



The Business Growth Association
Of America

COURSE 10

Online Reputation Management for Small Businesses

Know what customers say, earn steady positive reviews,
and protect your name in about 30 minutes a week.

\$300 - \$600

estimated monthly savings
by doing it yourself

1% - 10%

potential
sales growth

A 12-month program | 30-60 minutes per week | Simple tools only

Course Overview

THE PROMISE Know what customers and search engines say about your business, earn a steady stream of positive reviews, handle negative ones calmly and professionally, and protect your name, using a simple routine that takes about 30 minutes a week.

Core Idea

Your reputation is built or lost in public, and most buyers read reviews before they ever contact you. Reputation management has three parts:

Monitor

Know what's being said.

Build

Earn more good feedback.

Respond and Protect

Handle problems fast and fairly.

How This Connects to Earlier Courses

It supports your Google Business Profile (Course 6), online presence (Course 5), social media (Course 9), and how AI tools describe you (Course 7).

Format for Every Step

- 30-60 minutes per week, simple or free tools
- Each step ends with a clear **"done when"** checkpoint

Roadmap

Phase	Timeline	Goal	Output
1. Foundation	Month 1	Know your current reputation and stop being surprised by what's said	Scorecard, alerts, secured profiles, goals
2. Review System	Months 2-3	Make asking for reviews a normal part of operations	Review request routine and timely replies
3. Improve	Months 4-6	Fix problems at the source and learn from what customers say	Higher rating, fewer repeat complaints
4. Protect and Prepare	Months 7-12	Defend against unfair attacks and be ready for a crisis	Reputation Plan + Crisis Response Plan

Why Run It Yourself?

Reputation management firms and monitoring services often charge monthly fees. A 30-minute weekly routine lets you handle the essentials yourself.

\$300 - \$600

Estimated monthly savings when you manage your reputation yourself instead of sourcing it out

1% - 10%

Potential sales growth from stronger reviews, professional responses, and visible trust

Where the Savings Come From

- **No monthly fee for monitoring.** Free Google Alerts, platform notifications, and a simple scorecard replace paid monitoring tools.
- **Review requests done in-house.** Direct links, QR codes, and short scripts mean no paid review-generation service.
- **Replies written by you.** Positive, neutral, and negative reply templates make responding quick and professional.
- **Problems fixed at the source.** A Complaint Handling Process and feedback themes mean fewer repeat complaints and less damage control.
- **Vet before you pay.** Knowing to avoid anyone who promises to "delete bad reviews" or guarantees results protects your budget.

Where the Sales Growth Comes From

- **A higher rating and more reviews** build trust with buyers who read reviews before they ever contact you.
- **Replying to every review** shows prospective customers that you are professional and responsive.
- **Showcasing reviews, success stories, and trust badges** turns that trust into inquiries, while fixing top complaints improves repeat business.

Track Your Results	Month 1 baseline	Month 6	Month 12
Monthly reputation tool spend			
Average rating			
New reviews per month			
Sales growth vs. baseline (%)			

Savings and growth figures are estimates of potential, not guarantees. Actual results vary by business, industry, and how consistently the plan is carried out.

Audit and Set Up Monitoring (Foundation)

***Goal:** Know your current reputation and stop being surprised by what's said about you.*

Week 1: Run your Reputation Audit

- Search your business name, owner name, and "[business name] reviews" on Google, plus Google Maps, Facebook, Yelp, industry review sites, the Better Business Bureau (or local equivalent), Reddit, and local community groups. Also ask an AI assistant what it says about you.
- Record the average rating, number of reviews, recent trend, and common themes (praise and complaints) on the Reputation Scorecard.

DONE WHEN your scorecard lists every place you appear and your rating on each.

Week 2: Set up alerts

- Turn on review notifications for each platform and set up free Google Alerts for your business name, owner name, and common misspellings.
- Assign who checks them (you or one team member) and how often (daily glance, weekly review).

DONE WHEN alerts are working and a monitoring owner is named.

Week 3: Claim and secure your profiles

- Claim your listings on the major review and directory sites, and make sure your information is accurate and consistent.
- Secure each account with a strong password and two-factor authentication.

DONE WHEN every important profile is claimed and secured.

Week 4: Define your reputation goals and standards

- Set targets (e.g. 4.5+ average rating, 5 new reviews a month, response to every review within 48 hours).
- Write your Service Promise (the 3 things you want every customer to say about you) and share it with your team.

DONE WHEN goals and the Service Promise are on one page.

DELIVERABLE Reputation Scorecard (baseline), alerts running, secured profiles, and written goals.

