watch spelling and grammar. Ask a colleague to proofread your response before posting it.

Show that you are a reasonable person who is committed to customer satisfaction. Avoid saying “It is our policy” or telling the reviewer what they should have or could have done. Never offer compensation, as it might encourage others to post complaints. Do so only in private communications.

What if it is a personal attack?

If an employee has been singled out, avoid mentioning the employee in your response. Say that you have reviewed the issue with staff and, if appropriate, offer apologies. If you feel compelled to defend the employee, you might say something like, “I was surprised by your comments about our reservations agent, who is one of our best.”

What if the review contains false information?

Misinformation typically arises out of misunderstandings and forgetfulness rather than deliberate maliciousness. If it will set expectations you cannot meet, post a response to respectfully clarify the information.

If the review is false and damaging, or you suspect it was posted by a disgruntled ex-employee or competitor, dispute it with the host site. Review fraud is a controversial issue in the travel industry. While it is probably not as common as some would like us to think, it does happen. Review sites take fraud seriously. For instance, TripAdvisor has a department dedicated to combatting such activity.

Responding to Reviews: Answers to Common Questions

Note, however, that review sites typically will not remove a review unless the business can prove it is fraudulent or violates site rules. They may take the stance that the guest is entitled to his or her opinion and suggest that you post a reply to provide your own perspective. If so, do this politely and respectfully. Clarify the matter, but never accuse a reviewer of dishonesty.

What if I can't fix the problem?

Be transparent. Acknowledge that it is an ongoing issue you are trying to resolve or cannot fix, and apologize for any inconvenience. Complaints about pricing, noise, location, services, facilities and other areas can help set expectations for other travellers and thereby reduce complaints.

If you get a lot of complaints about the same issue, respond to select reviews rather than all of them, which may come across as defensive. Rather than expend your energy on crafting clever responses, focus on finding a resolution.



Destination British Columbia

7 Responding to Reviews and Social Media Commentary

Examples of How to Respond to Reviews

The following are examples of possible responses to typical reviews. Adapt them to fit your unique personality and brand.

Value

Comments: “... Parking cost almost half the price of my room! Internet was \$16 for 24 hrs and the connection was slow. RIP OFF!!! ...”

Response example: “I am sorry that your Internet access was slow, which can happen in rare occurrences when guest traffic is high. Our pricing is comparable to similar properties in the area, and we feel we provide good value given our central location and extensive facilities. Nevertheless, I appreciate your feedback and have reviewed it with my management group.”

Service—Negative

Comments: “.... We had to wait a half-hour before being seated, and then no one came to

our table for 20 minutes. The server seemed rushed and impatient. By the time our food arrived we were starving, but it was so cold and unappealing we barely touched it ...”

Response example: “... Clearly we were not performing to our usual standards that evening, and for that I offer my sincere apologies. I have reviewed your feedback with staff, and we have implemented the following changes to ensure higher quality and consistency ...”

Service—Positive

Comments: “The young lady, Emily, who showed us around was so helpful and knowledgeable it really enhanced our appreciation of local culture.”

Response example: “... I’ll be sure to share your comments with Emily, who will be thrilled ...”

OPUSHotel, General Manager at Opus Hotel, responded to this review, 1 week ago

Dear TuckerVictoria,

Thank you very much for choosing to stay at OPUS and for taking the time to share your comments. We appreciated the level of detail in your feedback to us from your recent stay, and in turn allowing us to better understand where we can improve. I am glad our management team was able to speak with you at departure and to personally follow up on your points that you brought forward. We sincerely hope to welcome you back to the hotel in the future, at which time please contact me directly at ngandossi@opushotel.com and I would be happy to personally assist in anyway possible.

Thank you,

Nicholas Gandossi
General Manager

Examples of How to Respond to Reviews

Medical Issue

Comments: “Staff went above and beyond after my husband fell ill during the tour. The guide, who was certified in First Aid, attended to my husband until paramedics arrived, and later staff delivered our belongings to the hotel. Then that night the owner called to see how my husband was doing. We will be back!”

Response example: “Thank you for your kind remarks. We are happy that we were able to be of assistance. We wish your husband a speedy recovery and hope to welcome you both back soon.”

Cleanliness

Comments: “... our cabin was another story, however. The closet shelf was caked with dust, the whole place smelled like smoke, and there were cigarette burns in the carpet. It was supposedly nonsmoking!”

