

RepUtAction Project | Training Curriculum

From Market to Digital: a Guide to Reputation Management for SMEs



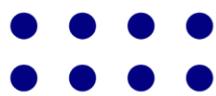
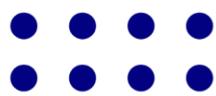


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Introduction

Welcome to the ReputAction Training Curriculum!

In an era where reputation can define the trajectory of a business or organization, managing and enhancing credibility has become more than just a priority – it's a strategic necessity. With market competition intensifying and digital platforms reshaping how the public perceives brands, companies must adopt a **structured and proactive approach to reputation management**.

This curriculum was developed to tackle the most critical challenges in reputation strategy, drawing from the insights of the **Transnational Analysis Report (TAR)** and **European best practices**. It equips you with the tools to build, sustain, and protect your reputation across markets and platforms.

Key Gaps and Needs identified

Analysis of the TAR revealed several pressing gaps that this training directly addresses:

✘ Lack of structured market-oriented strategies:
Businesses often miss aligning reputation with market dynamics and consumer expectations.

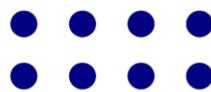
⚡ Underused PR strategies:
Public Relations is often reactive, rather than a core reputation-building tool.

🗣️ Digital and online expertise gaps:
SMEs are struggling with misinformation, fake reviews, and weak online credibility.

⚠️ Crisis unpreparedness:
Many companies lack a response framework, leading to long-term image damage.

👮 Ethical and transparency issues:
Customers demand accountability, yet many businesses lack clear, honest communication.





Digital Self-Assessment Tool (DSAT)

Before starting your learning journey, we strongly encourage you to assess your current understanding using the **Digital Self-Assessment Tool (DSAT)**.

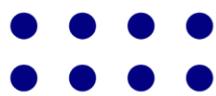
 Take the DSAT now to identify your starting point. After completing all three modules, return to the tool to measure your growth and progress.



*By completing the DSAT **before** and **after** your training, you'll be able to:*

- Reflect on what you've learned;
- Identify knowledge gaps;
- Track your development;
- Plan next steps for applying reputation strategies in real-life contexts.





How to use this Training Curriculum

Getting the most out of your learning experience

This curriculum has been designed to guide learners progressively, offering not only theoretical knowledge but also **tools for practical application**.

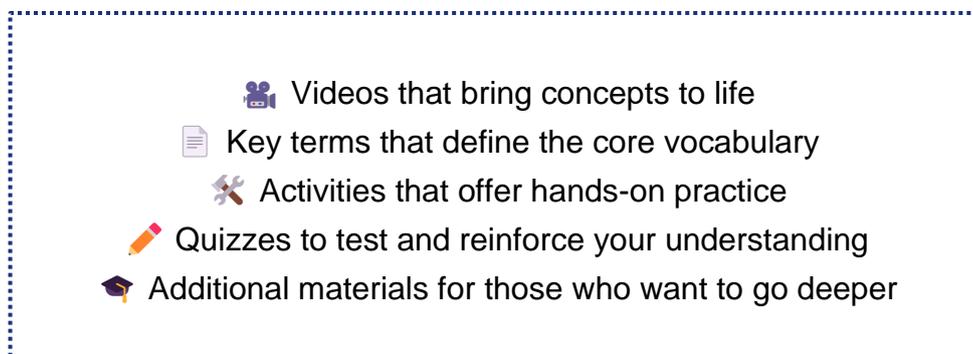
Here's how to get the most out of your experience:

- **Start by approaching the modules in the recommended sequence.** Each module builds on the previous one, moving from market foundations to public relations and, finally, to digital reputation. This order ensures a gradual, layered learning experience.
- **Immerse yourself in the content.** Don't just read—interact with it. Watch the embedded videos, explore key terms, and reflect on real-world examples and case studies. Engage actively by making notes or discussing insights with peers or mentors.
- **Each module includes activities and exercises to help you internalize what you've learned.** These are more than optional tasks—they're essential for transforming theory into practical skills. At the end of each module, you'll also find quizzes that allow you to self-assess your progress and reinforce your learning.

After completing all three modules, revisit the Digital Self-Assessment Tool (DSAT).

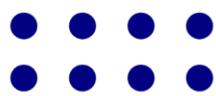
This second round will help you evaluate how far you've come and identify any remaining gaps you might want to explore further.

To support your journey, look for these **symbols** throughout the curriculum:



Take your time, stay curious, and make this curriculum work for your professional development goals!





A step-by-step guide

1. Follow the module sequence:

The modules are structured progressively, beginning with foundational concepts and advancing to strategic applications. Participants should follow the sequence to build a strong understanding of reputation management.

2. Engage with the content:

Each module includes reading materials, interactive discussions, and real-world examples. Learners should actively engage by taking notes, reflecting on key insights, and discussing topics with peers.

3. Apply learnings through exercises:

Exercises are designed to reinforce theoretical concepts through hands-on practice. Participants should complete all exercises to develop actionable skills.

4. Self-Assessment and Feedback:

Each module includes self-assessment tools to help learners gauge their understanding. Participants should also seek feedback from trainers or mentors to refine their skills. And use the Digital Self-Assessment tool to verify.

Training modules overview

To effectively address the challenges identified in the field of reputation management, this curriculum is structured into **three practical and interconnected modules**. Each module provides targeted knowledge, tools, and techniques that support a holistic approach to building and maintaining reputation.

Module structure

Each module is organized into the following sections:

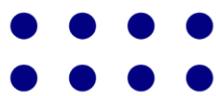
 **Introduction** – Outlines learning objectives, methods, and expected outcomes.

 **Core Content** – Presents lessons and key topics.

 **Activities & Quizzes** – Includes exercises to reinforce learning and promote reflection.

[Additional resources and reading materials can be found at the end of this handbook.](#)





Module 1:

Market-Oriented Reputation

This module offers a comprehensive look at how market dynamics, customer perceptions, and competitive positioning influence corporate reputation.

Participants will:

- Understand the key principles of market-based reputation.
- Examine the impact of leadership and internal culture on external image.
- Learn how to assess the influence of reputation on business performance.
- Discover practical tools and techniques to strengthen and sustain market credibility.

Module 2:

Business Reputation in Public Relations

Focusing on the strategic use of public relations, this module explores how communication shapes brand perception and trust.

Participants will:

- Apply PR techniques to strengthen stakeholder relationships.
- Develop structured approaches for managing reputation during crises.
- Adopt best practices for ethical, transparent, and consistent communication.

Module 3:

Online Reputation and Credibility Strategies

In the digital age, reputation is shaped largely online. This module equips participants with the skills to monitor, protect, and enhance their digital presence.

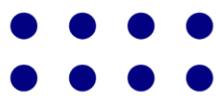
They will:

- Learn social media monitoring techniques and effective response strategies.
- Address the challenges of fake news, negative feedback, and online crises.
- Explore credibility-building tactics for digital engagement and long-term trust.

This curriculum is designed to **close essential gaps in reputation management** by combining structured methodologies, hands-on exercises, and real-world case studies.

By the end of the training, participants will be equipped with a comprehensive toolkit to effectively manage and protect their reputation across traditional and digital platforms – leading to stronger credibility, stakeholder confidence, and long-term success.





1Module 1 – Market-oriented corporate reputation

Introduction

Market-oriented reputation refers to how a company's reputation is shaped and influenced by its market position, customer perceptions, and the overall competitive environment. This is how companies manage their image, brand, and audience perception with the aim of attracting attention to the target market and building trust among consumers.

Key elements that influence a market-driven reputation include: 

1. **Customer satisfaction:** the quality of its products and services and the company's ability to meet or exceed customer expectations play an important role in building a strong reputation in the market.
2. **Brand value:** a company's ability to create a strong, consistent, and recognizable brand that appeals to customers' emotions and needs. This also includes corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts and ethical practices.
3. **Competitor comparison:** how a company compares to competitors in terms of pricing, innovation, quality, and customer service influences its reputation in the market.
4. **Market position:** a company's position in its industry, whether it is a leader, challenger, follower, or niche player, affects the public's perception of its credibility and influence in the market.

Learning objectives:

- Understand the fundamentals of market-based reputation;
- Explore the role of leadership and internal corporate culture in shaping market reputation;
- Learn how to measure the impact of reputation on business outcomes;
- Identify tools and techniques to maintain a positive reputation.

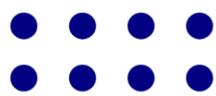
Learning Methods:

- Presentation of real business case studies;
- Group discussions and workshops;
- Hands-on exercises to simulate building, monitoring, and managing a strategic reputation plan for your chosen company.

