

Quick guide to managing your online reputation

Essential tips to help you build an online presence customers will trust

Quick guides for growing businesses

it'seeze websites

Helping your business grow

Growing your business, online

Whether you're starting a business or growing a business, you need an online presence that supports and affirms everything you want your customers to know about you. One that nurtures trust in you and your company.

Today, your website is often the first experience a customer will have of your brand. But even if they see your actual 'shop window' before your virtual storefront, or come to you because of a personal recommendation, the impression you make online could be a 'make or break' moment for a customer who has yet to decide if they will spend money on your products or services.

This quick guide outlines the essentials you need to properly manage your business's online reputation. It will also help you understand how to turn your website into a valuable and effective tool for growing your business.

This guide includes information on:



Websites



Security



Reviews



Logos

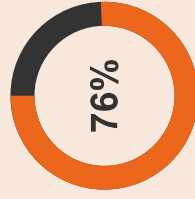


Compliance

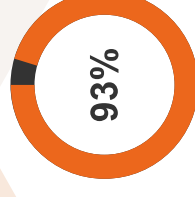


SEO and Content

Why is your online reputation so important?



FACT: Research shows that 76% of your potential customers use the internet to research your company before they decide to make a purchase. ¹



FACT: More than 93% of people say online reviews impact their buying decisions. ²

First impressions count. If you want to understand how potential customers are likely to first see your business, or how easy it is for them to find you online, the quickest way to put yourself in their shoes is to do a Google search for your business's name. You might also try to Google search your business type and location - e.g. 'sports equipment Bromsgrove', or more specifically, 'buy basketball uniform, Bromsgrove'. A little time spent Googling will hopefully give you a baseline idea of how you appear online - or if you don't. It should also highlight any problems with searchability, and give you a good idea of what a customer's first online impressions will be. Importantly, it will also let you know if there is any negativity out there connected to your business that is highly visible to prospective customers. Do this exercise for your competitors or similar businesses too. The results might provide some real 'food for thought'.

Once you know where you stand, it becomes easier to take action - and start building an online reputation that's as brilliant as your business.

¹ <https://www.retailtimes.co.uk/76-of-uk-consumers-research-or-get-inspiration-online-before-they-make-a-purchase-um-reports/>

² <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2017/03/27/online-reviews-impact-purchasing-decisions-over-93-consumers-report-suggests>

The six essential elements of your online reputation:



1. Your website

Important because: a professionally designed website gives you a better chance of making a great first impression.



2. Your logo

Important because: your logo is the most crucial element in your overall brand look, and the thing that most people will remember.



3. Security

Important because: if data security is breached by hackers or scammers it may damage trust in your business and have knock-on effects for your growing brand reputation.



4. Compliance

Important because: it gives your customers the protection they deserve and prevents you from facing non-compliance fines.



5. Reviews

Important because: positive reviews make it easier for prospective customers to put their trust in your business.



6. SEO and content

Important because: they extend your online presence and increase online engagement with your target audience.

1. Your website



Great websites win more business. While your home page is usually the first thing an online visitor will see, and so a crucial part of your website design, your website as a whole needs to be much more than a pretty front page. It needs to be engaging, informative, and easy to navigate. Once visitors have arrived, you want them to stay and explore. This is not only important because it makes it more likely that their visit will convert into a 'sale', it also affects your 'bounce rate' (a measurement of how many visitors immediately leave your site) and, in turn, how well your website does in online searches. In fact, research shows that a well-designed user interface could raise your website's conversion rate by up to 200%, and an intuitive user experience (UX) design could up conversion rates by as much as 400%³.

While using a template for website design might seem like a cheap and easy option, final results are often disappointing and may leave both you and your customers feeling frustrated – or even risk visitors defecting to a competitor's site. Similarly, if your website is littered with low quality images, errors and broken links, is slow to load or the information it contains is inaccurate because updates are difficult, customers will soon lose faith in

its reliability and in your expertise. They will certainly be more reluctant to use your online shop, if you have one.

A professionally designed website doesn't have to break the bank and could make a real and lasting difference, turning your site into a valuable asset for your business. Your website design should ideally be unique to you, with original photography, accurate information and useful, well written content. Its role is to persuade customers that you are great at what you do - and often to generate leads.