Response example: “... Thank you for bringing these items to our attention. I’ll get them fixed right away. Please accept my apologies ...”

Mixed Feedback

Comments: “Staff were warm and friendly, and our view of the ocean was magnificent. Our dinner couldn’t have been more perfect. The only issue was the band was a bit too loud, but they stopped at 10:00 PM.”

Response example: “Thank you for your kind remarks. I am delighted that you enjoyed the view and your dinner. We look forward to welcoming you back.”

Services

Comments: “There was no concierge, no bellman that I ever saw, and the kitchen closes at 9:00 PM! I expected more, and won’t be back.”

Response example: “... We are a limited-service property and our rates reflect this. Our kitchen had to close early that night due to unforeseen circumstances, and I apologize for the inconvenience. It is otherwise open until 10:00 pm. Front desk staff are on duty 24-hours to assist with luggage and recommendations ...”

False Allegations

Comment: “My wife’s purse went missing during the event and we’re certain it was stolen by one of the employees named Mark. When we complained, management said they weren’t responsible. Stay away from this place! Staff are thieves!!!”

Response example: “Finding your wife’s purse became a top priority the moment it was reported missing. We contacted the police at once, but as you are aware they were unable to determine what happened. Rest assured we have never had an incidence of theft in over 10 years of business. While we sincerely regret the situation, we feel we did our best under the circumstances.”

Décor

Comment: “It felt like staying at my grandma’s house – floral prints, doilies and trinkets everywhere. The owner was always skulking around, and we could hear everything from the guests next door – I mean everything! Next time it is a hotel.”

Response example: “We try to provide a homey, country-house environment, and the antique furnishings reflect our local history. We try to convey this clearly in the photos and descriptions on our website, but perhaps we could do a better job. In any case I’m sorry the décor wasn’t to your taste.”

7 Responding to Reviews and Social Media Commentary

Facebook

The same basic guidelines apply when responding to Facebook commentary as to online reviews, with a few important considerations. Most conversations that take place on Facebook are private, so unless it is posted to your page or within your network, you probably will not see it. Unlike review sites, which allow anonymous comments, Facebook comments are linked to the user's profile, so typically you know who you are interacting with.

When people post positive comments on your page, post a reply to thank them. It shows that you are listening, opens dialogue and may encourage others to share.

If someone posts a complaint, apologize as appropriate and say you are looking into the matter. After you have investigated, post a follow-up comment. If claims are false, respectfully clarify the matter. If the issue is serious or sensitive, take the matter offline by sending a private message or contacting the person directly.

Unlike review sites, Facebook allows you to delete comments posted to your page. Do so sparingly, and only if it is spam, offensive or particularly damaging. "Sanitizing" a page is frowned upon, and can trigger a backlash of negative commentary. As with all social channels, be open to all types of feedback.

The term "troll" refers to a person who makes off-topic or offensive comments online, deliberately intended to provoke a reaction. It is usually better to ignore trolls than to give them the attention they seek. Most people can easily spot a troll and will ignore their comments. As the saying goes, "Don't feed the trolls."

Facebook Response Examples

Facebook comment: "Our heli-skiing tour was awesome! We were up to our ears in powder, and the midday lunch break was delicious."

Response example: "We're so glad you had a great time! I'll be sure to pass your comments on to our guides and kitchen staff. We hope to see you back soon."

Facebook comment: "We were disappointed with the quality of the snow on our heli-tour. Lunch was soggy and there wasn't enough food."

Response example: "We're so sorry! While we can't control snow conditions, we can certainly control lunch. I have shared your comments with staff to ensure this doesn't recur. And I've sent you a personal note."

Twitter

When responding to comments on Twitter, use the same basic guidelines as you would with online reviews and Facebook, with a few special considerations.

Twitter is increasingly used as a customer service channel, whether to make inquiries prior to a visit or to share impressions during or after a visit. It is especially popular for real-time commentary on mobile devices. Therefore, monitoring is particularly important. It will help you identify and resolve issues before they escalate and find ways to connect with customers and enhance their experience.

Given the 140-character limit of tweets, travellers do not usually go into a lot of detail. Tweets also have a short shelf life compared to reviews. The audience is limited to followers of the person who sends the tweet, followers of anyone who retweets the message, and anyone who happens to be monitoring related keywords or streams. Typically tweets fade away very quickly—unless they go viral and cross over to other social channels.