Expected results:

- Knowledge of how to build a recognizable and trustworthy brand;
- Ability to implement strategies that ensure a customer-centric approach to reputation management;
- Measuring the impact of CSR efforts on brand reputation;
- Ability to collect data and insights to shape reputation management strategies;
- Knowledge of how influencer partnerships can improve brand perception.





1.1 Lesson 1: Fundamentals for Market-Based Reputation

1.1.1 Definition and fundamental principles for a market-based reputation

Corporate reputation is the result of the collective perception that customers, suppliers, investors and other stakeholders have of a company over time. 📄

It is an intangible asset, but of enormous strategic value, as it directly affects competitiveness, customer loyalty and the ability to attract new business opportunities. Unlike **corporate image**, which can be influenced by targeted marketing campaigns, reputation is built through the direct and indirect experience that people have with the brand and its activities over time.

*A strong reputation is based on a few **core principles**, which determine how a company is perceived in the market.*



A strong corporate reputation is built on **consistency, transparency, quality, innovation, social responsibility, and effective stakeholder management.**

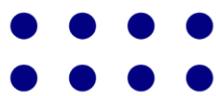
Aligning values, messages, and actions strengthens trust, while transparency and honesty are essential for fostering long-term relationships, especially in an era where information spreads rapidly.

The **quality of products and services, combined with the ability to innovate, makes a company more competitive and reliable.** Likewise, a genuine commitment to sustainability and social responsibility enhances brand perception, as long as it is authentic and not just a marketing strategy.

Customer experience and attentive service directly impact reputation, as does the ability to handle crises promptly and professionally. Moreover, a company that actively engages with stakeholders and responds to their needs is perceived as more responsible and authoritative.

Ultimately, reputation is not built through short-term marketing strategies but through a consistent and **continuous approach** that affects all aspects of business management. This enables companies to gain a lasting competitive advantage and establish a leadership position in the market.





1.1.2 The role of reputation in the market

Corporate reputation is a critical factor in a company's competitiveness, consumer trust and growth. In a fast-paced digital world where information spreads instantly, reputation becomes a strategic asset that can make or break a business.

A strong reputation is a competitive advantage that increases consumer preference and justifies premium pricing, as customers are willing to pay more for trusted brands.

It also fosters loyalty and positive word-of-mouth, which influences purchasing decisions more than traditional advertising. Conversely, a poor reputation leads to loss of customers and widespread negative reviews, especially on social media and e-commerce platforms.

Consumers increasingly rely on online reviews and ratings before making a purchase, with more than 90% consulting feedback before making a decision. Reputation also affects investors and business partners, as a well-respected company is seen as more reliable and financially stable, making it easier to secure funding and strategic alliances.

Conversely, a damaged reputation can deter investment and partnerships, threatening growth and stability.



Poor reputation management can quickly erode trust through scandals, miscommunication or poor customer service. Companies need to adopt proactive strategies that include continuous monitoring, transparent communication and effective crisis response. Social media and online reviews make reputation highly dynamic, requiring companies to actively engage with customers and leverage influencers and brand ambassadors.

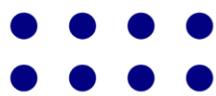
Ultimately, reputation is not just about image - it is a strategic asset that drives success. Investing in its management builds trust, strengthens relationships and ensures long-term sustainable growth.

1.2 Lesson 2: Building a Market-Driven Reputation Strategy

1.2.1 Market research and analysis of consumer expectations

Market research is an essential tool for businesses that want to understand market dynamics, customer needs, and emerging trends. Through the collection and analysis of relevant data, businesses can make informed decisions, develop products or services that align with consumer expectations and refine their marketing strategies.





Research can be conducted through various means: **surveys and questionnaires** (gathering quantitative data through questions to consumers) **or in-depth interviews** (qualitative insights through conversation) and **focus groups** (group discussions).

Other methods include direct observation of consumers and secondary data analysis.

Understanding consumer expectations allows you to meet their needs and build trust. Segmenting based on demographics or behaviours allows you to offer more targeted solutions. Studying the buying journey helps identify pain points and monitor online reviews for brand perception.

Research also reduces risk and discovers new business opportunities. It optimises marketing, refines advertising and tailors distribution to audience preferences. It improves the customer experience, increasing satisfaction and loyalty.

Investing in ongoing research is a critical choice for companies that want to remain competitive, innovate and build lasting customer relationships.

1.1.3 Alignment between corporate values and the market

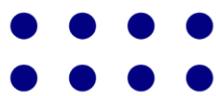
For a company to be successful long-term, it must align its values with the market. In today's socially responsible and ethical environment, this is important to build trust and loyalty.

This alignment requires clearly defined values integrated into business strategies, products, processes and communication.

Companies advocating sustainability, for example, must adopt eco-friendly practices and ethical supply chains. Market analysis helps businesses understand consumer needs, allowing them to adapt offerings and demonstrate commitment through initiatives like employee well-being programs and fair working conditions.

Consistency in communication is equally vital – branding, advertising and social media messaging should genuinely reflect company values. Any discrepancy between stated commitments and actual actions can damage credibility. Since market expectations evolve, businesses must remain flexible, continuously monitoring trends and engaging with consumers through reviews, social media and direct feedback.



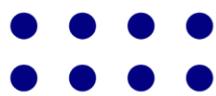


1.1.4 Creating a Strategic Communication Plan

A strategic communication plan is a fundamental element to effectively build and manage corporate reputation, ensuring that the brand message is clear, consistent and aligned with the company's values and market expectations. This process is not limited to simply promoting products or services but aims to build a strong identity and create an authentic connection with various stakeholders, including customers, employees, investors, and business partners.

STEP TO CREATE A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PLAN	
1. Preliminary analysis and definition of objectives	<p>Analysis of the company's current situation.</p> <p>This includes studying the perception of the brand in the market, analyzing the competition, and identifying the target audience. Once this information has been gathered, it is essential to define the objectives of communication.</p>
2. Target audience identification and key message	<p>Identifying the target audience and key message.</p> <p>Defining a unified key message is essential for maintaining consistency and brand recognition. This message should reflect your company's values, be authentic, and convey real value to your audience. The tone of voice and communication style must be appropriate for the channels used and the type of audience they are targeting.</p>
3. Choice of communication channels	<p>Selection of communication channels, based on the objectives and the target audience.</p> <p>Among the main channels we find:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Traditional media (press, TV, radio) for large-scale institutional or promotional campaigns.▪ Social and digital media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok) for interaction, targeted content, and community building.▪ Website and blog for detailed information, training, and SEO.▪ Events and sponsorships (trade shows, webinars, collaborations) to strengthen credibility and authority.▪ Internal communication (newsletters, meetings, digital platforms) to align employees with the company vision.
4. Activity planning and crisis management	<p>Create a detailed editorial calendar that defines the timing, content and methods of dissemination of communication.</p> <p>A well-structured plan helps avoid inconsistencies and maintain a steady flow of interactions with your audience.. Every business must have a protocol in place to deal with critical situations, such as scandals, negative reviews, or product issues. A crisis plan should include defining roles and responsibilities, preparing key messages to be disseminated quickly, and the ability to monitor public sentiment in real time.</p>
5. Monitoring and evaluation of results	<p>Performance measurement.</p> <p>Using KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) such as social media engagement, web traffic, media coverage, and consumer sentiment allows you to assess the effectiveness of your strategies and make any adjustments.</p>





1.3 Lesson 3: Market Reputation Monitoring and Stakeholder Feedback

Market reputation monitoring and stakeholder feedback

Corporate reputation is one of the most important elements for the success of a company. In an increasingly interconnected environment, stakeholders' perception of a company can determine its growth or decline. For this reason, measuring and monitoring corporate reputation is essential to consciously manage the company's image and better orient marketing and communication strategies.

Understanding how a company is perceived is crucial for identifying strengths and areas for improvement, planning growth strategies, and preventing potential reputational crises.

Here are some key reasons why monitoring your business reputation is crucial:

- **Consumer trust:** a strong reputation breeds trust, which is essential for customer loyalty.
- **Competitive advantage:** a company with a good reputation stands out from the competition and attracts more customers.
- **Attractiveness to investors:** investors are more likely to support companies with a strong and reliable reputation.
- **Talent attraction:** skilled professionals prefer to work for companies with a positive image.

There are several methods for assessing a company's reputation, each with its own advantages and limitations. Here are the main tools used:

1. Surveys and Interviews

Surveys and interviews allow you to collect direct data on the perception of the company by customers, employees, business partners and the community. Also having in-person meetings to know first hand which are the improvements to be done.

