

# 6 EASY STEPS TO IMPROVING YOUR ONLINE REPUTATION

[www.guestengage.com](http://www.guestengage.com)

# NICE JOB!!!

By downloading this E-book and signing up for the [GuestEngage](#) newsletter, you've taken the first step to improving your business's online reputation and optimizing your online reviews.

## Who we are

[GuestEngage](#) is the best place on the web to find Online Reputation Management (ORM) help for businesses in the services sector.

If you're running a business that sells services— a restaurant, bed & breakfast, auto repair shop, landscaping company, hair salon, etc.— then people are talking about you online. They are reviewing the quality of your services for others to see. GuestEngage can help you:

- understand how this review process works
- improve your online reputation by becoming an active part of the process
- stay ahead of the curve by learning the latest and greatest ORM strategies, products, and services

If you want people who search for your business to find positive search results and reviews, then you've come to the right place. GuestEngage can help you make this happen! Follow our 6 Steps yourself, or if you don't have time to implement everything here, sign up for our ORM and social media services at [www.guestengage.com](http://www.guestengage.com)

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# STEP 1: SEARCH

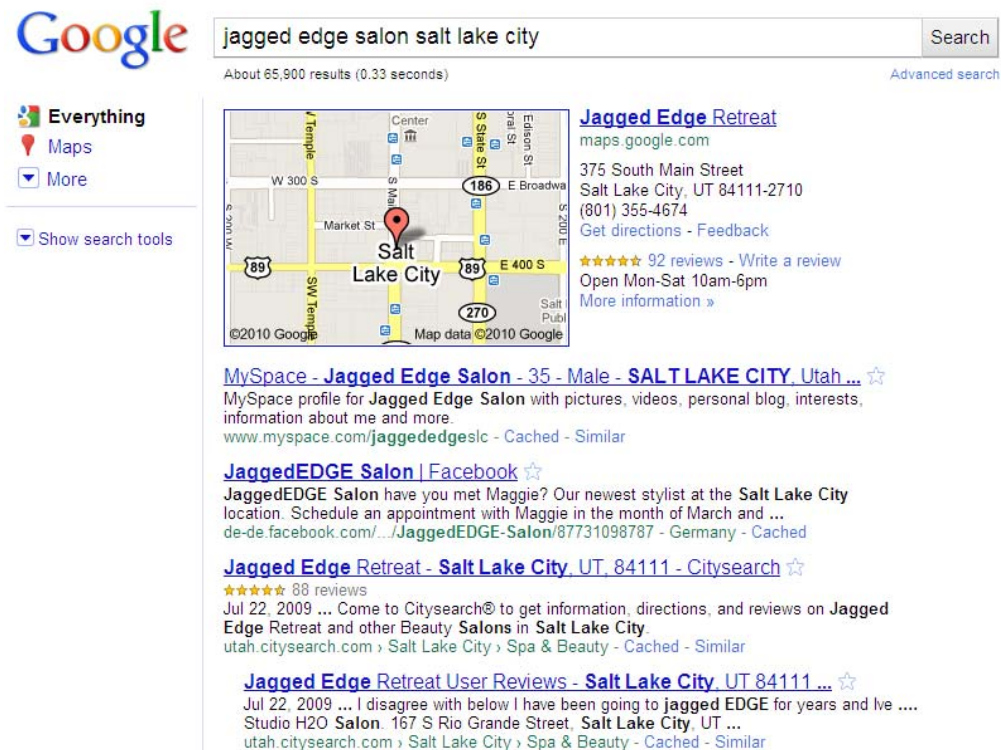
## "Am I out there?"



Step 1 is easy! Just search for your business and see what comes up.

Start with [Google](#), and then try [Yahoo](#) and [Bing](#). Google is the standard, so concentrate primarily on your results there. Refer to Yahoo and Bing for comparison.

Start by searching for the name of your business plus your city. The results should look something like this:



The screenshot shows a Google search for "jagged edge salon salt lake city". The search bar contains the text "jagged edge salon salt lake city" and a "Search" button. Below the search bar, it says "About 65,900 results (0.33 seconds)" and "Advanced search". On the left side, there are navigation options: "Everything", "Maps", "More", and "Show search tools". The main content area features a map of Salt Lake City with a red pin marking the location of Jagged Edge Retreat. To the right of the map, the search results for "Jagged Edge Retreat" are displayed, including the address "375 South Main Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84111-2710", phone number "(801) 355-4674", and "92 reviews". Below the map and search results, there are several search results from other websites, including MySpace, Facebook, and Citysearch, all related to Jagged Edge Salon and Retreat in Salt Lake City.

(We'll be using Jagged Edge Retreat hair salon in Salt Lake City, Utah for some of our examples.)

Notice that the first thing you see in the [search results](#) is not Jagged Edge's website, but rather the salon's location on Google Maps and a link to its Google Maps profile page (along with contact info and hours).

The salon's rating on a 5-star basis and a link indicating "92 reviews" are also shown:



## [Jagged Edge Retreat](#)

[maps.google.com](https://maps.google.com)

375 South Main Street  
Salt Lake City, UT 84111-2710  
(801) 355-4674

[Get directions](#) - [Feedback](#)

★★★★☆ 92 reviews - [Write a review](#)

Open Mon-Sat 10am-6pm

[More information »](#)

The next step is to do what a customer would do: click the "[92 reviews](#)" link.

Here's what comes up:








The screenshot shows a Google Maps search for "jagged edge salon salt lake city". The search bar contains the text "jagged edge salon salt lake city" and a "Search Maps" button. Below the search bar, there are links for "Get Directions", "My Maps", "Edit this place - Business owner?", and "Print". The main content area displays the business name "Jagged Edge Retreat" with its address "375 South Main Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84111-2710" and phone number "(801) 355-4674". It also shows a 5-star rating with "92 reviews" and links for "Directions", "Search nearby", and "more". The category is "Beauty Salon" and the hours are "Today 10am - 6pm". Transit information for "Main St @ 255 S" is also provided. A photo of the salon's interior is shown, along with a map of the location in Salt Lake City. Below the photo, there are snippets of customer reviews from citysearch.com and judysbook.com.