As a general guideline, acknowledge positive tweets with a thank you. You might also retweet the message. For negative tweets, attempt to take the conversation offline. If the sender is not following you, you will not be able to send a direct message. Start your reply with the @username to limit how many people see it.

Twitter response examples

Tweet: “What a fantastic stay at the ABC Lodge! Can’t wait to go back!”

Response example: “We’re thrilled to hear you enjoyed your stay at @ABCLodge. We can’t wait to welcome you back to #Smithers!”

NEGATIVE

Tweet: “Stood in line for 20 mins to check out of ABC Lodge. Won’t be back! #Fail”

Response example: “@JohnSmith, we’re so sorry to hear we kept you waiting! Can we make it up to you? Please direct message me or email me at chelsea@abclodge.com.”

Protecting Your Brand

Occasionally damaging content will come from within a business, instead of an outside party. Whether it is an employee-made comment that offends others, or an employee confusing his personal channel with a business channel, employee errors and misjudgment can cause significant damage to reputation.

To prevent and mitigate such issues, follow these steps:

- Be sure to have a social media policy in place that clearly defines employee rules of conduct and emphasizes respect, openness and transparency.
- Encourage employees to read content thoroughly and to think before posting, sharing and commenting. All content should be considered public.

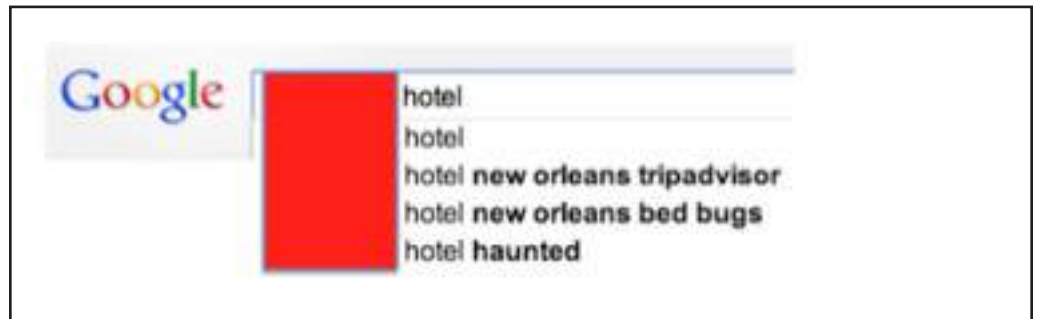
- When using tools such as Hootsuite, maintain separate accounts for personal and business profiles to avoid confusing them.
- If employees represent your business or comment on topics related to your business from personal accounts or blogs, they should add a disclaimer to say that the opinions are theirs and not those of your business.
- Prevent hacking by using strong passwords (alphanumeric, minimum 10 digits), changing them regularly, and using a different password for each channel.
- Limit access to social accounts to those responsible for sharing official content. If an employee leaves the company or is dismissed, immediately change passwords and cancel administration rights.

7 Responding to Reviews and Social Media Commentary

Handling Negative Online Feedback

What can you do if negative content related to your business comes up in search results? Each situation may call for different measures, but here are some general guidelines to follow.

- **Fix the problem.** If you do not go to the root of the issue, it will probably come up again. Make it a priority to resolve the problem.
- **Go to the source.** Search engines are rarely the originator of content; they pull it from online sources. Find out where the information is coming from.
- **Ask to have it removed.** Depending on the source, you may be able to flag the content as inappropriate or request that it be removed. Be polite and explain why. Do not be heavy-handed—that may make things worse.
- **Generate new content.** If you cannot get it removed, push it down in results by adding new content. Create profiles on major social networks, and generate news that will receive coverage on high-ranking sites and blogs.
- **Pursue legal action.** This should be a last resort, as lawsuits can be expensive, attract unwanted attention, and success is never guaranteed. However, if content is false and damaging, you may wish to consult a lawyer.



Google Search Autocomplete

A Social Media Crisis

Sometimes an issue goes beyond a negative review or damaging content to become a full-blown crisis that threatens to do serious harm to reputation. It may be a labour issue, an environmental crisis or mistreatment of a customer that goes viral. The source might be a disgruntled guest, an ex-employee, a competitor or a complete stranger. In certain cases you might not know who is behind it.

