

Manage Your Online Reputation

By [Helena Gospic](#)

Most job seekers prepare for their job search by updating their resume and networking and researching companies of interest, while overlooking one of the most critical steps in this process, cleaning up their online profiles. We are all so connected and reliant on digital media these days that we typically have profiles on multiple social media platforms. Many professionals maintain accounts with LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and possibly have a personal blog. Managing your online reputation should be an obvious step, but most job seekers do not recognize that employers and recruiters will first look you up online.

According to a 2010 research study, nearly **80% of companies conduct online searches of prospective employees. The study also found that almost 90% of companies state that a positive virtual reputation plays a major role in their decision to hire a candidate.**

With all the enjoyment and networking pleasure we get out of social media sites, it's important to keep in mind that others generate content about you as well. Your friends, colleagues and family member can mention you in online posts at their discretion and without your consent. This could be good or very bad. You can never be sure if a blog post mentions you in a negative light or an inappropriate video of past reckless behaviour ends up online. In cases where your online reputation is causing you embarrassment, it also has the potential to negatively affect or damage your professional life.

Take these steps to protect your online reputation.

Step 1: Google Yourself

Most people have Googled themselves before but if you haven't, then take a look. This is the first step someone who is interested in hiring you will take. Look at the results and the order in which they come up. Be aware that the links that come up first, second and third will likely get the most views. This is your online reputation, this is what people see when they look you up. If you are unhappy with it, you have the power to change it. Once you understand how you are viewed, you will be able to build on your profile in a positive way.

Step 2: Take Action

Take your virtual reputation seriously. If there is something online about you or associated with you that is incorrect, fix it. Find the source and asked to be removed or explain why the information is incorrect. Do not simply ignore these things because they won't go away without effort on your part. Be sure you haven't insulted any former employees or employers online. These types of comments will be damaging to your virtual reputation.

Step 3: Create and Update Your LinkedIn page

Make sure you have an up to date profile. Add skills and publications as often as they come up. Take the time to proof each section of your profile to be sure it is an accurate indication of your experience and expertise. Ask for recommendations from past employers and colleagues.

Step 4: Safe Tweeting

Go through your last week of tweets and click on all the links you posted. If this isn't something you want to be associated with then cater your future tweets to better reflect your personal brand. Check out who is following you and who your followers are, delete as you see fit. Keep in mind the background theme and image you choose and keep everything in line with your personal brand.

Step 5: Facebook Responsibly

Facebook might even be the most important to continually monitor because your friends are able to comment on your wall and tag you in anything. Be sure to un-tag yourself from any posts that do not portray you in a professional light.

After you have carefully reviewed and revamped your online reputation, continue to manage your online content keeping in mind that you are building a career-minded network on your social media profiles. Stay current as social media sites and professional networking online are growing at a rapid pace. Add new, positive and professional contacts as you continue to network and meet people.

There is no better way to improve your online reputation than by creating content such as a blog, podcast, or video. Provided it is tagged with keywords, along with a SEO (search engine optimized) friendly title and relevant description, it will score highly when someone types your name into Google. Blogging in particular is an effective way to document your thoughts, network and create a community of fans. There are also offline benefits to creating content as people recognize that it takes planning, creativity and commitment. Be sure to always take the time to review and filter any content you have online.

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