You've been directed to the [Google Maps page for the Jagged Edge salon](#). Here you see the same info from the original search results page. You also see a photo of the salon's interior and snippets of customer reviews. Notice that most the reviews look positive, and that they come from sites like citysearch.com, yelp.com and judysbook.com.

What would you do next if you were a potential customer? You'd probably scroll down to see more information.

Here's what comes up:

**What people are saying about**

<a href="#">staff</a>		"The shop boasts a Friendly young <b>staff</b> , cozy atmosphere." - citysearch.com
<a href="#">haircut</a>		"I love the haircuts I have got from this salon." - citysearch.com
<a href="#">atmosphere</a>		"Everyone there was super friendly and the <b>atmosphere</b> is awesome!" - citysearch.com
<a href="#">parking</a>		"The stylists there are amazing, and also <b>parking</b> is great!" - citysearch.com
<a href="#">service</a>		"The <b>service</b> is great too." - judysbook.com
<a href="#">prices_location</a>		

**Reviews** [Write a review](#)

**Worst Service and Environment!**  
★☆☆☆ By [Laura](#) - Apr 24, 2010  
I've never rated any business before but I just have to on this one although it's been 7 months already since I had a terrible experience from this place. I didn't want to rate one star because it doesn't even deserve it but it is a required field. I went to **Jagged Edge** to get my hair because all other places I called didn't have an open appointment. The minute I saw this place, I knew it wasn't my kind of salon. The facade gave me the idea that this was for those punk and gothic individuals. I stepped in and almost stepped back out because the interior smelled like cigarette smoke. But I had to get my hair done that day for an event the next day. The receptionist gave me this skinny, tall gay guy who was dressed like a bum. The moment he held my hair, I could already tell that he wasn't very experienced. So I changed my mind about getting my hair done and told him that I just wanted to get bangs instead and showed him a picture of how exactly I ... [More »](#)  
[maps.google.com](#)  
0 out of 3 people found this review helpful. Was this review helpful? [Yes](#) - [No](#) - [Flag as inappropriate](#)

**[Tonni is THE BEST](#)**  
★★★★★ By [Number1Client](#) - Mar 29, 2010  
I've been to Tonni several times now and she is the BEST stylist. She imagines, creates and ALWAYS exceeds expectations. I'll never go anywhere else. I definitely recommend her to anyone looking for a great look. You WILL NOT be ...  
[utah.citysearch.com/review/10384938?reviewId=66231091](#)  
Was this review helpful? [Yes](#) - [No](#)

Everything looks great up top— staff, haircut, atmosphere... all positively rated (more green than red!). But notice the title of the first review: “Worst Service and Environment!”

Ouch!

Imagine you're the owner of Jagged Edge salon.

For years you've worked to establish your business's reputation. You've hired and trained the right people. You've optimized your location, décor and business processes. You've put your blood, sweat and tears into providing the best services to your customers. Then someone comes along and trashes it... and all because of one bad experience! Maybe you should use those scissors for cutting something other than hair!

Slow down for a minute. Take a deep breath. Remember: you didn't even know this bad review existed until about 30 seconds ago.

Our advice: Don't panic! Even if every word this customer says is true, it doesn't change the fact that the overwhelming majority of customers love your salon.



*Take pride in that!* Take pride in all those positive reviews. We'll show you how to deal with the negative ones soon enough.



The search results and online reviews for Jagged Edge salon are typical of what most business owners or managers find when they first start searching for their business online—when they complete Step 1 of our 6 Steps.

Believe it or not, most owners find a negative review of their business in a prominent position. The review might be a week old, or it might be 3 years old. And the owner/manager may have changed a thousand things since the review was submitted.

It doesn't matter. The review is still there for public consumption. It will still influence potential customers and do damage to the business, whether it's true or not... whether it's relevant or not.

For right now, it's important not to worry too much and to try to see the big picture regarding your online reviews and search results. They may be good, they may be bad... but by taking this first step — by beginning to search for your business online — you're already well on your way to improving what you've found.

Below are the search and review sites you should use when completing Step 1:

## SEARCH:

- ✓ [GOOGLE](#)
- ✓ [YAHOO](#)
- ✓ [BING](#)
- ✓ [ASK.COM](#)

## REVIEW SITES:

- ✓ [YELP](#)
- ✓ [CITYSEARCH](#)
- ✓ [INSIDERPAGES](#)
- ✓ [TRIPADVISOR](#)

Note: Depending on the nature of your business, there are several sector-specific review sites to peruse. For example, [Zagat](#) and [UrbanSpoon](#) are extremely important for restaurants. Lists of these specific sites are available at our [Toolbox page](#) at GuestEngage.com.

## STEP 1: CHECKLIST

**QUESTION:** Am I out there?

**ACTIONS:** Search "Your biz name + City"  
(e.g. "Ruth's Diner Boston")  
at the following sites:

**GOOGLE**       **YAHOO**       **BING**       **ASK.COM**

**YELP**       **CITYSEARCH**       **INSIDERPAGES**       **TRIPADVISOR**

## STEP 2: DIGEST

**“What are people saying about me?”**



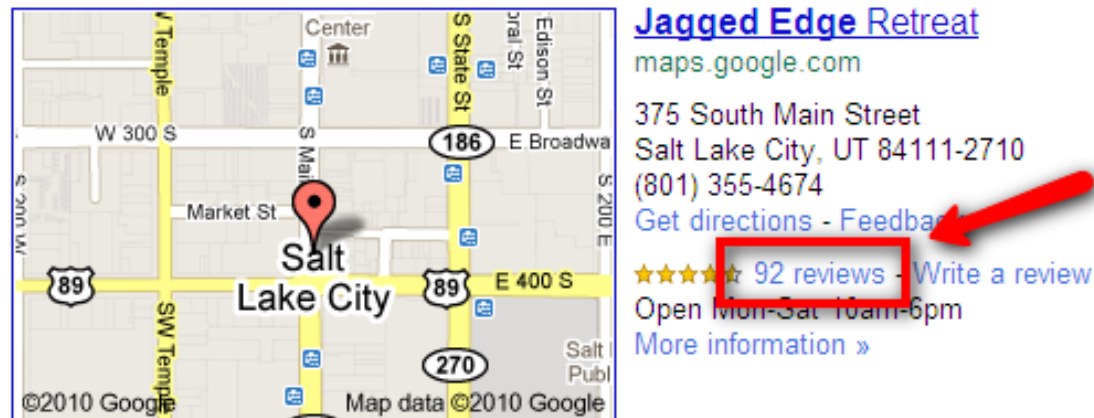
Step 2 is the natural extension of Step 1. You've searched for your business. Now you need to digest what you found. You started doing this in Step 1 when you noticed what came up in search results and read the first few reviews of your services. Now read more!

