Top 11 dos and don'ts
of online reputation management

don't

1 **Don't post compromising photos on your Facebook page.**

It should go without saying, but don't tweet them or post them on Flickr or "DM" them or email them… You may think that only your recipient will see the pics. Think again.

2 **Don't make hasty comments in online forums or on other people's blog posts.**

Although some online groups and forums let you edit your post for a (very) short period of time before it goes live, once it's up there, you can't take it back. Sometimes there's no way to pull the foot out of your virtual mouth.

3 **Don't try to confront an obviously intentional online attacker/detractor directly.**

If someone really wants to get at you, anything you do might provoke him further. And the more he puts out there about you, the more people will see it, and link to it, and spread it around, and the higher up it goes in the search engine rankings.

Nearly half of Facebook users have profanity on their walls. (Reppler, 2011)

Smartphone users are more than twice as likely to post something they later regret. (Retrevo, 2011)

4 **Don't underestimate the number of people searching for you online.**

According to a Microsoft poll from 2010, 79% of recruiters and hiring managers in the US have used social networking sites and blogs to screen job candidates. From the UK's dailymail.com: 70% of women and 63% of men use Google and other online tools to screen potential dates. Overall, according to Pew, 7 in 10 adults have searched for information about someone online.

5 **Don't assume that everyone shares your sense of humor.**

It's not just that different people respond — and take offense — to different types of humor. You yourself may look back on something you thought was hilarious months or years ago and not find it so funny anymore.

do

1 **Establish a presence on social networks.**

LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter are the most popular, and each serves a different purpose. If you want to jump in with both feet, there are plenty of others to explore and engage in. And be sure to keep them all updated: Search engines favor more recent content.

2 **Take up blogging.**

Start a blog, or two or three, on personal or professional topics. Use a different blogging platform or network for each, and link between them. Update them frequently, with stories, tips or relevant news items. And make (carefully considered) comments on other blogs with topics similar to yours.

3 **Regularly monitor your online reputation.**

You can set up a Google alert to let you know whenever a new mention of you pops up online. And other services, like Reputation.com, offer more sophisticated tools to help you track and control what shows up.

4 **Try to get inaccurate information changed or removed.**

If someone inadvertently says something about you that's misleading or just wrong — in a Facebook or blog post, for example — ask them nicely to correct their mistake or take the content down.

5 **Keep your social networks healthy.**

Make a conscious choice about which friend and connection requests you accept — and initiate. Your friends, and their online presence, can reflect on you. Parse and pare down your networks. While it may look impressive to have hundreds of LinkedIn connections and thousands of Facebook friends, when it comes to your online reputation, focus on quality over quantity.

6 **Remember: the Internet never forgets.**

You can take the old frat party photos down, but you can't delete them from everywhere. You never know when nostalgia might hit, impelling an old friend to send them on to all the other guys, who might forward the pics to their pals at work, and so on. Assume that anything you ever post or email or tweet will live on somewhere, forever.

80%

80% of US adults believe their online identity is now as important as their "offline" personal or professional reputation. (Harris Interactive for Intelius, 2010)

78%

78% believe it's very important to look up information about people and/or businesses online before deciding to interact or do business with them. (Harris Interactive for Intelius, 2010)

100%

100% of participants in a survey had incorrect privacy settings on Facebook. 93.8% revealed some info they didn't want disclosed. (Columbia University, 2011)

35%

35% of Americans have posted something online that they later regretted. (Retrevo, 2011)