Build a Steady Flow of Good Reviews

***Goal:** Make asking for reviews a normal part of your operations (Review System).*

Month 2: Create your Review Request System

- Decide the best moment to ask (right after a successful job, delivery, or compliment) and the best channel (in person, text, email, receipt, or QR code).
- Create your direct review links and QR code, and write short request scripts (provided) in your voice.
- Train your team on how to ask and what not to do. Follow each platform's rules: never buy reviews, pay for positive ones, review your own business, or screen out unhappy customers before asking ("review gating" can violate platform policies).

DONE WHEN the system is written down and your team knows their part.

Month 3: Respond to every review

- Learn the reply formulas:
- **Positive:** thank them, mention a specific detail, and invite them back.
- **Neutral or mixed:** thank them, acknowledge feedback, and share what you'll do.
- **Negative:** respond within 48 hours, stay calm, apologize for their experience without admitting legal fault, offer to resolve it offline, and keep it short and professional.
- Never argue, share private customer details, or accuse the reviewer of lying in public.

DONE WHEN every existing review has a reply and you've collected at least 5 new reviews.

CHECKPOINT A running review request routine and a clean record of timely, professional responses.

Turn Feedback into Improvement

Goal: Fix problems at the source and learn from what customers say.

Month 4: Prevent bad reviews before they happen

- Create a simple Complaint Handling Process (listen, apologize, solve, follow up) so unhappy customers reach you first.
- Offer an easy private feedback option, such as a short survey or direct contact, in addition to (not instead of) public review links.

Month 5: Find the patterns

- Use a spreadsheet (or an AI assistant with anonymized review text) to sort feedback into themes like price, speed, communication, and quality.
- Pick the top 2 recurring complaints and fix them, then tell customers what you changed.

Month 6: Showcase your reputation

- Display reviews and testimonials on your website and social media (with permission where required), create 3 short customer success stories, and add trust badges (awards, certifications, memberships).
- Re-run your audit and compare to Month 1.

CHECKPOINT Higher rating or review count, fewer repeat complaints, and a visible trust section on your website.

Protect and Prepare for Anything

Goal: Defend your reputation against unfair attacks and be ready for a crisis.

Months 7-8: Handle unfair or fake reviews

- Learn how to identify a fake, spam, or policy-violating review (not a customer you simply disagree with), how to flag or report it on each platform with documentation, what to expect (slow processes, no guarantees), and when a public response is enough.
- Understand the basics of when a legal step might be appropriate, and that you should consult a lawyer before making any legal threats.

Months 9-10: Build a Crisis Plan

- Create a one-page plan for serious events (a viral complaint, a safety issue, a staff mistake, a data breach): who is the spokesperson, how fast to respond, a holding statement template, and a checklist (verify facts, pause scheduled posts, respond once, take serious issues offline, follow up with what's fixed).
- Run a 30-minute practice drill with your team.

Month 11: Strengthen your search results and brand

- Learn to build your positive footprint: keep your website, Google Business Profile, and social profiles active and consistent, publish helpful content and customer stories, and earn mentions from local media and partners.
- Check how search engines and AI assistants describe you, correcting inaccurate sources at their origin.

Month 12: Annual review and plan

- Compare year-end numbers to your Month 1 baseline, celebrate wins with your team, update your Service Promise, and set next year's goals and routine.
- Learn when paid reputation tools or professionals make sense, and how to vet them (avoid anyone promising to "delete bad reviews" or guaranteeing results).

DELIVERABLE A one-page Reputation Plan, a Crisis Response Plan, and a 30-minute weekly monitoring routine.

Resources and Pitfalls

Course Materials to Build

- Reputation Audit checklist and Scorecard
- Alert and monitoring setup guide
- Platform claim and account security checklist
- Service Promise template
- Review request scripts, QR code guide, and "do and don't" rules
- Review reply templates (positive, neutral, negative)
- Complaint Handling Process one-pager
- Feedback theme tracker (Google Sheet)
- Fake and unfair review reporting guide
- Crisis Response Plan template with holding statements
- Monthly Reputation Dashboard
- "How to vet a reputation management company" checklist
- Common Mistakes (a short bonus lesson)

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Ignoring reviews, or answering only the good ones
- Arguing with or insulting a reviewer in public
- Buying or faking reviews, or filtering who gets asked
- Offering incentives for positive reviews where the platform prohibits it
- Waiting until a crisis to decide what to do
- Treating all negative feedback as "fake" instead of learning from it
- Paying anyone who promises to remove honest reviews