Click every result on the first page of your search results. Check it out. See what's there. Decide whether it's positive or negative. Ask yourself what impression it will make on your customer.

You don't need to know the answers to these questions just yet. But by asking them and contemplating the answers, you will automatically be moving yourself toward the next step: Formulating a strategy.

But we're not there yet. You still need to read your customer reviews. You read the first couple in Step 1. Now it's time to read more. How many more?

Read the first 25 reviews that appear on your Google Maps page. Remember: you got to this page in Step 1 by clicking the "92 reviews" next to the stars rating and the map of your location.



**Jagged Edge Retreat**  
maps.google.com  
375 South Main Street  
Salt Lake City, UT 84111-2710  
(801) 355-4674  
[Get directions](#) - [Feedback](#)  
★★★★★ **92 reviews** - [Write a review](#)  
Open Mon-Sat 10am-6pm  
[More information](#) »

**IMPORTANT:** Read the reviews closely... word for word. Digest them. Take note of how you feel as you read them.

When you're finished, read the first 25 reviews of your business at the following sites:

√ [YELP](#)

√ [CITYSEARCH](#)

√ [INSIDERPAGES](#)

√ [TRIPADVISOR](#)

Depending on the nature of your reviews, you're probably feeling either:



## STOKED!!!

All the reviews were super positive! People are excited about your business and want to talk about it. Even better, potential customers are being encouraged by what they read about you online.



## BUMMED!!!

You don't have much of an online presence. You're just not coming up. Or you *are coming up*... but your reviews aren't very positive. In fact, *many are negative!* People don't like everything you're doing... and in a few cases, they've slammed you in reviews.

...or...



## ENRAGED!!!

You completely disagree with the content of your reviews and want to throttle the dude who lied about you online.

Whatever the case may be, *your emotions are important!* Take note of them.

Remember, your reviewers also felt strong emotions when they wrote the reviews. In fact, emotion is what compelled most of them to write in the first place. You're tapping in to that emotion now — something you weren't doing before you started this process.

The result: by digesting your reviews and the results of your search, you've become *more aware*.

Why is this important?

Because becoming aware of your online reputation is *the first step* to improving your online reputation. And now that you're aware of yours, you can start improving it. You can become the primary force behind how your business is perceived online.

The question remains: how do you want to be perceived online? What do you want your online reputation to be? The answer:

**YOU WANT YOUR ONLINE REPUTATION TO COMMUNICATE CLEARLY  
THE VALUE YOU OFFER YOUR CUSTOMERS.**

Remember, the definition of value is simple: it's the benefits your customer gets from your service minus the price he pays for it.

$$\text{VALUE} = \text{BENEFITS} - \text{PRICE}$$

In business... *value always triumphs!*

Your business will only succeed if it offers more value than the competition. To offer more value, you can do one of two things. You can give your customers either:

(1) THE MOST BENEFITS      ...or...      (2) THE LOWEST PRICE

Ask yourself: which do you give your customers?

Your answer will help you define the online reputation you want to create, manage and optimize.



For example, if you offer the highest quality yoga lessons in town, you want your online reputation to convey this information. You want reviews that praise the multiple benefits of your services. You want customers talking about how much different and better your services are than the competition, etc.

If you offer the lowest-priced plumbing service in town, then you want your online reputation to convey this information. You want reviews that praise your low prices. You want customers talking about how they've never paid so little for such a great service, etc.



Once you decide whether your business offers (1) the highest quality service (the most benefits), or (2) the lowest-priced service, you can begin crafting an online reputation around that business strategy.



- That [mom-and-pop diner with the awesome lunch specials](#) in [Brooklyn](#) (low prices)
- That [fancy hair salon w/ the crazy mirrors and decorations](#) in [the U district](#) (high quality)
- That [state-of-the-art MMA gym with the digital equipment](#) in [the city center](#) (high quality)

Put simply, your business persona is:

**A CONCISE AND CASUAL DESCRIPTION OF YOUR SERVICES THAT REITERATES  
YOUR CORE BUSINESS STRATEGY (*HIGH QUALITY OR LOW PRICES*)**

Right now, there are probably *two differing* business personas for your business:

- 1) The persona your customers are *actually* imagining and discussing... and
- 2) The persona you wish they were imagining and discussing

In other words, your customers often think of and position your business differently than you'd like them to. Following our 6 Steps and implementing an Online Reputation Management strategy that reinforces your core business strategy (high quality or low prices) can change this.

## STEP 2: CHECKLIST

**QUESTION:**      **What are people saying about me?**

**ACTIONS:**

(1) Click & skim pages of top 10 search results (of "your-biz-name + city") at these sites:

**Google**       **Yahoo**       **Bing**       **Ask.com**

(2) Read top 25 reviews of your business at these sites:

**Yelp**       **CitySearch**       **InsiderPages**       **TripAdvisor**

(3) My biz offers services w/ the  **Most Benefits**     **Lowest Price**    *You can't do both!*

(4) Complete the Business Persona Test:

Imagine your customer is telling a friend about your business:

"You know, [Your Biz Name]... that place w/ the \_\_\_\_\_."  
   those guys who \_\_\_\_\_."  
   that \_\_\_\_\_ (place) in \_\_\_\_\_."

# STEP 3: FORMULATE

## “What should I do about it?”



Yes, what should you do about it?

You're reading this eBook right now because you want to take action — you want to improve and optimize your online reviews and reputation. But before you can take action, you need to make a plan. And before you make a plan, you need to know *who's making the plan*.

