Take Charge of Your Online Reputation

Microsoft

Chances are you already have a reputation online, even if you don't know it.

On the Internet, you create an image of yourself through the information you share in blogs, comments, tweets, snapshots, videos, and links. Others add their own opinions (good and bad) and contribute to your reputation.

Anyone can find this information and use it to make judgments about you. For example, Microsoft research* found that 79 percent of hiring managers and job recruiters surveyed in the U.S. said they routinely review online reputational information when considering job applicants.

Most of them count online reputation as one of their top selection criteria. In fact, that same study showed that 70 percent of U.S. hiring managers surveyed had rejected candidates based on what they found. Top disqualifiers included unsuitable photos and videos, concerns about the applicant's lifestyle, and inappropriate comments.
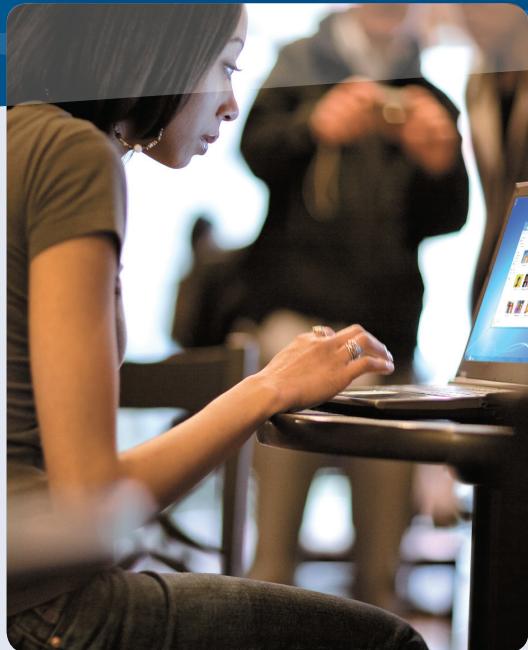
* Microsoft Online Reputation Research:
microsoft.com/security/resources/research.aspx.

Discover what is on the Internet about you

Use search engines

> Type your first and last name into several popular search engines. Search for images as well as text.

> Search all variations of your name—other names you have used, nicknames, or middle name or initial. Include personal domain names (**yourname.com**) in your search.

> Search sites you frequent—online directories and sites that compile public records, genealogy sites, the websites of organizations to which you belong—even your own pages.

Search blogs and social networks

Review what others have posted about you in comments, pictures, or videos. Explore blogs, personal pages on social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter), or photo-sharing sites like Flickr and Snapfish.

Evaluate your online reputation

Think about the story this information tells.

> Does it reflect the reputation you want to have? If not, what is missing?

> Is it accurate? If not, what should be deleted or corrected?

> Do you need more than one online profile—whether professional, personal, or for an area of interest, like a hobby or volunteer work? If so, is it okay to mix info from different profiles?

> Do you want your profiles to be public or more private?

Because information online is searchable, often permanent, and may be seen by anyone on the Internet, your answers to these questions are important. They may determine what personal information you share.

More helpful info

> Learn how your information gets on the Internet and how it's used (or can be misused): **microsoft.com/security/online-privacy/information.aspx**.

> Get practical advice about how to help protect your privacy on the Internet: **microsoft.com/security/online-privacy/prevent.aspx**.
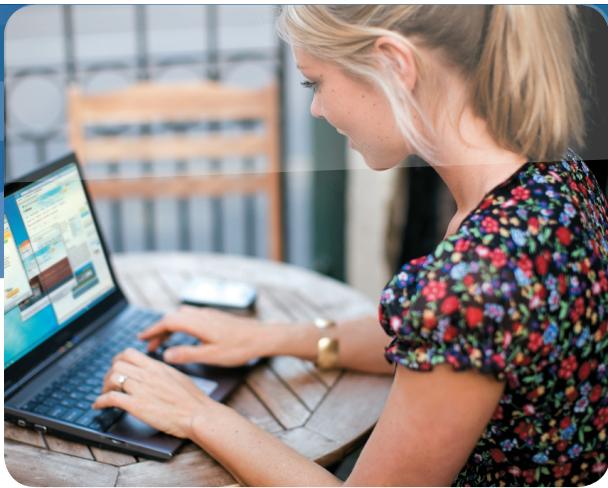
Protect your online reputation

Act online in a manner that reflects the reputation you want to earn.

Think before you share

> Think about what you are posting (particularly suggestive photos and videos), who you are sharing the information with, and how it will reflect on your reputation.

> Talk with friends about what you do and do not want shared. Ask them to remove anything you don't want disclosed.

Treat others as you would like to be treated

> Be civil in what you say and show on the web.

> Respect the reputation and privacy of others when you post anything about them (including pictures).

Stay vigilant

> Sign up for alerts. Some search engines will notify you automatically of any new mention of your name or other personal info. (Type **alert** in your search engine.)

> From time to time, search for yourself following the steps in "Discover what is on the Internet about you" on the reverse.

> Periodically reassess who has access to your pages. It's okay to remove those who no longer belong in your circle.

Cultivate your professional reputation

Publish the positive

Create what you want others to see. Link anything you publish to your name.

> Join a professional network like LinkedIn or CareerBuilder. Put together a robust profile. Make connections there, and ask for recommendations from those who know your work well.

> Comment on career-oriented blogs and participate in online forums where you have expertise.

> Start a blog or website in your own name. Write regularly (at least twice a month) on a subject about which you are knowledgeable. Invite comments.

Consider separating professional and personal profiles

> Use different email addresses, screen names, blogs, and websites for each profile.

> Don't link your real name (or personal info such as your home address, phone numbers, or photos) with other profiles you create. Avoid cross references to personal sites.

> Add personal information to your professional profile judiciously and only as it reflects well on that image.

> Look for **Settings** or **Options** to help you manage who can see your profile or photos, how people can search for you, who can comment, and how to block unwanted access.

Restore your online reputation

If you find information about yourself that doesn't fit the reputation you want, act quickly.

> In a respectful way, ask the person who posted it to remove it or correct an error.

> If the person doesn't respond or refuses to help, ask the site administrator to remove the digital damage.

> If you feel a public correction is necessary, present your case simply and politely.

> Consider using a service that can help you restore your reputation.

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