A crisis needs to be handled at the highest levels and may require the counsel of a public relations firm, lawyer or reputation management firm. Crisis management falls beyond the scope of this guide; however, there are a few basic guidelines that can help you avert a social media crisis and mitigate the damage if one occurs.

- **Be prepared.** Every business should have a social media policy in place with guidelines for employee conduct and the steps to take in the event of a crisis, including communication channels and responsibilities.
- **Act quickly.** Information can spread extremely rapidly in social media. If the issue threatens to go viral, there is no time for bureaucracy. Act quickly to contain the incident, but not before you have consulted professionals and understand the options and potential consequences.
- **Publish an official response.** People can be quick to condemn but may change their mind when they hear your side of the story. State your case with sincerity, be open and transparent, and speak to your company's track record. Use online and offline media to get the message out, but choose one channel for your official response (such as your website) and direct inquiries there.
- **Do not fan the flames.** Issues tend to die off quickly in social media. Once you have published a response, it might be better to go silent and wait for things to settle rather than risk drawing more wrath. Closely monitor the situation and modify your approach as necessary.
- **Rally supporters.** Ask for support and testimonials from your advocates, customers, employees and industry partners, and ask them to help spread positive information and clear up misinformation.

8

Building Communities and Advocacy

In this final section, we focus on how to strengthen reputation by preventing negative reviews, generating positive reviews and building and engaging communities on social networking sites.

Managing Expectations

EXPECTATIONS	IMPRESSION	TYPE OF CUSTOMER
FAIL TO MEET	DISSATISFIED	DETRACTOR - won't come back - may warn others to stay away
MEET	SATISFIED	PASSIVE - might come back - might recommend
EXCEED	VERY SATISFIED	ADVOCATE - will come back - will recommend

When customers arrive at your door, they have certain expectations of your service, facilities, amenities and staffing. You have three choices:

1. Fail to meet expectations.

This creates dissatisfied customers who may become **detractors**. Detractors are not only unlikely to come back, they may warn others to stay away. Social media makes it easy for them to reach large numbers of people.

2. Meet expectations.

This creates satisfied customers who tend to be passive. **Passives** might come back, but not if a better deal comes along. They might write a review, but it will be lukewarm or mixed. They will not be much help in spreading the word.

3. Exceed expectations.

This creates very satisfied or delighted customers who may become **advocates**. Advocates will not only come back, they will recommend your business to others. Social media makes it easy for them to reach large numbers of people.

The gap between customer expectations and results is where reviews and social media commentary are incubated: the positive, the negative and everything in between. By consistently exceeding expectations, you help create that virtuous circle we discussed in [Section 6](#).

Generating Positive Reviews

While the quality of reviews is most important, volume is important as well. Travellers want to see recent reviews to ensure they are getting up-to-date information. According to TripAdvisor, the three most important ingredients in the algorithm that determine how businesses rank on the Popularity Index are the quality, recency and volume of reviews.¹

This is why attracting a steady stream of positive reviews is in your best interest. Here are some suggestions for generating positive reviews and social media commentary:

1. Be Transparent

Setting realistic expectations means being honest and transparent about your offerings in marketing materials and communications. This includes pricing, fees, location, facilities and condition of facilities.

For example, if you are an accommodations operator that charges for Internet access, be upfront about this on your website and in confirmation letters; this will avoid disappointing guests. To appease them, you might offer free Wi-Fi in the lobby or a tiered system with free basic access.

Other complaints are more challenging to address. If you receive complaints about your location, you probably cannot move your business but you can manage expectations by being transparent about where you are. For instance, on your website you may include a detailed map, location description and distances to major attractions.

2. Ask for Reviews



TripAdvisor Review Card

Sometimes customers need a little nudge to remind them to tell the world how wonderful you are. However, not every business is comfortable with asking; it is really up to you. If you do solicit reviews, here are a few options:

- **Ask at departure.** If customers rave about the experience, ask them to share it on a review site and tell them how important reviews are to your business.
- **Give them a card.** Upon their departure, attach a flyer or business card to a guest's receipt as a reminder.
- **Send an email.** A post-stay email is the most effective way to generate reviews because people receive the request when they are at a computer or mobile device. Make it easy for them by including a direct link.