Fortunately, you know this. You figured it out in Step 2, right?

You identified your business strategy and decided who you want to be to your customers. These are both super important for the following reason... (and we can't stress this reason enough!!!):

**YOU NEED TO KNOW WHO YOU ARE  
BEFORE YOU START TRYING TO DEFEND WHO YOU ARE.**



So Steps 1 and 2 were critical. Because you completed them, you now have answers to the following questions:

- 1) What is my online presence?
- 2) What are people saying about me online?
- 3) What do I *want* my online presence to be?
- 4) What do I *want* people saying about me online?

Your answers to 3 and 4, in a nut shell, should be:

**3. I WANT A LARGER ONLINE PRESENCE**

**4. I WANT PEOPLE SAYING POSITIVE THINGS ABOUT ME ONLINE**

These are your overarching goals.

Now... how do you achieve them?

Easy!

# YOU GO ON OFFENSE AND YOU GO ON DEFENSE

**OFFENSE: FLOOD THE SYSTEM**

- Start creating as much self-generated content about your business as possible. Fill the first couple pages of search results with positive material generated by you!

**DEFENSE: ENGAGE**

- React to your online reviews (both positive and negative) with the aim of getting rid of the negative ones and increasing the positive ones.

## STEP 3: CHECKLIST

**QUESTION:**      **What should I do about it?**

**ACTIONS:**      **Make a Plan!**

**My Plan is to:**

- Go on Offense**
  - Flood the system with positive self-generated content
  
- Go on Defense**
  - React to reviews both publicly and privately with the goal of removing negative reviews and increasing positive ones
  
- Both** (*do yourself a favor and check this one!*)

# STEP 4: ATTACK!

## “What’s my Offense?”



Your offense is simple: You gotta flood the system!

You’ve got to create so much online content about your business that your own positive self-generated content floods the first page of Google’s search results (for your business name+city).

By now you know that your online reputation consists of more than just customer reviews. In fact, the impression people get when they google your business and scroll down the first page of search results may be more important than all your online reviews combined.

That's why you need to make sure your first page of search results looks good... and makes a positive and professional first impression.

How can you do this?

Easy... it's all about 2 things: business listings and social media sites: You want to

1. LIST YOUR BUSINESS ON EVERY BUSINESS LISTING SITE YOU CAN FIND  
(GENERAL AND INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC)
2. CREATE PROFILE PAGES AT ALL THE TOP SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

Why is this important? Why does it work?

Because these sites are so well-established and have so many links linking in and out of them that their pages (including your business listing and profile pages) tend to rank high in Google searches.

In other words, Google's search engine loves these kinds of sites... and it's a cinch to take advantage of this love.



## BUSINESS LISTINGS

The goal here is twofold. By listing your business at all the listing sites you can find, you will:

- 1) Establish information/facts about your business before someone else does
- 2) Create web pages about your business that rank high in Google search results

We'll start with Google and then discuss other key sites where you need to establish business listings. Follow along and add your business to the sites as we go. Have the following items ready for copying and pasting: (1) your business contact info, (2) a brief paragraph describing your business, (3) a nice photo of your facility, and (4) an image of your logo.

# Google

## 1. Set up a [Gmail account](#)

Google offers a whole slew of products and services that are essential to ORM. By creating a Google email account, you create a freeway into these services. We suggest creating a Gmail account that matches the name of your business. For example, if your business's website is goodmuffins.com, then use goodmuffins@gmail.com.

## 2. Set up your Google places account at <http://places.google.com> and add your listing

Google will walk you through the steps. We recommend giving as much information as possible via your profile listing. Remember: the more information you hold back, the more unnecessary road blocks you place in front of potential guests. Not good.

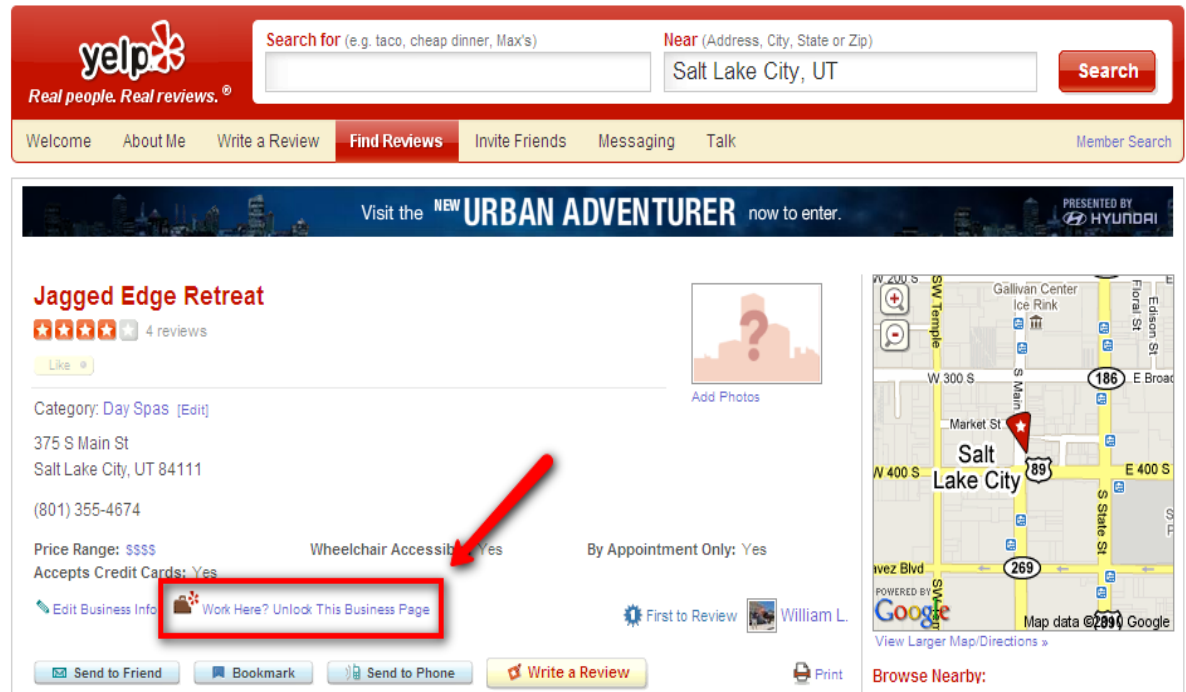
## 3. Set up your Google profile here: <http://www.google.com/profiles>

## Yelp (and other review sites)

### 1. Claim ownership of your business page

Go to [yelp.com](http://yelp.com) and search for your business. When you find it, click the link to see your listing. It will look something like the image to the right.

