

Reputation: The most important aspect of your business!

By Phil Hanson

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Summary: A damaged reputation can mean the end of your business. Here are some compelling reasons why you should build and maintain a good one.

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Your reputation is, without a doubt, the most important aspect of your business. Savvy Internet shoppers, leery of being ripped off by unethical Web vendors, want assurances they're not going to lose their money when they order merchandise or services on-line. The best assurance you can give them is your good reputation.

A good reputation begins with honesty; it doesn't get any simpler than that. Customers respond to honesty with loyalty. Not only will you get repeat business, you'll get referrals, too. However, if you lie to your customers or cheat them, word will get around and, soon, you'll have no business at all. You may even find yourself in court, fending off legal challenges.

You build a good reputation one customer at a time. More often than not, satisfied customers will rave about your superior products or services, fair prices and hassle-free way of doing business to their friends, which not only builds your reputation but grows your business, too.

Discriminating buyers want value in every purchase they make. They want quality merchandise; therefore, you should sell quality merchandise if you have an on-line store. Are you a referring partner in an affiliate program? Be sure your affiliate sponsor is a reputable company selling high-quality products. If your affiliate sponsor has a poor reputation, by association you will, too.

Perhaps you render consulting services on-line, or sell downloadable content such as a newsletter or e-zine. Perhaps you provide skilled labor such as carpentry, painting, landscaping or mechanical work or, perhaps, professional services like dentistry or physical therapy. Regardless of what it is you're selling, the people who would buy your products or services want (and expect) the highest levels of craftsmanship and professionalism they can get for their money. If you can't provide it, they'll find someone who can.

Other things that will enhance the value of your merchandise or services are warranties, guarantees, service contracts and fulfillment agreements, all of which help set purchasers' minds at ease by letting them know you stand behind everything you sell.

Timely delivery of products or services is important and you enhance your reputation considerably when you demonstrate an ability to make them. For most people, the six-to-eight week delivery cycle for physical merchandise is unacceptable. Delivery within ten days is much more reasonable, and it's becoming the norm.

When you promise quality and deliver value, you build respect in the eyes, and minds, of your customers. As you establish a solid reputation for reliability and a high degree of professionalism, you'll gain their trust, their loyalty and their business.

By offering quality, security and competitive pricing to your on-line shoppers, you'll encourage them to become your customers. They'll see, immediately, the value of your offer and they'll be anxious to do business with you because of your integrity and your good reputation.

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