At it'seeze we understand that growing businesses need a website that works hard for them. We understand exactly what makes a great website, and we specialise in designing beautifully unique and highly engaging sites that stand out, attract the right visitors, and win more enquiries. You can see the difference we've made to some of our customers on our [before and after page](#).

³ <https://www.forrester.com/report/The+Six+Steps+For+Justifying+Better+UX/-/E-RES117708#>

2. Your logo

A custom designed logo will help you to establish a professional image online, as well as helping your business to differentiate from competitors, convey your brand values and support long-term recognition. Often the starting point for a website design, your logo can then also be used across your stationery, business premises, social media, business cards etc. The overall effect will be consistent branding that your customers will recognise and trust.

It's possible that your business already has a logo but that it's dated or poorly drawn. If you want to keep it for the sake of consistency, think about having it professionally redrawn. That way, you can remove any unwanted elements or background and you'll have something in high resolution that you can use in print or digital marketing. New customers will get a great first impression and existing customers will see that your business is moving forward and making improvements.

Remember, your logo doesn't have to be complicated; sometimes simple, one colour shapes or even text-based designs can work brilliantly. It's more important to have a modern typeface, original look, and clean lines.

At it'seeze, we offer a range of affordable logo design services that will help you to get your business seen and recognised. Whether you need a full logo design, text-based logo, or your current logo redrawn, we'll take the time to understand your requirements and produce a modern, original logo that works beautifully with your website and suits your business and your industry. You can find out more about our logo services [here](#).

3. Security



When you're creating a website, security should always be a priority. It's vital to keep your data - and your customers' data - safe when you are building your online reputation. A hacked business website can lose up to 95% of its traffic ⁴, and small businesses are no less likely to be targeted than larger organisations.

SSL certification is one key security feature which every business website should have as standard. It serves as a guarantee that all data travelling to and from your website is encrypted. Put simply, when your business is sharing information with a customer, or vice-versa, no one else can 'eavesdrop' on or alter the details being shared. Importantly, having an SSL certificate for your website prevents users from receiving 'unsecure' warnings in their browser, which may put them off visiting altogether. SSL gives your website an 'HTTPS' connection, complete with a reassuring little padlock logo.

Other important things to keep in mind when considering your online security are where your website is hosted and how you will keep up to date with new security features. This is where handing over to a professional service can sometimes be the best choice for busy growing businesses. It will give you one less thing to worry about.

All the key considerations of website security are covered by the it'seeze Quick Guide to website security, which you can [download for free](#). We believe that website security is of paramount importance for protecting your online reputation. That's why every it'seeze website includes all of the features you need to give you and your customers complete peace of mind. This includes SSL certification and regular security updates, as well as daily data backups to secure UK based servers.

⁴ <https://blog.sucuri.net/2015/03/the-impacts-of-a-hacked-website.html>

4. Compliance



Compliance will mean different things to different businesses and requirements will vary from one website to another. The one thing that all UK (and EU) based businesses need to be aware of is the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR). When GDPR came into force in 2018, it changed the way businesses were allowed to request, store, and use customer data. Getting it right will enhance trust in your website and your business, while getting it wrong will usually mean loss of custom, but may also lead to a hefty fine.

Every business should seek independent expert advice about how GDPR affects them. A simplified overview is that you must now have a compliant privacy policy on your website, that you must always explicitly ask permission to store and use customer information, and that you do so securely, only keeping it for as long as necessary and only using it for the purpose agreed. You must also be able to completely remove personal records from your business if requested to do so.

It's important to note that businesses of all sizes must comply with GDPR, even the very smallest. It's also worth knowing that fines for non-compliance are harsher than any seen in the UK for data breaches before; GDPR allows fines of up to €20 million, or four percent of annual turnover, whichever is higher – not to mention the reputational damage.

Whilst it has attracted the most attention over the past couple of years, GDPR is by no means the only regulation that businesses must consider when it comes to best practice communications. The Privacy and Electronic Communication Regulations (PECR) sit alongside GDPR and detail specific guidance for businesses on the appropriate management of electronic communications, such as email, SMS, or instant message. You can find out more about the regulations that your business should be adhering to [here](#).