Click on the button that says: "Work Here? Unlock This Business Page" — indicated by the red arrow and box →



The screenshot shows the Yelp website interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Search for (e.g. taco, cheap dinner, Max's)" and a "Near" field containing "Salt Lake City, UT". Below the search bar is a navigation menu with options: "Welcome", "About Me", "Write a Review", "Find Reviews", "Invite Friends", "Messaging", "Talk", and "Member Search". The main content area features a banner for "Visit the NEW URBAN ADVENTURER now to enter." and a business listing for "Jagged Edge Retreat". The listing includes a 4-star rating, 4 reviews, and a "Like" button. Below the listing, there are details such as "Category: Day Spas", "375 S Main St, Salt Lake City, UT 84111", and "(801) 355-4674". A red arrow points to a button labeled "Work Here? Unlock This Business Page" which is highlighted with a red box. Other buttons include "Send to Friend", "Bookmark", "Send to Phone", and "Write a Review". A map on the right shows the location in Salt Lake City, UT.

Yelp will then walk you through the process and make you verify your listing via email. After you do so, you can login as a Business Owner and start exploring the Yelp site.

## 2. Add information and images to your business page

The first thing you need to do is add a profile picture of yourself. You should do this right away as Yelp won't let you interact with reviewers until the site has approved your profile pic. We'll talk more about interacting with reviewers in Step 5.

Once you've established ownership and added your info and images to your Yelp business page, do the same at the following sites:

[www.citysearch.com](http://www.citysearch.com)

[www.insiderpages.com](http://www.insiderpages.com)

[www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)

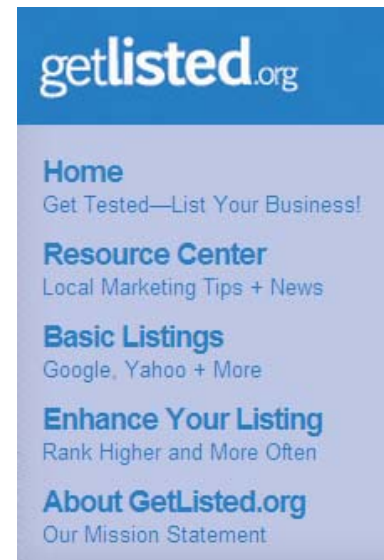
Like Yelp, these sites let you claim ownership of your business and access an exclusive "Business Owner" user interface. Other review sites (remember: there are hundreds of them!) don't. As a general rule of thumb, if a review site lets you establish ownership, then do it. If not, then simply sign up for a personal account and use it to interact with reviewers... *but always identify yourself as the business owner if you contact a guest via a personal account* (more on this in Step 5).

## Other Business Listing sites

Now that you've created profiles at Google and the review sites, you should have no problem doing the same at the other listing sites. Most of them require the same basic info and images you used above.

To get started, go to GetListed.org (<http://getlisted.org/>) and enter your business and zip code. You'll be shown your listing status on five major listing sites: Google, Yelp, Bing, Yahoo, and Best of the Web.

Click the "To Do" tab to access links for claiming your listings at the above sites. Since you've already taken care of Google and Yelp, you can now take a moment to create listings at the other sites. Depending on when you're doing this, Yahoo may charge for listing services, so be aware.



Now click the "Enhance Your Listings!" link and GetListed will show more options for listing your business. Some of these are paid services, some are not.

The great thing about GetListed is they explain what each listing service offers. They also provide tons of articles and materials so you can research the best services yourself. The business listing sites GetListed recommends are as follows:

Universal Business Listing: <https://www.ubl.org/>

Localeze: <http://www.localeze.com/>

Rate it all: <http://www.rateitall.com/>

Info USA: <http://dbupdate.infousa.com/dbupdate/startupdate>

Super Media: <http://www.supermedia.com/spportal/quickbpflow.do>

Brownbook: <http://www.brownbook.net/business/add/>



These are all great, but we also strongly recommend the following:

Merchant Circle: [www.merchantcircle.com](http://www.merchantcircle.com)

Intuit: [www.business.intuit.com](http://www.business.intuit.com)

Local.com: [www.local.com](http://www.local.com)

True Local: [www.truelocal.com](http://www.truelocal.com)



And if you just can't get enough of all this listing, then visit this page:

[<http://www.locallytype.com/pages/submit.htm>] and list, list, list to your heart's content. Actually, this link is an AWESOME... yes, AWESOME resource. Use it!

Remember: it's almost always a good thing to establish an additional listing of your business on the web. It doesn't take much time and every new listing takes up another spot in your Google search results.

Also, once you set up profiles at these sites, you can pretty much forget about them. No maintenance is required (unless your business details change, of course), and the listings will likely bring in customers and boost your Online Reputation for years to come.

## SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

As a part of your offense, profile pages at social media sites like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter serve the same purpose as your online business listings: they occupy high-ranking spots in search results and push negative items down and (hopefully) off the first couple pages of the results.

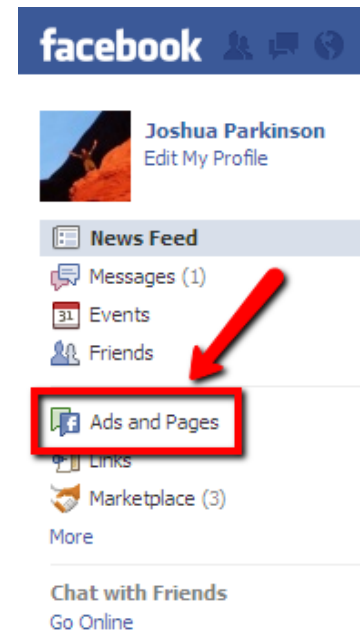
Creating these profile pages requires the same information and images you used when establishing your business listings above. So get the info and images ready and let's get crackin'!





