




Mastering your image and reputation as an accountant




Presenters




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Questions




Handouts



Recording



Email



Agenda

1. The importance of your reputation
2. Aspects to your reputation
3. How accountants' reputations have evolved over time
4. 10 ways you can effectively manage your reputation
5. Summary and Q&A



The importance of reputation



A woman with long white hair and glasses is sitting at a desk, looking at a laptop. She is wearing a green button-down shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be an office or home workspace. The slide has a dark blue background with a yellow and white graphic element on the left.

Why should you master your reputation?


- > Your reputation is an asset
- > Byproduct of the relationship you have with a client
- > Once you've mastered it, it can be used to increase sales prices



A group of four people, including a man and three women, are gathered around a tablet. They are all looking at the screen with interest. The man is wearing glasses and a white shirt. One woman has curly hair and is wearing a red plaid shirt. The slide has a dark blue background with a yellow and teal graphic element on the right.

Your reputation is your brand

- > Tied to your brand's credibility
- > People want to work with accountants that they can trust



A man with short dark hair, wearing a white button-down shirt, is smiling and looking at his smartphone. The background is bright and out of focus. The slide has a dark blue background with a yellow and white graphic element on the left.

The level of your reputation affects the clients you have

- > Good reputations attract good clients
- > More specifically, clients who are willing to pay top fees for top services
- > If your reputation's solid, you'll be able to attract those top clients who value your expertise



1. Professionalism

- › At the heart of maintaining a good reputation
- › Being punctual, reliable and respectful
- › Micro-actions: Dressing appropriately for your brand, maintaining a neat and organised workspace, and following up with clients in a timely manner

2. Confidentiality

- › Confidential data (payslips, invoices, receipts, and annual returns) must be safeguarded (passwords, privacy settings, encryption, and two-factor authentication)
- › Do not expose confidential client details to anyone

3. Stay current

- › Stay on top of legislative changes so your clients remain compliant
- › If you don't, there is a risk of penalties and fines from HMRC
- › This is an absolute must to manage and maintain an excellent reputation

4. Client relationships

- › If you have an excellent relationship with your clients, then you shouldn't worry about what a client thinks of you
- › Understand the people and motivation behind the businesses
- › Be proactive when problems arise
- › Engage with your clients – respond to their queries, and address problems



5. Knowledge

- › Built on the service you provide
- › Doing the right thing, even if it upsets clients
- › Precision, accuracy and reliability are the most important qualities to have as an accountant

How reputation has evolved



Circles of influence have expanded

- › In the past, your reputation was primarily dependent on your direct local community
- › Now, our circles of influence have gone beyond the scope of our direct local community and now has worldwide potential




Opinions are instant

- > No more waiting for pages to be printed
- > Can be published on any platform

Examples in everyday life

- > Sharing a difference in personal opinion – changes when talking in person versus sharing opinions online
- > Loss of confidential data – was part of life a few decades ago, but now has organisations dedicated to preventing it

Tools that can improve your reputation



1. Online reviews

- > The first place prospects will go is online
- > 88% of customers who read an online review said it influenced their buying decision
- > It gives prospects an opportunity to look at what other businesses who've dealt directly with you think of you
- > Encourage clients to leave positive reviews on platforms like Google or testimonials on your own website

The role of social proof

- The role of social proof is huge
- Seeing positive reviews from clients can help build trust in prospects
- The more positive reviews they see, the more likely they are to choose you over someone with negative or no reviews

Scared to put yourself out there?

- If prospects see how you listen to customers' issues, this which puts you in a much better position reputation-wise
- It's important to have boundaries online
- Avoid debating issues online
- Any further dialogue should be professionally shut down and taken offline

Don't forget about employee reviews

- Consider the effect employees can have on your reputation
- Main platform that employees tend to post on is Glassdoor
- Reviews that happy employees leave will help build and maintain your positive reputation as an employer

2. Clients

- Nurture your existing relationships with excellent customer service
- A great metric to use for client satisfaction is an NPS score
- Respondents classified into three groups – promoters, passives and detractors
- Results can range from -100 to 100. Aim for about 30 or 40.



Select the right clients

- › Be selective about which clients you choose to take on
- › Portraying the type of firm you are through branding can help you attract and pull in the right type of clients

3. Branding

- › Branding is a visual representation of your reputation
- › It's about how your firm looks, acts, and moves through society
- › Make sure that prospects have a positive perception of you from your branding, before engaging with you



How to start building a strong brand

- › First impressions are everything
- › One of the best places to start with this is your proposals
- › Send them a digital brochure, fully branded and signable on the spot. That way, you've got a smooth, slick and professional image right from the get-go.
- › Make sure client portals are branded where possible
- › To give the impression of a unified digital ecosystem, add client portals directly to your website



4. Word of mouth

- › Triumphs over any other tool that can be used to improve your reputation
- › When you're looking for a painter, a plumber, insurance, a car, or even a kettle – if people you know have used them already and said that they're fantastic, you're more likely to choose them