TripAdvisor offers a number of resources in its Management Center to help businesses solicit reviews. These include order forms for a limited supply of free business cards or flyers, and a free email service called Review Express.

While TripAdvisor encourages businesses to solicit reviews, Yelp discourages the practice. In fact, Yelp favours its regular users, and an automated fraud detection system often places reviews from first-time reviewers on a hard-to-find "Filtered Reviews" page.

¹ Reknown.com (2013.) *Eight key strategies for climbing TripAdvisor Rankings.*

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Building Communities and Advocacy

Generating Positive Reviews

3. Be Remarkable

As discussed, the most effective way to generate positive reviews is to consistently exceed expectations. Train and empower your staff to provide “**remarkable service.**” In the age of social media, the word remarkable takes on new meaning: it means “worth remarking about.”

People most remember negative experiences, surprises (both good and bad) and emotions (how you made them feel). Rather than lavish gestures, it is often the little details and special attention of staff that travellers remember most.

Be careful not to impose. Be inquisitive and intuitive, and tailor service accordingly. For example, if a customer asks for a map, and the employee provides a long and detailed overview of local restaurants and attractions, that might be welcome for a leisure couple visiting for the first time, but it may be off-putting for a busy corporate traveller. Inquire about preferences and pay attention to verbal and non-verbal cues.

4. Perform Temperature Checks

Despite our best intentions, problems still occur. How you handle them can make the difference between a positive or negative review. Most businesses wait until departure to ask guests how their visit was, but by then it may be too late.

As a preventative measure, train staff to perform **temperature checks** at various points during the guest’s stay. Use open-ended questions like, “How are you enjoying your visit so far?” and “Is there anything we can do to make things even more enjoyable?”

Temperature checks can help you identify and resolve issues before the customer leaves. They also unearth minor nuisances that can show up in reviews. For example, if a room attendant asks the guest how everything is in the room, the guest might mention a faulty iron, a burned-out light bulb or a missing room service menu. Temperature checks can also present opportunities to turn a happy guest into a delighted guest.

5. Build Reputation Across Channels

TripAdvisor may be the most-visited travel site in the world, but it is not the only place travellers go to seek opinions. As discussed in Section 4, there are numerous review sites and third-party websites that carry reviews and traveller recommendations. Do not put all your eggs in one basket; strive for positive reviews and high ratings on all popular review sites in your business sector.

6. Do Not Cheat the System

Offering incentives or rewards to guests for writing reviews, and asking employees to write reviews, is against the rules on review sites. TripAdvisor and Yelp have posted traveller alerts to listings of businesses suspected of such activity, which can frighten off prospective guests.

Moreover, by falsely “stacking the deck” you will set expectations you likely cannot meet, which can result in a backlash of negative reviews. You are better off focusing energy on fixing problems and generating positive reviews organically.

Also, note that encouraging guests to write reviews while on-site is not recommended; numerous reviews from the same IP address may trigger the review site’s fraud detectors.

7. Manage Threats from Potential Reviewers

What should you do if a customer threatens to write a bad review if you do not give in to their demands? Handle such situations with care. Take the threat seriously, but do not allow it to cloud your judgment.

Manage the situation as you would with any complaint. Do everything within reason to resolve the matter. Few guests will follow through with the threat once calmer heads prevail, especially if you conduct yourself calmly and professionally.

Afterward, record the details for future reference. If the guest does follow through, post a response to respectfully give your side of the story. If the guest comes across as irrational or abusive, readers are not likely to take him too seriously. If the claims are false and damaging, dispute the review with the host site. TripAdvisor has a Review Blackmail form in the Management Center that allows you to alert them of such situations as soon as they happen.

Have clear guidelines in place so staff will know what to do in such a situation, and have the confidence you will support their decisions.

8

Building Communities and Advocacy

Building Communities



Facebook page, Royal Museum Victoria

Having a presence on social networking sites is not enough. To leverage the power of social media, build and engage communities of advocates and people who share an interest in your business and destination and help spread the word. This may include former guests, prospects, media, bloggers, event planners, DMOs, tourism partners and other influencers.