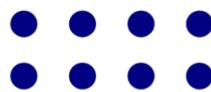
2. Media Analysis

This technique involves evaluating mentions of the company mainly in traditional but also in digital media, including news, blogs, social media reviews, and other sources.

3. Net Promoter Score (NPS)

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) is an indicator used to assess the likelihood that a customer will recommend the company to a third party. The measurement is done through a direct question: "On a scale of 0 to 10, how likely are you to recommend our company to a friend or colleague?"





NPS is a benchmarking tool for customer satisfaction. The NPS method measures the willingness of customers to recommend a company to a friend or acquaintance with a short survey of just two minutes and thus provides information on their level of loyalty.

NPS differs from other related benchmarks, such as customer satisfaction score, in that it indicates the customer's overall sentiment about a brand instead of their opinion on specific interactions or purchases. This is why it is frequently mentioned when talking about customer experience.

Furthermore, as it is a standard benchmark used by companies all over the world, the Net Promoter Score lends itself well to measuring one's performance against that of competing companies.

4. Social Listening

Social listening involves monitoring users' social media conversations to understand their sentiment towards the company.

→ **Advantages:** it allows you to collect feedback in real time and identify emerging trends.

→ **Disadvantages:** Data analysis can be complex due to the high volume of information.

To get accurate and useful results, it's important to follow some best practices:

! Define clear goals

Before you begin, it's essential to set your SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) measurement goals: Improve customer perception? Strengthen reputation among investors? Monitor your brand locally or globally? Reaching more B2C relations?

! Involving all Stakeholders

A comprehensive assessment requires the involvement of customers, employees, business partners, suppliers, and local communities.

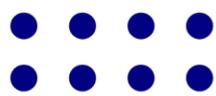
! Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Integrating numerical data (NPS, volume of social mentions) with qualitative information (feedback from interviews and surveys) gives you a more complete picture of your company's reputation.

! Implement continuous monitoring

Business reputation is dynamic and can change quickly. A continuous monitoring system allows significant changes to be detected and corrective action to be taken promptly.





Effective reputation monitoring is not limited to data collection, but also requires prompt action in response to feedback received. In particular, in the event of a reputational crisis, it is essential to adopt a transparent, rapid and effective communication plan to avoid lasting damage to the corporate image.

Best practices in this area include:

- ! Respond promptly to negative reviews with concrete solutions
- ! Demonstrate openness to dialogue and a willingness to improve
- ! Clearly communicate the actions taken to resolve any issues
- ! Preventing future crises through constant monitoring and active listening to market needs

Monitoring reputation in the market and collecting feedback from stakeholders is an essential process to ensure business growth and sustainability.

A strategic approach based on continuous analysis of perceptions and interaction with the public allows companies to strengthen their image, prevent crises and adapt quickly to market changes, creating a solid and lasting competitive advantage.

1.4 Lesson 4: Reputation as a competitive advantage in the market

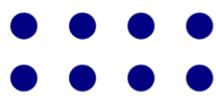
1.4.1 Reputation as a competitive advantage in the market

In a highly competitive environment, corporate reputation is crucial to a company's success. A brand with a positive image inspires trust and facilitates customer loyalty, allowing it to differentiate itself in the market and justify higher prices.

Reputation is not just a matter of image, but represents a lasting competitive advantage.

Consumers choose products based on reliability and brand values, making sustainability and social responsibility increasingly important in purchasing decisions. In addition, reputation influences a company's positioning in the market: a brand recognised for quality, innovation and reliability consolidates a leading position. Finally, a solid reputation increases corporate resilience, as consumers and stakeholders maintain trust even in the event of crises or disputes.





The reputation of a company has a value that goes beyond customer relations and also involves investors, business partners and institutions.

A company with a solid reputation is more likely to attract capital, obtain favourable terms from suppliers and form strategically important alliances. Moreover, a company with a good reputation is able to attract qualified talent, thus improving productivity and the business climate. To make the most of reputation as a competitive advantage, it is crucial to take a proactive approach to its management.

This involves constantly monitoring the corporate image, responding to feedback in a timely manner and investing in transparent communication. Successful companies use reputation as a strategic lever to expand their market and consolidate their position. In short, reputation is a powerful tool to distinguish oneself from competitors and ensure sustainable growth, and a company that carefully and consistently manages its reputation builds strong relationships with customers and stakeholders, ensuring long-term success.

1.4.2 Reputation and attraction of new markets

A strong corporate reputation is crucial for market expansion. Reputation influences consumer confidence, the attraction of qualified talent and regulatory processes. According to research by Weber Shandwick, managers attribute on average 63% of a company's market value to its reputation.

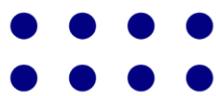
A company with a good reputation can enjoy greater credibility and trust from customers, employees and investors. This makes it easier to build long-term relationships and generate customer loyalty. Moreover, a positive reputation can be a competitive advantage, as customers prefer trustworthy companies and may be willing to pay a premium for their products or services. A strong reputation can also attract and retain qualified talent and facilitate access to resources such as funding and partnerships.

Finally, a good reputation can be an important asset in crisis situations, as it allows a company to effectively manage negative impacts and restore stakeholder confidence. Therefore, investing in building and maintaining a strong reputation is essential for companies wishing to successfully expand into new markets.

Strategies for leveraging reputation in attracting new markets:

- 1 Analyze brand perception in target markets
- 2 Adapt your brand message to new contexts
- 3 Proactive online and offline reputation management
- 4 Engage local influencers and ambassadors
- 5 Social responsibility and sustainability





Reputation is a strategic asset that can facilitate access to new markets, increasing consumer trust, fostering partnerships and reducing barriers to entry.

To make the most of it, companies must constantly monitor the perception of their

brand, adapt communication to new contexts and proactively manage relationships with different stakeholders.

Only through a strategic and reputation-oriented approach can companies achieve lasting success in global markets.

1.4.3 Long-term reputation and sustainability

To build and maintain a solid corporate reputation in the long term, sustainability plays an increasingly important role. Integrating sustainability into business strategy is not only a responsible choice, but also a competitive advantage.

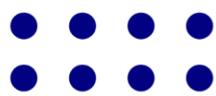
Companies that adopt sustainable practices reduce their environmental impact, use resources responsibly and promote ethics and transparency. These companies enhance their reputation and attract a broader, more loyal audience that prefers brands committed to reducing CO₂ emissions, recycling materials and respecting human rights. In addition to environmental aspects, sustainability extends to corporate social responsibility, including employee welfare, inclusion, support for local communities and transparency with stakeholders. A company that stands for ethical and responsible policies increases public trust and reduces the risk of reputational crises.



Investing in sustainability not only improves the image of companies, but also their economic and competitive advantage. Companies that adopt sustainable business models can enjoy tax incentives, attract ESG-sensitive investors and improve operational efficiency. In addition, global regulation is moving towards stricter environmental and social standards, giving an advantage to companies that adapt early.

However, to achieve a credible and lasting reputational impact, sustainability must be authentically and consistently integrated into business strategy. Greenwashing, or the misleading promotion of an ecological image without real commitment, can damage public trust. Consequently, it is important to adopt transparent communication based on hard data, such as environmental certifications, sustainability reports and testimonials of positive impact.



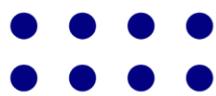


Finally, stakeholder engagement is essential for strengthening reputation through sustainability. In an era where sustainability has become a global priority, the companies that succeed in combining economic success and social responsibility will be those that stand out and thrive in the long run.

1.5 Case Study

Case Study Title	How an SME strengthen the reputation of a high-quality and sustainable product, promoting the authenticity and craftsmanship of "Made in Italy"
Image	
Learning Outcome	Understand how to strengthen the reputation with strategies of Transparency and traceability, Sustainability and organic farming to create a deeper connection with consumers.
Goal	To explore the role of strategies of transparency, traceability and sustainability to build and maintain a strong and lasting reputation.
Overview	<p>Olio Dante has decided to focus on the transparency of its production chain. Each bottle of oil is traceable, ensuring the quality and origin of the olives, with labels providing detailed information about the production process. This has created a strong bond of trust between the brand and consumers, who appreciate the clarity and quality of the product. Additionally, the company has adopted sustainable agricultural practices, using organic techniques to cultivate the olives, attracting an audience sensitive to environmental issues and the quality of ingredients.</p> <p>Thanks to these strategies, Olio Dante has been able to strengthen its reputation, attracting consumers willing to invest in premium olive oil. Transparency and commitment to sustainability have made the brand a reference point for those seeking authenticity and quality.</p> <p>The company - which combines craftsmanship with the most modern technologies to always guarantee the best quality of each of its products - can count on the strength of a recognised brand, which is a symbol of Italian style all over the world.</p>
Challenge	This case study addresses the challenge of strengthening the reputation of a high-quality and sustainable product, promoting the authenticity and craftsmanship.
Assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think the transparency and accountability shown by the SME could work in your business context? Why or why not? • How would you adapt a similar strategy to meet the needs of your target audience?





