

8 Steps to Manage your Online Reputation

Everyone plays a role in managing the online reputation and image of your organization. As a team leader, you can help make sure that everyone – from prospective residents, family members, and job hunters to legislators and the media – get the most accurate, up-to-date, and positive view of what is happening on a daily basis. Tim Hodges, president and co-founder of Honor Aging, says these 8 tips can make it easier:

- 1. Have a strategy for monitoring what is being said about your organization.** There are companies you can engage to do this; but if there are budgetary constraints, you can do things like setting up alerts for your organization and key words that are important to you. “Know what is happening and enlist others on your team to track along with you,” said Hodges, adding, “There is a real and palpable connection between people, and you need to know what everyone is saying. Keep your radar up and track news on your feed. Every day, I search nursing homes, long-term care, and other related terms. It only takes a few minutes, and it doesn’t cost anything.”
- 2. Manage your personal brand. It is useful to search your own name from time to time.** This will help you see what people are saying about you. Check variations of your name to make sure people recognize you and don’t mistake you for someone else with the same or a similar name. And search your name on social media platforms to help ensure people aren’t using your name or image fraudulently.
- 3. Respond to negativity.** Negative comments will appear from time to time in social media and reviews – even for the best of organizations. Hodges suggested, “Respond



in a professional way. Let them know that you appreciate their concerns and offer the person a way to discuss the issue offline.” Keep it short and sweet, but craft responses that show empathy and accountability. This will help enable you to defend your organization without appearing defensive, he said. He stressed, “Never get into online arguments or feuds.”

- 4. Prepare for problems.** If you experience a true public relations crisis, Hodges said, “I would be totally transparent. The media senses if you’re holding back, and they will keep digging. If you disclose key facts, it will help.” He also suggested crafting a statement and talking points, and designating an official spokesperson before your organization talks to anyone. “This is a way to control your messaging, even if there are follow-up questions,” he said. Be open and transparent with staff about the situation and what policies/procedures your organization has about social media posts. Make sure everyone knows who to refer inquiries or interview requests to if they are approached by a reporter.
- 5. Use social media as an ally.** Make no mistake, said Hodges. “We are still learning

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about social media, and it's still a bit of the Wild West," he said. He advises clients not to use social media to "promote, promote, promote." Instead, he recommends making posts more interactional, educational, and fun. "Limit direct promotions. Instead, position yourself by engaging," he offered. He also advised "showing rather than just talking about what you do." Photographs and videos are powerful, but he stressed the importance of ensuring everyone understands privacy issues and the need for residents/families to sign consent forms if they are featured in photos or stories. Hodges proposed that every organization should invest time and effort into developing procedures and guidelines about social media for leadership and staff alike. "This is important, as rumors and misinformation can spread quickly if there is a problem," he said.

- 6. View your online presence through the eyes of prospective residents and employees.** Show them what life in your community is like with posts about special events and activities. Spotlight accolades such as industry awards and accreditations, as well as ratings from outside organizations. Testimonials from residents and outside professionals such as attending physicians or nurse practitioners

can also carry weight. However, make sure quotes or videos don't appear too scripted or contrived. Spotlight great employees and portray benefits such as tuition assistance (e.g., congratulate an employee who received their R.N.). "Showcase your positive culture. These days culture promotion trumps everything," Hodges said.

- 7. Act locally, think globally.** Your online presence can help you interact with legislators and other decision makers. Connect with these individuals and organizations online and let them know what you are doing and how their actions impact your residents, staff, and overall organization. Start with local officials and community influencers. Consider inviting them to visit your community or participate in special events such as holiday celebrations. Keep these interactions as upbeat and respectful as possible. "These efforts might not change laws, but they can help establish relationships that may be important down the line."
- 8. Don't forget to engage your teams.** Encourage them to be aware of their social media posts and to keep their eyes and ears open. Remind them to share posts your company puts out. The more positive engagement you get online, the better.