Here are some tips for building and engaging communities:

- **Be likeable.** So you just want to be liked? Then be likeable. Be friendly, helpful, responsive, a good listener and supportive of your community.
- **Call on your supporters.** Ask suppliers, employees and tourism partners to follow you on social networks and share relevant content. Be sure to return the favour.
- **Be curious.** Interact with followers by posting questions related to your business and destination such as “What’s your favourite BC travel memory?” This will get them into a vacation frame of mind and encourage interaction. Plus, it will be seen by their friends.
- **Offer incentives and rewards.** Travellers often follow social channels to gain access to deals and promotions. Offer limited-time specials and exclusive offers to keep them engaged, encourage sharing and reward their support. Note, however, that offering incentives or rewards to travelers for writing reviews is against the terms of service of review sites like TripAdvisor and Yelp.
- **Hold contests.** Contests can boost followings, but quality is more important than quantity. Target potential customers rather than people who simply want free stuff. Engage them in a meaningful way. For example, ask them to tag imagery with your business name, take a quiz or vote on new service or idea.
- **Be relevant to brand.** According to Facebook, the biggest predictor of engagement is the relevance of posts to the brand. Focus on content that is related to your destination and the experiences you provide.
- **Advertise.** Most social channels offer paid options to increase and engage followings,

Building Communities

target users based on interests and location, and amplify reach. If you have an important post, consider boosting it with paid advertising.

- **Share imagery.** Posts with visuals capture more attention, occupy more real estate, and are more likely to appear in newsfeeds than regular posts. Create “social imagery” by taking photos and videos of activity on-site and in your area. Always tag imagery with your business name, location and description.
- **Source content from guests.** Encourage customers and followers to share imagery and stories related to your business and destination. Search the web, YouTube and photo sites for content, ask for permission to use and give credit.
- **Be a local expert.** Help travellers plan their trips by sharing travel tips and destination information. By positioning yourself as a local expert, you will instill confidence and increase conversions.
- **Find your voice.** Your tone and diction should reflect the nature of your business and convey authority and enthusiasm. You can outsource social media management, but the most authentic voice comes from someone who has a finger on the pulse of operations.
- **Integrate and cross-promote.** Integrate social media components into marketing campaigns and vice versa. Cross-promote social channels and promote them on your website, in marketing materials and on-site.



Destination BC Facebook Page

9 Summary

The many demands of managing your online reputation may seem overwhelming at first, but it will get easier over time. The key is to invest time at the beginning to whip your online positioning into shape. After that, it is a matter of keeping information up to date, building and engaging your followings, and monitoring and responding to feedback.

You will not be able to do everything, so focus instead on the activities that produce the greatest returns on objectives. As previously stated, it is better to manage a few channels exceptionally well than do a mediocre job of a lot of channels.

By dedicating time to familiarizing yourself with popular tools and platforms, you will be better positioned to adapt to changes over time.

Most importantly, you will be able to take advantage of the opportunities social media provides to drive higher awareness, customer satisfaction and revenue.

Ten Key Takeaways

1. Perform a reputation audit.
2. Set reputation goals and objectives.
3. Develop a social media policy and guidelines.
4. Complete your profile on key social channels.
5. Track and measure performance and share with staff.
6. Respond to customer reviews and commentary.
7. Set realistic expectations by being authentic and transparent.
8. Train and empower staff to resolve issues and recognize their successes.
9. Build and engage communities on social networking sites.
10. Be remarkable. Make sure your business earns a positive buzz.

10 Additional Resources

There are numerous online guides, how-to articles and news sites dedicated to social media including:

- Destination British Columbia Programs and Resources www.DestinationBC.ca
- Destination British Columbia Regional Destination Marketing Organizations www.DestinationBC.ca/Programs/Regions,-Communities-and-Sectors/Regional-Tourism-Programs/Regional-Partners.aspx#.Uv_KY0JdXUc
- WorldHost™ Training Services www.WorldHostTraining.com
- Social Media Explorer www.socialmediaexplorer.com
- Social Media Examiner www.socialmediaexaminer.com
- Social Media Today www.socialmediatoday.com
- Tnooz www.tnooz.com

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Appendix: Glossary

Alerts

Notifications of mentions of your business or specified keywords on social channels sent by email or text message.

Algorithm

In search marketing, a formula that determines which content appears in search results, and in what order, based on factors such as relevancy of the search term and the importance of the website.

Brand Website

The official website created by a business rather than a third-party reseller like an online travel agency.