1.6 Conclusion

Corporate reputation is a strategic asset that shapes a company's competitiveness, growth, and market position.

Built through **quality, transparency** and **ethical responsiveness**, a strong reputation fosters trust, attracts talent and investors, and enables better pricing strategies.

In the digital era, reputation is highly influenced by social media and online reviews, requiring proactive management, continuous monitoring, and swift crisis response. Beyond risk mitigation, it serves as a key differentiator, driving long-term success through authentic values and stakeholder trust.

Protecting and enhancing reputation is essential for sustainable growth. Trust is hard to earn and easy to lose, making consistency, customer focus, and integrity fundamental to corporate success.

1.7 Activities & Quizzes

Activity – Corporate Reputation Analysis 

Objective:

To apply the knowledge acquired on corporate reputation through critical analysis and the development of improvement strategies.

Arrangement:

- **Company selection:** Choose a real company (it can be a well-known international brand or a local SME).
- **Online reputation analysis:** Research information about the reputation of the selected company using online reviews, social media, industry articles, and discussion forums.
- **Identifying strengths and weaknesses:**
 - What factors contribute to a positive reputation?
 - Are there any negative reviews or comments? If so, what are the most recurring issues?
- **Reputation Management Assessment:**
 - Does the company respond to online reviews and comments?
 - Have you faced reputational crises in the past? If so, how did you manage them?
- **Suggestions for improvement:** Based on your analysis, develop three strategies to strengthen or improve the company's reputation.

Expected output:

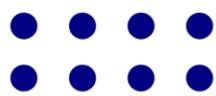
Prepare a short report (maximum two pages) that includes your analysis and proposed strategies.

Assessment criteria:

The exercise will be evaluated on the basis of:

- Completeness of the analysis
- Critical ability to identify strengths and weaknesses
- Creativity and feasibility of the suggested strategies





Quiz  ([Check your answers Here](#))

1. Why is corporate reputation considered a strategic asset?

- a) Because it only determines the image of the company
 - b) Because it directly affects competitiveness and consumer confidence
 - c) Because it depends solely on advertising and marketing campaigns
 - d) Why it does not influence investors' decisions
-

2. Which of the following factors contributes most to a positive business reputation?

- a) A great advertising strategy regardless of the quality of the product
 - b) Transparency, product quality and customer orientation
 - c) The ability to ignore online criticism to avoid reputational damage
 - d) The absence of customer feedback
-

3. What is the main impact of a bad business reputation?

- a) Short-term sales increase
 - b) No real effect on customer loyalty
 - c) Loss of customers, financial damage and difficulty in attracting investors
 - d) Better market positioning through brand awareness
-

4. Which of the following is a competitive advantage of a company with a solid reputation?

- a) May charge higher prices due to consumer confidence
 - b) You can avoid investing in marketing and communication
 - c) Doesn't need to innovate its products or services
 - d) Can ignore customer service without consequences
-

5. How does corporate reputation influence consumer purchasing decisions?

- a) It has no influence, as consumers choose solely on the basis of price
- b) Consumers trust positive reviews and opinions before making a purchase
- c) It is not relevant in the digital age as people buy on impulse
- d) It only affects large companies, not small companies

6. Why is it important to constantly monitor your business reputation online?

- a) To delete any negative comments on digital platforms
 - b) To manipulate reviews and artificially improve the company's image
 - c) Quickly identify problems and manage potential crises
 - d) Ignore criticism without suffering reputational damage
-

7. Which strategy is most effective in managing a reputational crisis?

- a) Denying all allegations and not making official statements
 - b) Respond transparently, admit mistakes and propose solutions
 - c) Block all negative comments on social media
 - d) Wait for the crisis to resolve itself without intervention
-

8. Which of the following elements do NOT contribute to strengthening the company's reputation?

- a) Responsive and effective customer service
 - b) Consistent quality of the product or service
 - c) A total absence of communication with the public
 - d) Commitment to corporate social responsibility
-

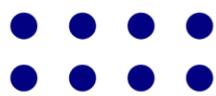
9. Why do investors consider reputation a key factor?

- a) Because a good reputation reduces risks and ensures business stability
 - b) Because they only want to invest in companies with a lot of positive reviews
 - c) Because it allows them to manipulate market value more easily
 - d) Because reputation has no relevance to their decisions
-

10. What is one of the main effects of positive word-of-mouth?

- a) Increase brand trust and influence new customer decisions
- b) It does not have a significant impact on sales
- c) It is less effective than paid ads
- d) It only occurs in large companies





2. MODULE 2 – BUSINESS REPUTATION IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

Introduction

In today's fast-paced and highly connected environment, public perception can shift in an instant—making effective communication more vital than ever. **Public Relations (PR)** plays a central role in shaping, maintaining, and sometimes restoring a company's reputation.

Module 2 explores the foundations and strategic functions of PR within a business context, with a focus on stakeholder engagement and crisis communication. Through a mix of theoretical insight and practical application, participants will learn how to craft transparent, ethical messages, engage meaningfully with audiences, and navigate challenging situations with confidence.

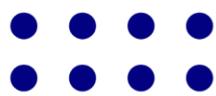
Module 2 aims to:

- Provide an understanding of the principles and role of PR in building business reputation.
- Develop communication strategies for effective stakeholder engagement.
- Learn crisis management techniques to protect and restore reputation.
- Learning methodologies for this module:
- Read and comprehend texts to build a strong theoretical foundation in PR.
- Analyze PR scenarios to apply concepts to real-world situations and develop critical thinking skills.
- Complete quizzes to assess knowledge, receive immediate feedback, and reinforce learning and retention of key concepts.

Expected outcomes of completing this module:

- Develop strong PR and reputation management skills to enhance business credibility and stakeholder trust.
- Gain a deeper understanding of crisis communication to identify risks, respond strategically, and restore reputation.
- Improve stakeholder engagement through tailored messaging and effective communication channels, fostering long-term relationships and brand loyalty.





2.1 Lesson 1: Fundamentals of Public Relations for SMEs

2.1.1 What is Public Relations?

Public relations (PR) plays a crucial role in shaping the reputation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Reputation is one of the most valuable assets for any business, influencing customer trust, investor confidence, and stakeholder relationships. As PR has evolved, it has moved beyond traditional press agency to include engagement, transparency, and reputation management as central pillars of business strategy.

For the Public Relations Society of America, the definition of PR is:

A strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics. 📄

2.1.2 The Role of PR in Business Reputation

Public relations (PR) is crucial for building and maintaining a strong business reputation, fostering trust, and creating a competitive advantage.

SMEs, despite having fewer resources than larger companies, can leverage PR strategies to establish credibility and navigate challenges effectively. Reputation, built through consistent and ethical actions, influences a company's ability to attract customers, investors, and employees.

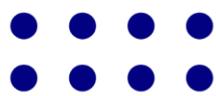


A positive reputation serves as a key asset, strengthening stakeholder support and organizational legitimacy. In times of crisis, credibility becomes vital, as reputation damage can lead to loss of confidence and competitive standing. Investing in PR as a long-term strategy helps businesses shape perceptions, engage stakeholders, and build resilience, making reputation one of their most valuable assets.

2.1.3 The Strategic Importance of PR in SMEs

SMEs depend on trust and credibility for growth. PR provides a cost-effective way to enhance reputation, establish authority, and stand out in competitive markets. Effective PR





strategies help SMEs shape public perception, manage crises, and build lasting relationships with stakeholders. By fostering transparency and consistency, PR strengthens credibility and reinforces the business’s position within its industry.

Key PR functions in reputation management include **building trust** through transparent communication, **crisis management** to mitigate reputational risks, **media engagement for brand visibility**, and **online reputation management** through social media interactions. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) also plays a role in enhancing credibility and stakeholder goodwill.

In SMEs, PR responsibilities are often shared across different levels, emphasizing **credibility** and **transparency**. PR professionals in small firms excel due to their dual expertise in management and communication, highlighting the need for specialized PR education tailored to SME challenges.

2.1.4. Building a PR foundation: Vision, mission, and core values.

A strong Public Relations (PR) strategy begins with a solid foundation rooted in an organization's **vision**, **mission** and **core values**. These elements serve as the guiding principles for all PR activities, ensuring consistency, authenticity, and alignment with the organization's long-term goals.

