

Choosing an online reputation management tool

By [JP Kloppers](#) 20 Sep 2016

How people feel today influences what they decide tomorrow. Online reputation management and monitoring are thus essential for tracking and influencing the consumer's experience and perception of the brand.

Do you know what people are saying about your business across social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter or YouTube? What do they like? What has resonated with them? What about blog posts by industry influencers? Is your brand well represented?

The ability to answer questions such as these – and step into customers' (and potential customers') shoes – can be a huge advantage for any company. Effective [social media monitoring](#) allows companies to listen to and analyse relevant customer conversations, gain accurate insight into how to better connect with their target audience and, as a result, make better business decisions.

So, what should companies look for in a good online reputation management (ORM) tool?

Down to basics

Online reputation monitoring means searching across online and social media channels for conversations revealing sentiment information about the brand, and then cleaning and structuring that data to accurately understand what customers really think about their brand. This includes everything from how brands are perceived in general to particular incidents that may have affected their reputations positively or negatively. Ultimately, the process can shed light on what companies can do to better build trust with customers.



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In general, machine processing (via software and algorithms) is used to sort and classify relevant brand content. This can have certain drawbacks, however, as machines can have difficulty recognising and accurately categorising things like sarcasm, 'sms-type' or mixed languages and local idiosyncrasies of expression.

The only way to get truly accurate online data is by combining software with the insights of people. Where algorithms may struggle, people are able to cut through the complexity of online conversations and provide a human edge, increasing the accuracy of insights and providing greater clarity and understanding. The ideal ORM tool should provide both of these capabilities.

Why should companies pay attention to ORM?

People rely on what others say. Before purchasing a product or engaging a company's services, many people do research and are keen to find out about others' experiences. Good reviews are great and increase trust, but poor reviews or comments can damage a brand's reputation. A good online reputation monitoring tool allows businesses to not only identify areas of strength and weakness but also to engage directly with customers and grow from the feedback collected.

What about magazines and TV? In addition to online and social media monitoring, companies also need to pay close attention to how they are being represented across print and broadcast media. Good ORM tools combine both online and traditional media monitoring, providing both granularity at the individual customer level as well as a broad overview of how their brand is being portrayed in the press.

Going global. For larger companies and those whose markets straddle multiple countries (or even continents), the key to building holistic brand understanding is the ability to analyse brand reputation across multiple languages and jurisdictions, while maintaining a common measurement methodology and technique. This enables companies to benchmark from one region to another with high degrees of confidence.

Customisation is king. Companies need granular insight: both into who their customers are and what they want. ORM tools providing customisable data metrics such as volume of mentions, share-of-voice, country, gender and language, trend and topic analysis, data filtering and competitive monitoring and benchmarking can help companies to get a clear view of how they're really positioned in the marketplace.

So hot right now. In today's digital age, information moves extremely fast. As such, the ability to engage in rapid online reputation management is critical. Access to real-time monitoring capabilities, alerts and notifications can help companies quickly zero in on topics attracting strong sentiment, campaign performance, areas of concern or influential authors capable of affecting their online reputation.

Brand ambassadors. Finally, ORM tools should be able to track the impact of brand ambassadors enabling companies to see what their influencers are talking about, observe customer engagement and monitor changes in sentiment. A good tool should also allow for a quantifiable analysis of the ROI of your brand ambassadors ensuring you get the best bang for your buck.

As is clear from the above, knowing what customers feel and think about a brand – and what they are saying about it – is crucial for companies keen to develop and maintain a positive brand image.

In the short-term, online reputation monitoring can shed light on campaign success, brand engagement and allow for timely intervention, preventing brand image issues from escalating into crises. Over the longer-term, social media monitoring and online reputation management can be key strategic drivers: by isolating what resonates with customers and what doesn't, companies can help their brands become more relevant, engaging and engaged with. A customisable, accurate and crowd-assisted ORM tool can be a great asset.

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