Facebook offers two ways to "promote" your business at their site: the Community page or the Official page. We recommend setting up an Official page.

To do so, you need a personal Facebook account. If you don't have one, then set it up. After that's done, click the "Ads and Pages" link in the left column of the screen (on the main "News Feed" page). This will bring you to an admin page. Click the "Create Page" button on the right (shown below) and create an "Official Page" for a "Local business."



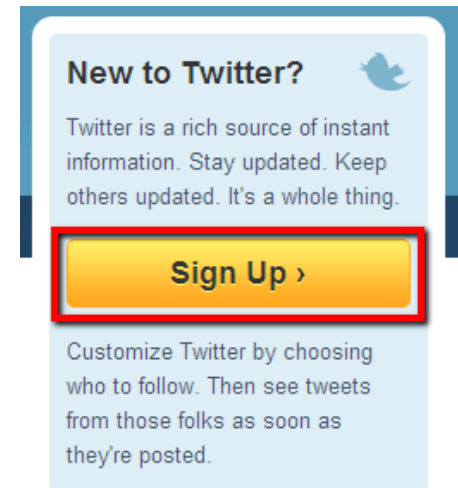


To set up a Twitter account, go to <http://twitter.com/> and click the yellow “Sign Up” button on the right.

Enter your full name then choose a Username that’s as close to the name of your business as you can get.

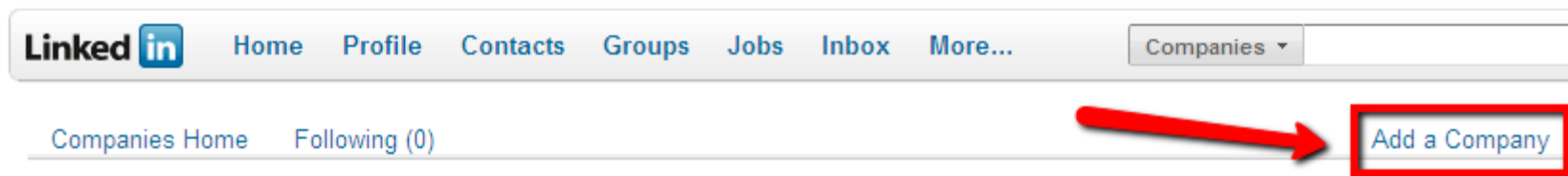
Then press “[Create my account.](#)”

Write a few tweets about things currently going on in your business, and then make a habit of posting 2-5 times per week (or more if you have the time).



## LinkedIn

To establish a “company” at [LinkedIn](#), you need a personal LinkedIn profile (like at Facebook). If you don’t have one, set it up and then (while logged in to your profile) click the “Add a Company” link in the top right corner of the screen (as shown below).



Enter your company's name and your personal company email into the form that follows. Then submit the info. LinkedIn will send a confirmation to the email address you submitted. Follow the instructions in the email to confirm your account.

It will take 20 minutes or so to complete your company profile. Add the basic info about your company, then identify which industry you're in, etc. After that, upload your logo and finish the rest of the steps to complete your company profile.

We can't take the time here to show you how to create a business profile at every social media site, but we definitely recommend creating pages at the following sites:

- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Linkedin](#)
- [MySpace](#)
- [YouTube](#)
- [Foursquare](#)
- [Wikipedia](#)

These sites represent the majority of social media traffic and they'll give you the best ROI in terms of your time. If you want to go the extra mile, create profiles and/or pages at these sites as well:

- [DocStoc](#) , [Squidoo](#) , [Bigsight](#) , [LookupPage](#) , [Naymz](#) , [Hubpages](#)

If you want to go the extra 10 miles, then we suggest creating blogs at the major blogging sites as well:

- [Wordpress.com](http://Wordpress.com)
- [Blogger](http://Blogger)
- [Typepad](http://Typepad)
- [LiveJournal](http://LiveJournal)
- [Squarespace](http://Squarespace)

*Always use your business name as the blog title!* That way it will become part of the URL/domain address for the blog (and be more likely to rank high in search results).

When you write a blogpost at one blog, copy and paste it to all the others. This can be time-consuming, but it will pay off in terms of search engine results.

## STEP 4: CHECKLIST

**QUESTION: What's my offense?**

**ACTIONS: Flood the system!**

(1) Establish a listing for your business at the following sites:

[Google Places](#)  [Yelp](#)  [CitySearch](#)  [InsiderPages](#)  [TripAdvisor](#)

(2) Use GetListed.org to establish biz listings at as many additional sites as possible.

(3) Create business profiles at the following social media sites:

[Facebook](#)  [Twitter](#)  [Linkedin](#)

(4) Create biz profiles at as many additional social media sites as possible, including:

[YouTube](#)  [MySpace](#)  [Foursquare](#)  [Wikipedia](#)  [Squidoo](#)

(5) Establish blogs with your business name as title at the following sites:

[Wordpress.com](#)  [Blogger](#)  [TypePad](#)

# STEP 5: DEFEND

“What’s my defense?”