Vision

The vision statement outlines an organization’s long-term goals and serves as a guiding force in Public Relations.

It aligns all communication with the company’s future direction, inspires stakeholders, and helps PR teams create consistent, purpose-driven messaging. A strong vision builds trust by showing clarity, ambition, and commitment.

Where do we want to be in 5-10 years?

Mission

The mission statement defines the organization’s core purpose and the value it delivers to stakeholders.

In PR, it serves as a foundation for all communication, ensuring clarity, consistency, and alignment with broader goals. A strong mission not only guides purposeful messaging but also helps differentiate the brand and strengthen its identity.

What do we do, for whom, and how do we do it?

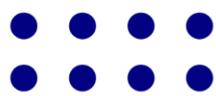
Core Values

Core values are the ethical principles that guide an organization’s actions and decisions.

In PR, they act as a moral compass—ensuring communication is ethical, transparent, and true to the brand’s identity. Core values build trust, shape crisis responses, and create authentic connections with stakeholders.

What principles guide our decisions and actions?

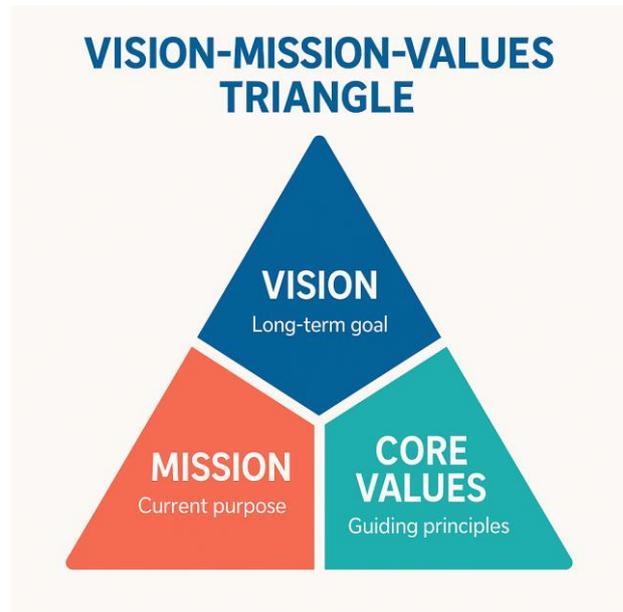




When vision, mission, and core values are clearly defined and integrated into PR strategies, they form a strong foundation for authentic and consistent communication. This alignment:

- Creates a cohesive narrative across all channels;
- Builds trust and positions the organization as purpose-driven;
- Supports values-based decision-making during challenges or crises;
- Strengthens stakeholder relationships through clarity, integrity, and purpose.

Together, these elements are the cornerstones of effective PR, enabling communication that is not only impactful but also sustainable and aligned with long-term success.



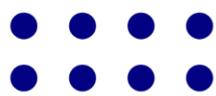
2.2 Lesson 2: Effective Stakeholder Communication

2.2.1. Mapping stakeholders: Investors, media, customers, and employees

Mapping stakeholders is essential for crafting effective PR strategies, as each group plays a critical role in a company's success. Identifying and engaging key stakeholders such as investors, media, customers, and employees ensures that a business can foster strong relationships and align its communications with its strategic goals.

Investors	Media	Customers	Employees
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transparent financial communication• Solid corporate governance• Builds confidence and reassures stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strong media relations• Ensures accurate and positive coverage• Enhances credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personalized communication• Ethical business practices• Fosters brand loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal PR efforts• Boosts engagement, productivity, and advocacy





2.2.2 Effective communication: message, channels and evaluation.

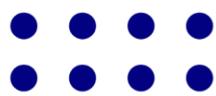
Effective communication with stakeholders is crucial for businesses to convey their values, objectives, and actions. Each stakeholder group—whether customers, employees, investors, or the public—requires tailored messaging that speaks directly to their interests and concerns.

- **Clarity and Consistency:**
clear, concise messaging that aligns with the company's values builds trust and ensures that all stakeholders are on the same page. Consistency across all communication channels is equally important, as conflicting or unclear messages can damage a company's reputation and undermine its objectives. Messages should be clear, aligned with company values, and consistently communicated across all channels.
- **Relevance:**
is another critical factor in stakeholder communication. Each group has unique interests, so messages must be adapted to resonate with their specific concerns. For example, investors may prioritize financial performance and market growth, while customers are likely more focused on product quality and service. By tailoring the message to these different needs, businesses can ensure that their communication is meaningful and impactful.
- **Authenticity:**
in communication is essential for building long-term relationships. Genuine, transparent messaging fosters trust, making it easier for stakeholders to engage and form a positive association with the brand. When businesses communicate openly about both successes and challenges, they not only gain credibility but also increase the likelihood of sustained support from their stakeholders. Genuine and transparent communication fosters trust and long-term engagement.

Traditional PR, including press releases, TV, radio, print media, and industry events, remains vital for credibility and broad audience reach. However, digital PR has transformed stakeholder engagement through social media, online news, influencer partnerships, and content marketing, enabling real-time interaction and response tracking. A **hybrid approach**—combining both traditional and digital strategies—ensures maximum outreach, credibility, and engagement, allowing businesses to optimize their PR efforts effectively.

Finally, to evaluate the effectiveness of their PR strategies, businesses must measure success using various metrics.





Engagement Metrics

Such as social media interactions, website traffic, and audience participation, provide insight into how well messages resonate with stakeholders.

Media Coverage

Is another important measure, focusing on the volume, tone, and reach of press mentions. The volume, tone, and reach of press mentions.

Brand Sentiment Analysis

Using social listening tools, helps track public perception and emotional responses to the brand. Public perception and sentiment tracking through social listening tools.

Crisi Response Effectiveness

The speed of response and the reactions from stakeholders to crisis management efforts are key indicators of a company's ability to handle adversity.

Return on Investment (ROI)

By measuring the impact of PR campaigns on brand awareness, sales, and stakeholder trust. These evaluation tools help businesses refine their strategies, ensuring continuous improvement and long-term success. Measuring the impact of PR campaigns on brand awareness, sales, and stakeholder trust.

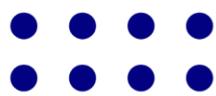
2.3 Lesson 3: Crisis Management and Reputation Recovery

2.3.1 Common PR crises for SMEs

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are particularly vulnerable to public relations crises that can significantly impact their reputation and business operations. From product failures to social media backlash, these challenges require strategic crisis management to maintain public trust and ensure long-term stability. SMEs often face crises that threaten their reputation, including:

- **Product Failures:** defective or unsafe products leading to recalls and negative customer sentiment.
- **Financial Issues:** bankruptcy, fraud, or cash-flow problems that damage investor trust.
- **Workplace Controversies:** employee misconduct, discrimination allegations, or poor labor practices.
- **Cybersecurity Breaches:** data leaks affecting customer privacy and corporate credibility.
- **Social Media Backlash:** negative customer reviews or viral criticism impacting brand image.





2.3.2 Steps for Crisis Management: Identification, Response, and Resolution.

Effective crisis management involves three key steps: identification, response, and resolution. By monitoring public sentiment and conducting risk assessments, businesses can proactively identify potential crises. Quick and transparent responses, along with clear communication, help control the narrative, while corrective measures and ongoing dialogue ensure long-term resolution and trust rebuilding.

Identification

- Monitor public sentiment, social media trends, and internal reports to detect potential crises.
- Conduct risk assessments to prepare for likely crisis scenarios.

Response

- Act quickly and transparently to address the issue.
- Issue official statements through PR channels to control the narrative.
- Engage with stakeholders to manage concerns and provide accurate information.

Resolution

Corrective measures to prevent similar crises in the future:

1. Employee Training

- Create training modules on crisis prevention, risk management, and best practices;
- Offer refresher courses and compliance workshops;
- Include safety and ethical decision-making topics;
- Form a monitoring team to ensure understanding and accountability.

2. Internal Safety Policies

- Update policies based on learnings and industry benchmarks;
- Conduct regular safety audits;
- Establish an **anonymous reporting system** for safety concerns or violations.

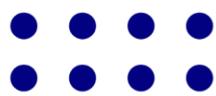
3. Crisis Management Task Force

- Set up a cross-functional crisis team;
- Hold **quarterly simulations** to test preparedness and refine strategy.

