

Six Steps to Protecting Your Online Reputation

By Roberta M. Gubbins

Your online reputation and identity are vital to your practice. It doesn't matter if information on the internet is true or false; who you are in that community becomes reality to consumers searching for a lawyer. Knowing what's being said about you online is important for you to protect your reputation.

These steps can help ensure your online reputation is not costing you clients.

Check search engines monthly

Consumers are searching for lawyers online in record numbers. Review websites, blogs, and social media and search your name and firm name on major search engines to see what people are saying about you. The results of your search will likely include:

- Your LinkedIn profile
- Your bio from your law firm website
- Your Facebook, Twitter, and other social media accounts
- Images of you from around the web
- Articles and blogs in which your name appears

Review the results and edit as needed. It's important to update your profiles to help your page stay high in the search-engine rankings. Every time you write an article or complete a case, update your bio.



Set up a Google alert for your name

This is a great way to see when your name appears in search engines. To create an alert, go to the Google Alerts home page and type your name into the "Create an alert about _____" box. You can choose whether you'd like to receive daily or weekly email alerts.

Protect what you can

Check your social media privacy settings and make changes to suit your needs. Eliminate language and photos you don't like from your personal networks.

Register your name as a domain

This prevents someone else from taking it. Even if you don't use it right away, it will be in your control. Also secure your name on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter.

Publish regular, informative content

You can't control everything written about you, but you can control the content you provide. Regular and informative articles, blogs, podcasts, and features help keep your reputation positive.

Address negative reviews

Consumer research shows that a few negative reviews improve the credibility of the positive postings, and a negative review may reveal a procedure that needs changing. Responding to the negative reviews by restating your commitment to client service sends a powerful message to potential clients.

Protecting your online reputation is an important part of building and sustaining your practice. Knowing what's out there and correcting any problems helps ensure your online reputation doesn't cost you clients. ■

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Roberta M. Gubbins has served as the editor of the Ingham County Legal News. Since leaving the paper, she provides services as a ghostwriter writing and editing articles, blogs, and e-blasts for lawyers and law firms. She is editor of The Mentor, the SBM Master Lawyers Section newsletter.