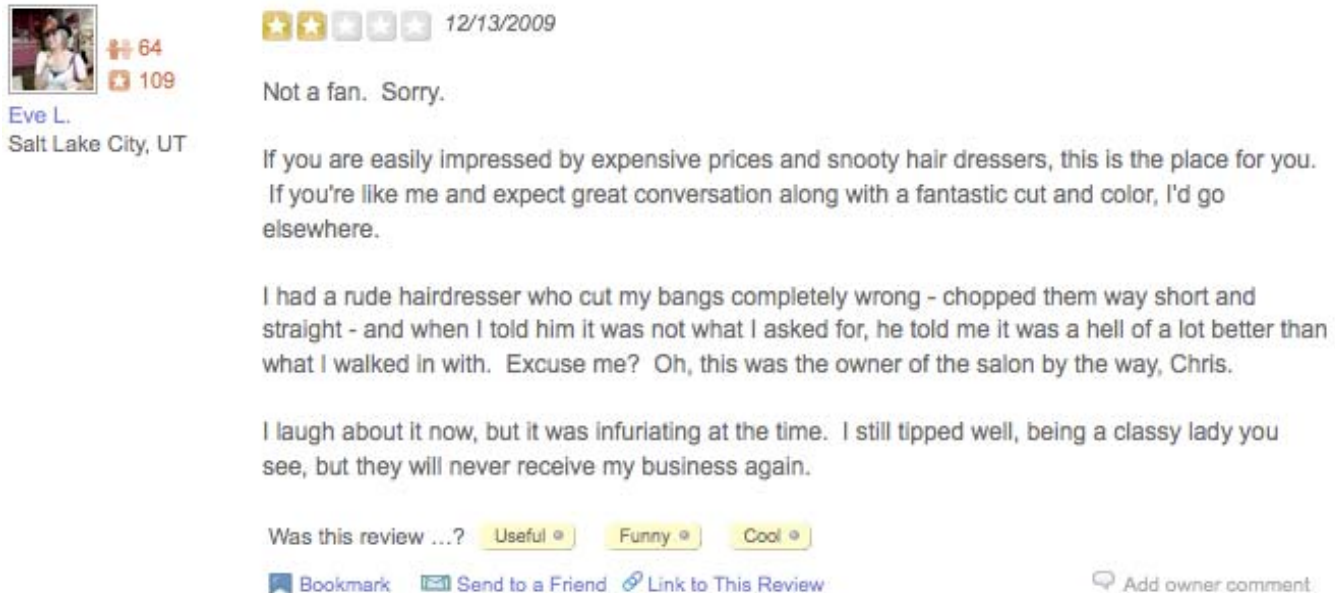
So you’ve now established business listings at multiple sites and created profile pages at multiple sites. You’ve started flooding the system with self-generated content... and your Google results are probably already improving. Your offense is well underway.

Now it’s time to beef up your defense... but how?

Let's start answering this question by looking at a negative review posted on Yelp.

You probably remember the scathing review of Jagged Edge Salon we checked out in Step 1. Well, it turns out they also have a negative review on Yelp. In fact, the Yelp review is actually more damaging because the salon only has 4 reviews total on Yelp versus 87 on CitySearch.

[Check it out:](#)



The screenshot shows a Yelp review by Eve L. from Salt Lake City, UT, dated 12/13/2009. The review has 64 helpful votes and 109 total votes. The reviewer gives a 1-star rating. The review text is: "Not a fan. Sorry. If you are easily impressed by expensive prices and snooty hair dressers, this is the place for you. If you're like me and expect great conversation along with a fantastic cut and color, I'd go elsewhere. I had a rude hairdresser who cut my bangs completely wrong - chopped them way short and straight - and when I told him it was not what I asked for, he told me it was a hell of a lot better than what I walked in with. Excuse me? Oh, this was the owner of the salon by the way, Chris. I laugh about it now, but it was infuriating at the time. I still tipped well, being a classy lady you see, but they will never receive my business again." Below the review are buttons for "Useful", "Funny", and "Cool", and options to "Bookmark", "Send to a Friend", "Link to This Review", and "Add owner comment".

Wow! How are we supposed to react to a review like this?

Well... first we need to decide what the goal is. Here it's pretty straightforward: we want the negative review either improved or deleted.

The best way to do this is to convince the reviewer herself to modify her original review... or to delete it altogether. As you can imagine, this is a delicate task. We recommend these three steps:

## 1) Swallow Your Pride.

People write negative reviews for many reasons and in reaction to a whole range of circumstances. Accept this, and don't take it personal. Above all, be practical. As they say: the noblest form of revenge is forgiveness.

## 2) Make Contact

Take a look at your Yelp business owner's account. At the bottom of the review is a small button that says "Send Private Message" Click it:

*You may message 10 more customers today, and your business may make up to 3 public comments.*

[Send Private Message](#)

[Add Public Comment](#)

A text box will appear where you can write whatever you'd like to the user. Your conversation will not be posted on your Yelp page. It's a private conversation between you and the user.

What do you say?

### 3) Apologize

Start by apologizing. Say sorry to the user for the circumstances that led to her bad experience and thank her for bringing it to your attention. Then tell her the problem is being addressed.

That's it. Yes, it's really that simple. Write and apologize. You'll be amazed at how effective this can be. What can come of it? Well, check out this response from a reviewer who was contacted by a restaurant owner:



c.g.'s updated review of [Island Prime](#)

★★★★☆ Update - 3 months ago

OKAY: I upped the stars because I was contacted about my review from the chef. That was very much appreciated and very professional as a business woman. We even were sent a little somethin to cover some of our expenses to try it again...Repeat SOMETHIN. So although grateful, im not so sure I want to spend another 60-70 bucks(including the little something) But I may try one of the other places or try the C level. I feel that even though my first inclination is not to try it again, it deserves a second chance due to the professionalism and couresty displayed by the chef. I only hope that the staff will have that same dimeanor.

No, the restaurant did not get a stellar 5-star review from “C.G.”, but the reviewer did increase the number of stars over her original review (from 2 to 3), and if even one potential customer decides to visit the restaurant because of this “updated review,” then Island Prime’s effort was worth it.

In fact, the “updated review” may be worth much more than that. The message it’s sending to the world is that Island Prime’s owners and staff care about their guests. This is a priceless message, and C.G. helped the restaurant convey it, 3 stars or 5.



The next step is to move on to the next review and employ the same response. We even suggest using the same text if possible. Remember: if you establish a general response for the majority of your negative reviews, you’ll save yourself time. Sure, it will take a while to respond to a large backlog of reviews. But once you catch up and become consistent with your review maintenance, the time commitment will diminish.

*Warning: We do not recommend soliciting reviews or asking users to improve their reviews. This violates Yelp’s [terms of use](#) and just happens to be the quickest way to get you booted off the site.*



Before we finish up with step 5, let's briefly consider a worst case scenario.

Let's say you receive no responses to the emails you've sent to a particular reviewer (send at least 2 emails before resorting to this option). In this case, you may have to "go nuclear."