4. Open Communication to rebuild trust

- **Public Communication:**
 - issue a public statement acknowledging concerns and outlining steps being taken to address them;





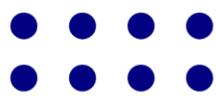
- hold a press conference or Q&A session to answer stakeholder and media inquiries directly;
 - publish regular updates on the company website, blog, or social media about progress on improvements.
- **Engagement with Stakeholders:**
 - host town halls or virtual meetings with employees, customers, and investors to listen to concerns and share updates;
 - send personalized emails or newsletters to key stakeholders reinforcing commitment to improvement;
 - launch a customer feedback program to show willingness to learn and adapt based on user concerns.
 - **Internal Communication & Feedback:**
 - encourage internal feedback channels (e.g., anonymous surveys, open-door policies) to ensure employees feel heard;
 - align internal messaging so that all staff understand and can reinforce the company's commitment to rebuilding trust.

2.3.3 Developing a crisis communication plan

A crisis communication plan is essential for managing unexpected events. Establishing a well-structured **crisis communication plan** is essential for managing and mitigating reputational risks:

Steps to create a Crisis Communication Plan	
Crisis Team	A critical first step is assembling a Crisis team , which should include PR personnel, legal advisors, and key executives. This team is responsible for assessing the situation, coordinating responses, and ensuring that all communication aligns with the company's values and strategic goals. Clearly defined roles within the team help streamline decision-making and prevent conflicting messages.
Communication Channels	Communication channels must be identified in advance, ensuring that official statements are disseminated effectively. Press releases, social media updates, and direct stakeholder engagement through emails or meetings should be coordinated to maintain transparency and control the narrative.





Key Messaging Strategy	Key messaging strategy is crucial to ensure that public statements are clear, consistent, and aligned with the company's brand values. Messages should be adaptable to different scenarios but always emphasize accountability, solutions, and reassurance.
Response timeline	A Response timeline must be established, outlining when and how statements will be issued to prevent misinformation and speculation.
Stakeholder engagement plan	A Stakeholder engagement plan should outline steps to address concerns from customers, employees, investors, and the media. By actively listening, responding with transparency, and demonstrating commitment to resolution, businesses can maintain trust and recover their reputation more effectively.

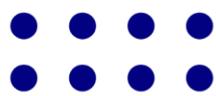
2.3.4 Strategies for rebuilding trust and credibility post-crisis

Rebuilding **trust and credibility** after a crisis requires more than just damage control - it demands a genuine commitment to ethical responsibility and positive social impact. Businesses must first acknowledge their mistakes and take full responsibility where appropriate. A sincere apology, supported by a transparent outline of corrective actions, communicates accountability and a clear intention to improve.

Engaging with the community through **corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives** can further reinforce a positive brand image. **CSR** refers to a company's commitment to operate in an ethical and sustainable manner, considering its impact on society, the environment, and the economy. It involves going beyond profit-making to support initiatives that benefit employees, communities, and the planet. Beyond internal reforms, companies should actively engage with communities by launching or participating in meaningful initiatives. These may include:

- **Education and Awareness:** organize awareness activities or training courses for employees, customers, and the community on topics related to sustainability, health, and well-being. SMEs could, for example, offer educational sessions on the benefits of a healthy diet, the importance of physical exercise, or mental health management.
- **Donations and Volunteering:** SMEs could implement a corporate volunteering program, where employees are encouraged to dedicate a few work hours to social engagement. Additionally, contributions could be made to non-profit organizations or local charity projects.





By supporting social causes, sustainability efforts, or local projects, businesses can rebuild goodwill and demonstrate their long-term commitment to ethical practices.

In the table below, you will find some PR strategies to be used during times of crisis.

SME Crisis PR Toolkit		
Strategy	Action Steps	SME-Friendly Tools/Tips
Transparency	Share updates, use recovery webpages, hold briefings	Blog posts, newsletters, video messages
Sentiment Monitoring	Track perception, detect issues early, adjust messaging	Google Alerts, Hootsuite, social media insights
Stakeholder Engagement	Respond to feedback, share changes, involve your audience	Surveys, virtual town halls, social media Q&As
Positive PR	Highlight wins, showcase values, shift the narrative	Testimonials, behind-the-scenes content, celebrating milestones

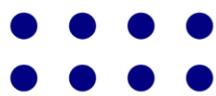
A Crisis is a Test—Not a Defining Moment.

By proactively identifying risks, preparing crisis communication plans, and committing to transparency and engagement, SMEs can **not only recover but emerge stronger**. A values-based, stakeholder-driven approach to PR ensures that trust is rebuilt—and sustained—over time.

2.4 Case Study

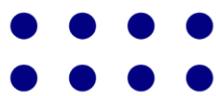
Case Study Title	The Patiswiss Crisis: A Social Media PR Disaster
Image	
Learning Outcome	<p>Understand the importance of crisis management, empathetic communication, and brand reputation in the digital age. Understand the critical role of emotional intelligence and tone in public communications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize how fast reputation can be damaged in the digital age. Learn key principles of crisis communication. Evaluate the impact of leadership behavior on brand perception. Develop strategies for managing customer feedback and complaints effectively.





Goal	To learn how SMEs can effectively handle PR crises and restore brand reputation.
Overview	<p>In April 2024, Patiswiss, a well-known Turkish premium chocolate brand, faced a major public relations crisis after a consumer reported finding a stone in one of its chocolate bars and shared the experience on social media. Instead of issuing a calm and professional response, the company's CEO, Elif Aslı Yıldız Tunaoğlu, responded in a defensive and dismissive tone—questioning the customer's intentions and belittling the post.</p> <p>The CEO's reaction quickly went viral, sparking widespread backlash across social media platforms and news outlets. The public viewed the CEO's behavior as unprofessional and arrogant, which led to immediate consequences for the brand: boycotts, negative press, and the removal of Patiswiss products from several major online marketplaces. The brand, once praised for its quality and innovation, experienced a rapid decline in reputation.</p> <p>In an effort to contain the damage, Patiswiss took swift action. Within 48 hours, the CEO resigned—a clear move to signal accountability and regain public trust. The company also released a formal apology, acknowledging its mishandling of the situation and expressing regret over the tone used by its former CEO.</p> <p>Following this, the company focused on recovery efforts. Patiswiss worked to reestablish relationships with digital marketplaces and shifted its public messaging back to its core values, emphasizing product quality and customer care. However, the response was limited to immediate damage control; the company did not implement a broader corporate social responsibility (CSR) campaign or transparency initiative, which could have strengthened long-term trust.</p>
Challenge	This case study addresses the challenge of aligning leadership communication with public expectations in the digital age—balancing tradition and innovation, emotional response and professional responsibility, brand quality and reputational sustainability.
Assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What could the CEO have done differently in response to the original complaint?• How should SMEs prepare for public feedback—both positive and negative—on social media?• How can leadership behavior affect a company's brand reputation in the digital age?• Do you think that the transparency and accountability demonstrated by the SME can work in your business context? Why or why not?• Can you think of other ways to monitor and address online reputation in real-time?
Link to the article	https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/4061267





2.5 Conclusion

In today's business environment, public relations (PR) plays a crucial role in shaping and maintaining a company's reputation, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). By establishing clear communication strategies, engaging stakeholders effectively, and proactively managing crises, businesses can foster trust, credibility, and long-term success.

The integration of both traditional and digital PR approaches allows companies to maximize their outreach and engagement, ensuring that their messaging remains relevant and impactful across different audiences. Furthermore, by anchoring PR strategies in a strong foundation of vision, mission, and core values, organizations can create authentic and consistent communication that aligns with their long-term objectives.

The case study of Patiswiss serves as a powerful example of how mishandling public relations can lead to significant reputational damage and business consequences. It highlights the importance of empathy, transparency, and strategic crisis communication in maintaining public trust. Effective crisis management requires businesses to identify risks early, respond promptly and professionally, and implement corrective measures to rebuild credibility. By learning from real-world examples and continuously refining PR strategies, SMEs can navigate challenges more effectively, strengthen stakeholder relationships, and secure a resilient and positive brand image in an increasingly digital world.

2.6 Activities & Quizzes

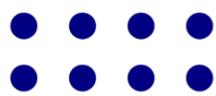
Activity – Connecting Concepts

Connect the concepts listed in Column A with the corresponding definition in Column B. For example, if you think that "Public Relations (PR)" corresponds to definition A, you would write "1 - A." Complete the matching for all five concepts.

CONCEPTS	DEFINITIONS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public Relations (PR) 2. Crisis Management 3. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) 4. PR Foundations (Vision, Mission, and Core Values) 5. Stakeholder Engagement 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. The strategic basis that guides all communication activities. These elements ensure consistency and authenticity in PR strategies. B. The process of mapping and interacting with different groups (investors, media, customers, employees) to align communication with expectations and strengthen support for the organization. C. A strategic communication process aimed at building mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics. D. The company's commitment to ethical practices and social initiatives that contribute to building a positive image and strengthening community ties. E. A set of techniques and processes used to identify, respond to, and resolve critical situations that may compromise reputation. The text highlights the importance of a structured plan to address crises and restore trust.