Claiming your space

Registering your business on a social media channel.

Communities

Users of a social networking site or review site, including fans, followers and members.

Cost-per-click Advertising

An internet advertising model used to direct traffic to websites, in which advertisers pay the publisher when the ad is clicked.

Engagement

Interaction with users, followers and communities on social media channels.

External Response

How a business externally responds to customer feedback, such as posting a response, sending a private message or contacting the customer directly.

Gatekeeper

The individual responsible for monitoring social channels, disseminating relevant information to staff and posting official content on behalf of a business.

Goal

A broad, far-reaching outcome a business wishes to attain. It answers the question, "Where do we want to go?"

Googling

Using an Internet search engine to find information on a given word or phrase. Typically refers to this activity on Google.

Hashtag

A word or phrase preceded by a hash or pound sign (#) and used to identify messages on a specific topic on social networking sites.

Inbound Marketing

A marketing technique that focuses on being found by customers (rather than primarily finding them), by publishing helpful, relevant content on websites, blogs and social media channels.

Internal Response

How a business responds to feedback internally, such as sharing it with staff, reviewing policy and procedures and using it to guide improvements.

Key Performance Indicators

The most important measures of a business' success in reaching its objectives.

Location-based Social Network

A social network designed for use primarily on mobile devices, it allows users to "check in" to establishments, share their locations with friends, post comments, and earn points, badges and incentives from businesses.

Objective

A specific, measurable step to achieve a strategy.

Online Reputation Management (ORM)

The process of monitoring and engaging on the social web to drive higher awareness, customer satisfaction and revenue.

Organic Search Results

"Natural" or unpaid search engine results that are ranked by the search engine using an algorithm according to relevancy to the search term.

OTA (Online Travel Agency)

Short for online travel agency, an OTA is a website where consumers can plan trips and book flights, hotels and activities; companies pay a commission on bookings.

Outbound Marketing

Traditional “interruptive” or “push” marketing techniques such as email blasts, telemarketing and TV, radio and print advertising.

Paid Search Results

Search engine results that are purchased by an advertiser and marked by a shaded area or “Sponsored” label.

Real-time Commentary

Social media commentary that concerns what the user is thinking or doing right now.

Remarkable Service

Service so unexpected, special or memorable customers feel compelled to remark about it on review sites and social networks.

Responsive Design

A process by which a website is designed to read the user’s device, whether desktop, smartphone or tablet, and display content formatted to fit the screen.

Review Site

A website on which users post reviews about businesses, products or services, as opposed to professional reviews from experts and the media.

Sanitizing

The frowned-upon practice of brands deleting negative commentary from social networking sites such as Facebook.

SEO (Search Engine Optimization)

Formatting a website’s content and design in order to increase visibility in relevant organic (unpaid) results in keyword searches on search engines.

Sentiment Analysis

A process whereby reviews are analyzed for meaning and words and phrases are classified as positive, negative or neutral.

Social Media

A broad term that refers to web-based and mobile applications used for social interaction and the exchange of user-generated content.

Social Media Administrator

The individual responsible for managing a company’s presence on social media channels.

Social Media Analytics Tools

Applications that track and organize feedback and content on behalf of a business and provide data to help measure performance and understand customer feedback.

Social Media Management Tools

Applications that allow users to administer multiple social networks from one dashboard.

Social Media Monitoring Tools

Applications that track, organize and score feedback and commentary on review sites and social networking sites.

Social Media Policy

A code of conduct to guide employee social networking activity related to the company.

Strategy

The approach a business takes to achieve a goal. It answers the question, “How will we get there?”

Tactic

A tool used by a business to pursue an objective associated with a strategy.

Temperature Check

Checking in with a customer at key points during their visit to see how everything is going.

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Appendix: Glossary

Trolls

People who make off-topic or offensive comments online with the deliberate intention of provoking a reaction.

User-generated Content

Content created and shared primarily by consumers rather than marketers, journalists, experts and other paid professionals.

Vicious Circle

In reputation management, the process by which a business does not act on customer feedback, which could lead to more negative reviews and frighten prospective customers away.

Viral Content

Content – such as a video, photo or tweet – that is shared broadly and rapidly on the Internet and social networks.

Virtuous Circle

The process by which a business uses customer feedback to guide improvements, creating satisfied, loyal customers who write positive reviews.

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