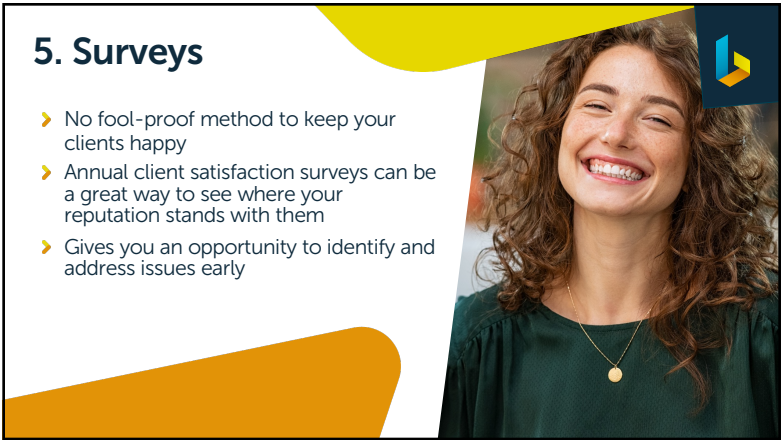
Influence conversations

- › Word of mouth influences the conversation about you, your firm and your services
- › When someone hears positive things about your services from a trusted source, they're more likely to feel confident in your ability to handle their compliance requirements
- › Remember, how you treat your customers can directly impact your influence on prospects in the community

5. Surveys

- › No fool-proof method to keep your clients happy
- › Annual client satisfaction surveys can be a great way to see where your reputation stands with them
- › Gives you an opportunity to identify and address issues early







How to conduct a survey

- › Google Forms or SurveyMonkey
- › Clients are more likely to respond to a question where they can just enter a number

Examples: On a scale of 1 to 10...

- › How satisfied are you with our services?
- › Do we respond to your queries in a timely manner?
- › How easy to use are the tools we offer?
- › How happy are you with our level of communication frequency?
- › How likely are you to refer us?

6. Public relations

- › Public Relations plays a crucial role in enhancing your reputation outside of your existing client base
- › Examples: Getting invited to comment on legislation in the local media or to speak at industry events
- › Being more active often results in additional PR opportunities








Top 10 ways to manage your reputation as an accountant




1. Keep your clients informed

- > Communication is the foundation for maintaining your clients' trust and your reputation
- > A clued-in client is a happy client



2. Ask for referrals at the point you deliver services

- > People like to make referrals
- > But only if they're sure that the recommendation is a positive one
- > Ask for referrals at the point you deliver the service, as it's the most likely time they'll do it



3. Maintain confidentiality

- > You hold the keys to a vault of confidential information, and it's your responsibility to keep it safe
- > Ensure that you're engaging in GDPR best practices to best protect your clients' data from unauthorised access
- > Data breaches could lead to fines from the ICO or DPC

4. Use technology wisely

- › Make sure you've got the cybersecurity essentials – like 2FA, encryption, firewalls, etc.
- › Then get more into the specifics, like automatic data backups, GDPR client portals, etc.
- › Train staff in cybersecurity



5. Offer additional services that complement your existing ones

- › Use other technology solutions that are integrated with the ones that you currently use to enhance your service offerings
- › Use the tech stack you have to provide additional higher quality services, like advisory services using different parts of various software (e.g. forecasting tool)



6. Continuous professional development

- › Sign up for CPD content whenever you can to stay sharp on what's going on in the industry
- › Helps you stay on top of the latest developments and ensures your clients receive reliable, accurate advice



7. Develop a client-centric approach

- › Put your clients first
- › Invest time in understanding what drives your clients' financial decisions and provide advice that aligns with their objectives
- › That way, you're best positioned to understand both aspects of their business, and structure of their affairs in the best way possible



8. Strengthen your communication skills

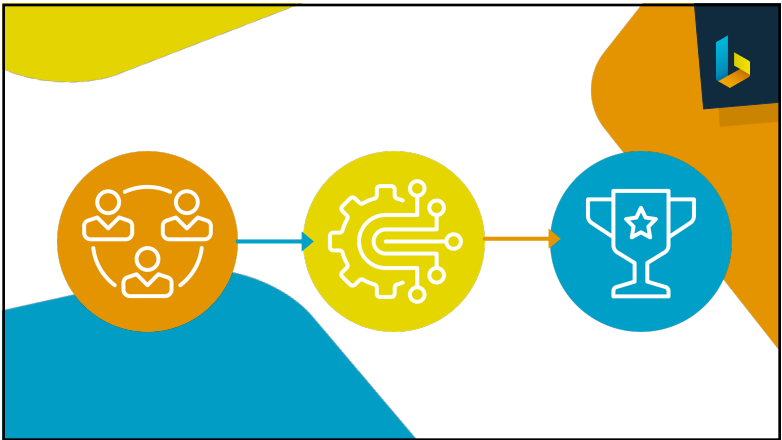
- > Avoid chit-chatting with people about confidential client information
- > Have a quick response rate
- > Prioritise using GDPR-compliant tools
- > Keep everything transparent
- > Communication can help you build lasting relationships and increase the positive awareness of your firm in the community

9. Being reliable

- > Do what you say you'll do
- > Clients are trusting you with their personal and business' financial affairs
- > You need to be trustworthy

10. Manage your online reputation

- > Keep track of online comments and reviews
- > Ensure you have modern and up-to-date website, active social media, and consistent branding across all your online channels
- > Make sure you're careful about what you post on personal accounts



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Questions and answers