1.		2.		3		4.		5.	
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Quiz  ([Check your answers Here](#))

1. What is the primary role of public relations (PR) in business reputation?

- a) Increase product prices
 - b) Build mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics
 - c) Focus solely on advertising campaigns
 - d) Replace customer service efforts
-

2. Which of the following is a recommended crisis communication strategy?

- a) Blaming the customer
 - b) Responding defensively to complaints
 - c) Issuing a prompt and transparent response
 - d) Ignoring the media coverage
-

3. Which of the following is NOT a key stakeholder group in PR?

- a) Investors
 - b) Media
 - c) Competitors
 - d) Employees
-

4. Which metric is commonly used to evaluate PR success?

- a) Number of new employees hired
 - b) Media coverage and brand sentiment analysis
 - c) Cost of production
 - d) Number of office locations
-

5. Which of the following is a key step in crisis management?

- a) Ignoring customer complaints
 - b) Monitoring public sentiment and conducting risk assessments
 - c) Avoiding transparency in communication
 - d) Removing all negative reviews from social media
-

6. What is a key benefit of integrating both traditional and digital PR strategies?

- a) Maximizing reach and engagement
- b) Avoiding customer interactions
- c) Focusing only on print media
- d) Reducing the need for social media presence

7. What was the main reason for the Patiswiss PR crisis?

- a) A price increase in chocolate products
 - b) A poorly handled customer complaint about moldy chocolate on social media
 - c) A factory closure due to financial issues
 - d) An aggressive marketing campaign that failed
-

8. Which of the following is a core component of a PR foundation?

- a) Business profitability goals
 - b) Vision, mission, and core values
 - c) Product pricing strategy
 - d) Social media follower count
-

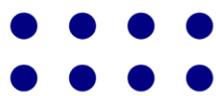
9. Which option best explains the importance of clearly defined vision, mission, and core values in Public Relations?

- a) Reducing marketing costs through replacing paid ads.
 - b) Ensuring PR campaigns are consistent, purpose-driven, and aligned with the organization's identity.
 - c) Eliminating the need for crisis communication planning.
 - d) Being useful only for internal branding, not for external stakeholders.
-

10. What is a crucial first step in developing a crisis communication plan?

- a) Assembling a crisis team
- b) Ignoring media inquiries
- c) Waiting for the situation to resolve itself
- d) Deleting negative online comments





3. MODULE 3 – ONLINE REPUTATION AND CREDIBILITY STRATEGIES

Introduction

In today's hyper-connected world, a business's online reputation can make or break its success—especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups. Thanks to the rise of social media, digital reviews, and search engine visibility, public perception is shaped in real-time, often without the business's direct involvement.

Learning Objectives

Reputation is no longer just a PR issue; it's a **vital component of a company's overall business strategy**. This module is tailored to help SMEs build sustainable, trustworthy online identities that translate into real-world success. In particular:

- This module will explore essential strategies for monitoring, managing, and enhancing online reputation, and credibility;
- This module will equip participants with knowledge and skills to effectively manage their online reputation;
- This module will equip participants to build their credibility in the digital landscape;
- This module will assist SMEs owners to protect their company's online presence;
- This module will enable participants to ensure that the business goals are aligned with stakeholder's expectations.

Learning Methods:

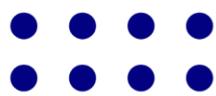
- A blended learning method of theoretical and practical framework;
- Interactive workshops;
 - Case studies;
 - Quizzes.

Expected results:

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Understand the importance of online reputation and its impact on business success;
- Identify key components that contribute to a positive online reputation;
- Implement strategies to monitor and manage online reviews and feedback;
- Develop and execute plans to build and maintain credibility with stakeholders.





3.1 Introduction to Online Reputation Management

3.1.1 What is online reputation?

In the business context, credibility refers to the perception of a company as dependable, ethical, and professional. It is a core attribute that directly affects consumer decisions, partner relationships, and brand equity. No matter how superior a product or service may be, without credibility, it is unlikely to earn lasting customer engagement or market traction. Key indicators of reputation's impact:

- **Consumer willingness to pay more:**
Research indicates that 68% of consumers are willing to spend up to 15% more on a product or service that is backed by a strong and reputable brand.
- **Reputation as a growth engine:**
A positive reputation enhances all business functions, from marketing and public relations to customer service and sales. It can amplify outreach efforts, reduce resistance to new offerings, and increase customer retention.
- **A competitive differentiator:**
In highly saturated markets, credibility often becomes the defining factor that separates successful enterprises from those that struggle to maintain relevance or profitability.

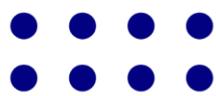


3.1.2 Reputation Management and Credibility Importance

In the world of business, credibility is the cornerstone of sustainable success. It's not just about what you offer-it's about how you're perceived. Being seen as reliable, trustworthy, and professional directly influences how customers engage with your brand. Even the best products or services can go unnoticed if consumers doubt the credibility of the company behind them.

- Reputation is the emotional footprint your business leaves behind after every interaction-be it through marketing, customer service, or product delivery;
- Credibility builds trust, and trust drives conversion, loyalty, and advocacy;
- According to research, 68% of consumers are willing to pay up to 15% more for a product or service from a company with a strong and trustworthy reputation;





- A solid reputation amplifies growth, attracts partnerships, and fosters long-term customer relationships;
- Ultimately, credibility is the factor that often separates thriving businesses from those that struggle to gain market traction.

3.1.3 Tracking Your Online Reputation: Quantitative vs. Qualitative Indicators

To manage and improve your brand's credibility, you need to actively monitor a mix of quantitative (data-driven) and qualitative (perception-based) indicators. Here's a breakdown and enrichment of those tools:

Quantitative Indicators

These indicators provide numerical data that can be tracked, analyzed, and compared over time:

Web Traffic & Visitor Behavior:

- Number of site visits, page views, bounce rates, time on site;
- Conversion rates and visitor flow patterns;

Browser Page Rank & SEO Visibility:

- Google search ranking for targeted keywords;
- Domain authority and backlink quality;
- Organic vs. paid traffic sources;

Social Media Reach & Engagement:

- Followers, likes, shares, comments;
- Impressions, reach, click-through rates;

Customer Reviews & Star Ratings:

- Aggregated scores across platforms;
- Number of reviews and growth rate in feedback volume;

Mentions & Subscriptions:

- Frequency of brand mentions online;
- Growth in email/newsletter subscribers or app downloads;

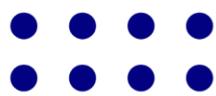
Brand Trust Metrics:

- Percentage of promoters vs. detractors;
- Score trends over time by customer segment;

Offline Key Performance Indicators:

- Sales volume, return rates, and referral rates;
- Attendance at events or workshops hosted by the brand;





Qualitative Indicators

These indicators reflect opinions, emotions, and narratives around your brand that shape its reputation:

Sentiment Analysis of Comments and Feedback:

- Tone and emotion in customer reviews, messages, and social media posts;
- Identifying patterns of praise or criticism

Brand Perception in Media and Public Discourse:

- How journalists, influencers, or industry leaders talk about your brand;
- Inclusion in expert roundups, rankings, or awards;

Customer Testimonials and Case Studies:

- Depth and quality of user stories;
- Themes that emerge across testimonials;

Influencer & Thought Leader Endorsements:

- Alignment with credible voices in your industry;
- Authenticity and depth of endorsement;

Feedback from Direct Customer Interactions:

- Insights from support chats, surveys, and email correspondence;
- Repetition of key sentiments, suggestions, or complaints;

3.2 Building Online Credibility

3.2.1 Definition and Importance

In the context of businesses, credibility is defined as the quality of being trusted by your target audience. 📄

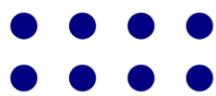
The ideal outcome of trusting customers is, of course, higher conversion rates. And with trusting customers and higher conversion rates ultimately comes a robust and loyal customer base. Credibility is one of the key distinguishing factors between businesses that succeed and those that face more challenges. You may sell a higher quality product, but if your credibility is in the gutter, it will undoubtedly affect your company's success.

3.2.2 Let's Build Credibility

To establish a credible and respected online presence, SMEs should:

- Create a clean, professional website;
- Offer responsive, accessible customer service;
- Maintain active social media channels;
- Display customer testimonials prominently;
- Collect and respond to user feedback;
- Ensure product/service quality;
- Highlight certifications or awards;
- Publish detailed case studies showcasing success.





