

Establishing a Good Company Reputation

A good company reputation doesn't happen by accident and it's a valuable commodity. A good reputation can promote referrals. Let's say you heard from half a dozen people about how great the food is at a local Italian restaurant. Even if you never ate there, you'd probably recommend it to someone looking for an Italian restaurant.

Why? It's got a good reputation. That said, creating that reputation requires sustained work over time. You must deliver on multiple fronts again and again.

What are some specific things you can do to build that good company reputation?

Offer Excellent Customer Service

Excellent customer service is something that many companies claim to offer and most fail to deliver. This failure comes at a cost.

Most people consider quality customer service as simple respect. Never forget that the customer is the one spending money with your business. Listen when they give you feedback and respond accordingly. If you can, fix things when they go wrong. If you can't, immediately find someone who can.

After all, we live in a time when customers can spend 10 minutes just trying to navigate a phone menu before getting put on hold. A little respect and some good faith efforts can leave you looking like a rock star.

Know When You Should Say No

Sooner or later, almost every successful business faces a dilemma. The company gets offered work that everyone knows it shouldn't take on.

Sometimes, the business just can't muster the resources to do the job well. If you're already working at close to capacity, taking on more work is a recipe for failure. Even if you somehow finish the job, it won't prove to be the best quality.

You end up with an unhappy customer who will almost certainly complain. And when someone is dissatisfied, they are more likely to tell people and post on social media than when they are pleased.

Other times, the work just isn't the right fit for the business. Maybe the client works in an area that the business doesn't understand well, or there could be a difference in values and practices.

Saying no isn't natural for most businesses. It certainly looks bad from a financial perspective. Yet, you risk doing substantial reputation damage when you take on work you know you shouldn't.

Watch Out for Online Reputation Killers

If you're in business today, you cannot escape the internet and social media. At a minimum, you're running a website and a couple social media profiles.

Starting with your website, make sure your hosting service guarantees 99% uptime. A website that goes down all the time alienates your customers and damages your search engine rank. It also makes your business look unprofessional.

There are other, more damaging online threats to your company reputation. One of those is bad reviews. You can't stop people from posting bad reviews, but you can comment on them. Take advantage of that option and explain the steps you took to resolve the issue. Always be apologetic. Most people won't hold the review against you if you respond accordingly.

Some people will take things one step further and get into online defamation. That happens when someone specifically says false things about you or your company. Examples:

Bad review: "They overcooked my steak and the potatoes were cold. Also, my waiter seemed more interested in his phone than doing his job."

Online defamation: "The staff at this restaurant sits at the tables playing online games and the owners are sitting somewhere stuffing their mouths with bon-bons while we eat their old, stale food."

Obviously, you must deny these allegations, but depending on the severity of the comment, it may also provide grounds for legal action on your part.

Develop Quality Content

Putting out quality content is another way of cementing a good company reputation. What is quality content? Quality content must hit three essential points:

- It's useful
- It's interesting
- It's relevant

Maybe even more importantly, it's all those things for your intended audience.

An article about new technology being used in virtual reality might prove interesting, but it's not useful or relevant if you run a bakery. On the flip side, someone working in robotic prosthetics probably shouldn't offer advice on making cheesecake.

Assuming your content does hit all those points and it's for the right audience, you get some real benefits. It demonstrates your mastery of the topic. Customers and peers will start trusting your opinion. This increases the odds they'll think of you when someone asks for a recommendation.

Quality content can draw in customers from unexpected sources:

Let's say that Larry reads my article about good company reputation because someone shared it on social media. He passes the link along to Jane, who currently received a negative review online and didn't know what to do. She needs someone to maintain and market on her social media platforms. Ta-da... maybe she hires me.

Stranger things happen every day.

Establishing a good company reputation isn't a fluke or an overnight process. You must work at it over time. You must deliver excellent customer service. Businesses that fail at customer service damage their own reputations and cost themselves money.

It means saying no when work comes your way that you can't do well. If you lack the resources or it's a bad fit for any reason, recommend a company you think can do it well. You'll end up looking good for not wasting someone's time and money. Having great partnerships with complementary services can go a long way.

Don't passively accept online reputation killers like downtime or bad reviews. They'll just ruin your reputation if you let them.

Produce solid content. Relevant, interesting, useful content proves your knowledge. That encourages referrals and can lead to unexpected opportunities.