Finally, an important point to note in web build is copyright. It's crucial to make sure you have the right permissions in

place for any photography or imagery you wish to use on your website, and have licensed the image for the specific purpose of website use. We help protect clients from copyright breach by providing them with access to thousands of licensed stock photography options that they can use with confidence. And it goes without saying that any images we source for our clients as part of the initial design will all be licensed for use on their website.

Every it'seeze website is GDPR compliant by design when we set it live. This means we'll provide you with all the website essentials you need to help you comply with the latest regulations – including a privacy policy, cookie notice, and contact forms set up to protect sensitive data.



5. Reviews



Hosting reviews and testimonials on your website can be a brilliant way to tell new customers more about the quality of your products or dependability of your services. To take this one step further, businesses should also consider showcasing reviews collected through well-established independent platforms. When it comes to building a reputation, these are even more effective and more likely to inspire more trust from people encountering your business for the first time – and using a third party site helps to overcome any GDPR concerns around displaying customer reviews and details that you have collected yourself.

Take Trustpilot for example. This review platform is open to everyone and receives 1.2 million reviews from verified customers every month. Independent consumer research from Sirkin Research showed that 86% of people find adverts more trustworthy with a Trustpilot rating ⁵, and with a simple widget

you can add your star rating to your website, along with a link back to your verified reviews. Because the focus is on consumers helping others to find the best products and services, rather than on businesses promoting themselves, Trustpilot is a simple way to drive business growth.

At it'seeze, we encourage our customers to include a Trustpilot widget on their website – it's extremely straightforward to set this up through the it'seeze website editor. In fact, we see Trustpilot as being so essential to business reputation that we use it ourselves – and display our own five-star rating prominently throughout our website. See how it looks and works on our home page banner [here](#).

<https://uk.business.trustpilot.com/why-trustpilot>

6. SEO and content



Reaching customers online is easier if you spend a little time on search engine optimisation (SEO). This is a shorthand way to say that you've paid attention to certain elements that will ensure your website ranks higher up the listings on search engines, making your site easier to find. This includes things like adding regularly searched [keywords to your website copy](#) and making sure every page has a [unique title and description](#). If you're launching a new website, your searchability at launch can also be enhanced by manually submitting your website to the major search engines. This allows your pages to be seen more quickly in searches, rather than waiting for the time it takes for the engine's search bots to 'crawl' and index the site.

Another essential consideration is the need for NAP consistency. NAP is an acronym for Name, Address, Phone Number and it's a crucial element of local search. Unfortunately, it's not as simple as putting the right contact details on your website. NAP citations are created automatically by search engines whenever you post your

details online. This might be because you've put them on social media, taken part in an event advertised online, or been added to a local directory. When all of these citations are correct and consistent, it gives your SEO a boost - but if some are incorrect, shortened, or misspelled, it can have a detrimental effect or even lead to Google ignoring your listings altogether. Our top tip here is to decide how you want your name and address to be written, add it prominently to your website footer, write it in exactly the same format on all social media channels and then, importantly, set yourself up and do the same on Google My Business.

The other crucial element of SEO is content. Credible, topical, and logically organised content that's regularly updated and loaded with keywords (the words your customers are searching) is a great way to push your website up the search rankings. Not only that, but it's also a brilliant way to increase engagement, keep visitors on your webpage for longer, and reinforce your 'brand position' by proving that you really know your stuff. Content

doesn't have to be weighty; it might be a short blog, video, or infographic. The important thing is to make it relevant and to keep it fresh.

Expanding your online presence is easy with a standard it'seeze website package. We ensure that every page has a unique title and description, and that every site is submitted to the major search engines. If you want to take SEO to the next level, we also offer an SEO boost package. Once you're all set up, the it'seeze website editor has been designed to be 100% user-friendly, so that you can quickly and easily add, update, and amend information. It also includes an intuitive blogging platform*. You can find out more about what you can do with the incredibly easy to use it'seeze website editor [here](#). With an it'seeze website, you never have to put up with out of date information – and you'll always look like an active, reputable, professional business.



*Not available on all packages

We hope you've found this quick guide useful.

If you have any questions about how to establish, boost, or repair your online reputation, we'd love to help you find the answers. Why not get in touch?

Go to www.itseeze.com or email support@itseeze.com

Your online reputation made simple, by it'seeze

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Helping your business grow