The nuclear option entails a public response. Yes, Yelp allows business owners to post a public response to any review of their business. Please proceed with caution here! Your response will be visible to everyone viewing your Yelp page. Above all, be nice!

Write something like this:

*We have tried contacting the reviewer in order to gain a better understanding of their experience. We value all of our guests and their feedback.*

This just lets the community know that you're concerned about the review, and it disarms the original complaint.



Now, what if someone goes over the top slamming you in a review? We say don't touch it.

Instead, "bracket" it. That is, find a couple positive reviews in close proximity to the negative one, and respond to each publicly.

This doesn't mean you should ignore the over-the-top review... especially if its subject matter is legitimate. You should always make right with legitimate negative reviews. We suggest corresponding privately with the reviewer first, and asking for his permission to respond publicly to the review. Once you get his permission, write a quick response letting everyone know you've spoken with the reviewer and corrected the problem. Nada mas.



### One drop in a big pond

One thing you always need to focus on at review sites is volume.

Yes, volume. You can respond to as many negative reviews as you like, but the real way to game the system is to increase the ratio of positive to negative reviews. If you have a ton of positive reviews and just a few negative ones then your overall rating will be higher.



There are many clever ways to encourage more positive reviews. For example, on Yelp, you can respond to one or two positive reviews from prominent Yelpers (elites) using the public option. Make sure you do this only after getting the user's permission via private message.

Then... hook them up! Give them a \$10 off coupon, or something similar and write a public response like this:

**[Yelper name here],**

**Thanks for the great review. We can't wait to see you again soon.**

We've seen review volume jump by as much as 30% as a result of this strategy. Remember: your response should be short and simple. Be wary of doing any of the following:

- Offering products or services for their review
- Doing anything more than thanking the reviewer.
- Using this strategy more than once or twice a month.



So.... that about does it for defensive tactics.

Don't forget to make use of your reviewers as sources of innovation and improvement. Sometimes reviewers give you ideas or make suggestions that can genuinely help your business.

We think of reviewers as a group of unpaid consultants. Sure, a lot of what they say is fluff, but now and again they come up with real gems... and best of all, they give away for free!

In this chapter, we've concentrated exclusively on Yelp. But the strategies we've recommended will work at most review sites (CitySearch, InsiderPages, TripAdvisor, etc.), so don't be afraid to try them there. Remember, the basic approach is as follows:

1. Learn how the review site works
2. Create an account as a business owner or user
3. Engage reviewers using the above techniques (*but always introduce yourself as the business owner if you're using a normal user account*)

## STEP 5: CHECKLIST

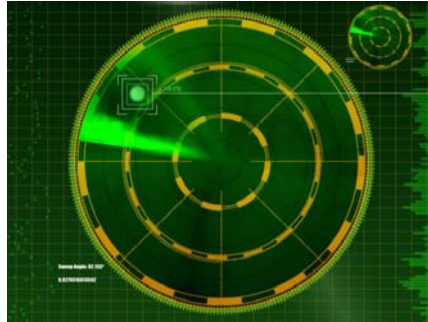
**QUESTION:** How do I go on defense?

**ACTIONS:** React and respond!

- Determine which review sites your negative reviews are coming from.
- Sign up for a business account at these sites (if they allow it)
- Respond directly (and privately) to reviewers who've posted negative reviews.
- If you don't receive a response to your private messages, post a short public response to the review
- Play the volume game. Encourage more positive reviews by thanking (often privately, sometimes publicly) guests who've given positive reviews.

# STEP 6: MONITOR

“How do I keep track of it all?”



You're almost there! Your offense and defense are underway. Now it's time to set up a monitoring service so you can stay on top of things and react quickly to new developments. The two most important (and most free) online monitoring tools are:

**Google Alerts**

**Yelp Notifications**

## Google Alerts

This application sends you an email whenever someone mentions your business name online.

Go to <http://alerts.google.com> and you'll see a box that looks like this →

Type the name of your business into the "Search terms" box, leave the other settings on default, and enter your email address at the bottom. Then click "Create Alert." It's really that easy!

You'll notice the value right away. If someone posts something about you in a blog, website, or any other place on the web these alerts will catch it. Once you're aware of the information you can decide whether or not to engage with the writer, editor, blogger, tweeter or guest.



Search terms:

Type:

How often:

Email length:

Your email:

## Yelp Alerts

Once you've set up your Yelp Business Owner Account (which you did back in Step 5), you can easily customize the email notifications.

[Business Owner Account](#) | [Email Notifications](#) | [Change Password](#)

Just click the "Email notifications" link at the bottom of your screen and you'll see a settings page that looks like this:

### Manage Email Notifications

#### Email Messages

- Send me an email when someone reviews my business.
- Send me an email when an announcement for my business expires.
- Send me an email when customers message me.
- Send me billing confirmation emails.
- Send me a weekly email with information about how my business is doing on Yelp.
- Send me emails with new information for business owners.

#### General Email Setting

- Never send me any Yelp email.

[Cancel](#)

[Update](#)

We recommend the settings as seen above (with all the “Send Me” boxes checked except the last one).

Once you have the notifications set and coming in, just maintain your defense and respond to reviews as they’re posted. If you do this consistently, you’ll keep your backlog to a minimum.



Step 6 is the shortest step in this E-book, but it’s also the most important for the continued success of your ORM strategy.

By engaging in this step consistently, you’ll be able to monitor 99% of the information that’s posted about your business online.

What about the other 1%? It’s not important because no one else is seeing it either.

## STEP 6: CHECKLIST

**QUESTION:      How do I keep track of it all?**

**ACTIONS:        Use free monitoring tools!**

Set up the following alerts/notifications:

- Google Alerts**
- Yelp Notifications**

# CONGRATULATIONS!!!

You've now completed our 6 Steps! As a consequence, your online reputation and reviews are almost certainly already improving.

Feel free to use this E-book as a reference tool anytime you need it. If after reading it, you decide you don't have time to implement everything we suggest, then please consider signing up for one of our service packages.

Go to <http://www.guestengage.com/services> or call (858) 633-7192 for more information.

# 6 EASY STEPS TO IMPROVING YOUR ONLINE REPUTATION

[www.guestengage.com](http://www.guestengage.com)