3.3 Strategies for Enhancing Online Presence

3.3.1 Monitoring and Responding to Online Feedback

Online reviews serve as a reflective lens through which a company's public image is projected and evaluated by its customers.

These digital assessments provide valuable insights into customer satisfaction, highlight strengths, and identify areas requiring improvement. Consequently, systematic monitoring and response to online feedback have become essential elements of a successful reputation management strategy.

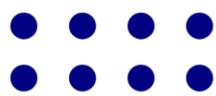


To maintain consistency and professionalism in handling reviews, organizations should establish a **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)** that outlines best practices for monitoring and responding across various platforms. Furthermore, integrating online feedback management into a broader performance management framework—particularly one that emphasizes employee development and retention—can enhance organizational responsiveness and service quality.

Below are key strategic steps for implementing an effective review monitoring and response system:

- 1. Map customer journeys across platforms:** Identify the digital channels and review sites most frequently used by your target audience to evaluate businesses similar to yours.
- 2. Conduct competitor benchmarking:** Analyze platforms where competitors receive the highest volume of reviews. This analysis can reveal potential blind spots in your own visibility and engagement strategy.
- 3. Establish review volume benchmarks:** Track the average number and distribution of reviews competitors receive, categorized by service or product type. Use this data to define realistic targets for your own reputation goals.
- 4. Perform sentiment analysis:** Evaluate the tone and emotional content of reviews to gain insight into customer expectations, satisfaction levels, and recurring concerns.
- 5. Observe competitor response behavior:** Study how competing brands address customer feedback, both positive and negative. Identify best practices and tailor them to your brand's tone and communication style.
- 6. Centralize review management:** Utilize a dashboard or review aggregator to monitor feedback from all platforms in one place. This ensures a streamlined and organized approach.





7. Enable real-time notifications: Activate alerts to be informed immediately when a new review is published, facilitating prompt and efficient responses.

8. Analyze review intent and sentiment: Go beyond surface-level feedback by interpreting the intent behind reviews. This enables prioritization based on urgency and potential reputational impact.

9. Monitor core review metrics: Track indicators such as review frequency, geographical origin, sentiment classification, and average star ratings over time to assess progress and guide strategy adjustments.

10. Utilize and customize response templates: Develop standardized response templates for common feedback scenarios. Personalize each reply to maintain authenticity and reflect the brand's voice.

11. Set clear response time targets: Aim to respond to all reviews—positive or negative—within a defined timeframe (ideally within 24 hours) to demonstrate attentiveness and customer appreciation.

12. Assign responsibility for review management: Designate specific team members or departments to handle various types of feedback, particularly critical or negative reviews that may require escalation or investigation.

13. Proactively request reviews: Encourage satisfied customers to share their experiences by including polite review prompts in email signatures, post-purchase follow-ups, or through your website.

14. Simplify the review process: Provide clear instructions and direct links to review platforms to reduce friction and make the process convenient for customers.

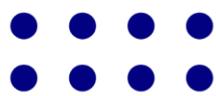
15. Track sentiment trends: Categorize reviews by sentiment (positive, negative, neutral) and identify patterns or sudden shifts that may signal emerging issues or PR risks.

16. Monitor average ratings across channels: Keep an eye on overall star ratings and fluctuations across platforms. A downward trend may indicate unresolved customer dissatisfaction that requires attention.

17. Identify recurring themes and keywords: Use keyword analysis tools to pinpoint frequently mentioned terms, helping you understand customer priorities and pain points.

18. Publish positive feedback: Publicly acknowledge and share favorable reviews as part of your brand storytelling. This not only shows gratitude but also reinforces trust and credibility among future customers.





3.3.2 SEO Online Reputation Management for SMEs

In the contemporary digital landscape, **Search Engine Optimization (SEO)** has become an indispensable tool for the sustainable growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

As consumer behavior continues to shift toward online research and digital engagement, a company's online discoverability plays a pivotal role in influencing purchasing decisions. A well-executed SEO strategy not only enhances the visibility of a business across search engines but also drives qualified web traffic and ultimately boosts customer acquisition and conversion rates.



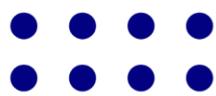
A strong SEO framework is not only a marketing asset but also a key reputation driver, as it ensures that positive content about the business is easily accessible and ranks higher than negative or irrelevant content.

3.3.2.1 Understanding SEO for SMEs

SEO for SMEs involves a systematic approach to enhancing a company's digital footprint so that search engines, such as Google or Bing, can effectively recognize, index, and rank the business for relevant search queries. This multifaceted process comprises three core components: 

- **Technical SEO:** Focuses on optimizing the structural and backend elements of a website—such as loading speed, mobile responsiveness, secure connections (HTTPS), and proper indexing—to ensure search engines can efficiently crawl and understand site content.
- **On-Page SEO:** Involves tailoring the website's content, titles, meta descriptions, and HTML tags to align with targeted keywords and deliver value to users. High-quality, keyword-optimized content enhances both relevance and user experience, encouraging longer engagement.
- **Off-Page SEO:** Refers to external strategies that enhance the site's authority and credibility, primarily through link-building efforts. This includes earning backlinks from reputable websites, leveraging social media presence, and engaging in guest posting or digital PR campaigns.





3.3.2.2 Evaluating SEO Performance

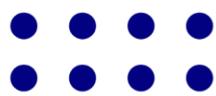
Measuring the effectiveness of SEO efforts is essential to refining strategy and demonstrating return on investment (ROI). Key performance indicators (KPIs) for assessing SEO success include:

- **Search engine rankings:** Monitor the website’s ranking position for target keywords over time. Improvements in rankings indicate increased visibility and relevance in search results.
- **Organic traffic:** Analyze the volume of visitors arriving at the website through unpaid search results. A growing trend in organic traffic suggests that SEO initiatives are successfully attracting potential customers.
- **Conversion rate:** Assess the percentage of site visitors who take meaningful actions, such as completing a purchase, submitting an inquiry form, or downloading resources. High conversion rates reflect the effectiveness of both SEO and overall website usability.

3.4 Case Study

Case Study Title	Multichannel Marketing Strategy and Data Analysis for Marika Hotel
Image	
Learning Outcome	Understanding how actions such as optimizing the website and upgrading social media channels can contribute to enhancing brand awareness, attracting new customers and steadily increasing bookings.
Goal	How to enhance a hotel's brand awareness, increase bookings and ensure the stability of attendance through a multi-channel marketing strategy.
Overview	In 2024, Marika Hotel implemented a series of strategic actions to upgrade its digital presence and improve the overall guest experience. These actions, which included optimizing the website and upgrading social media channels, were aimed at enhancing the hotel's brand awareness, attracting new customers and steadily increasing bookings. Website optimization included the addition of high-quality photos and videos to highlight the hotel's services, while the SEO strategy focused on keywords related to the hotel and services provided to ensure a high-ranking in-search results. To enhance customer loyalty, loyalty programs were created with discounts and exclusive offers for repeat customers, as well as personalized experiences based on customer preferences and customer preferences.
Challenge	New user acquisition was effective, with a total of 28,449 users visiting the website. The majority came from Direct traffic (16,036 users), with Organic Search bringing 9,292 users, Organic Social adding 1,746 users and Paid Search contributing 930 users.





Assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What specific strategies did Marika Hotel implement to increase its digital visibility?• Which marketing channel generated the most traffic? Why do you think that is?• How did SEO and website optimization work together to improve discoverability and user experience?• How does a loyalty program influence customer retention and brand trust? If you were the marketing manager of Marika Hotel, which channel would you invest more in next year and why?
Link to the article	https://ethosevents.eu/hospitality/register/uploads/candidates/files/7/73_2024_a3e044016beb9345e1a3fba0c7e2540e.pdf

3.5 Conclusion

In today's digital economy, a company's reputation is no longer a peripheral concern—it is a fundamental pillar of business success, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). **A well-managed online reputation significantly influences brand perception, shapes consumer behavior, and serves as a critical competitive differentiator.**

Developing a credible digital presence, proactively engaging with customer feedback, and preparing for potential crises are essential components of a resilient reputation management strategy. These efforts not only enhance consumer trust but also contribute to sustainable customer loyalty, the strengthening of strategic partnerships, and overall financial stability. When effectively executed, online reputation becomes an asset capable of driving long-term value across all dimensions of business operations.

3.6 Activities & Quizzes

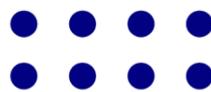
Activity – Review response roleplay 

Participants are given a mix of fictional positive and negative reviews about a mock SME business. They must write personalized, professional responses using best practices discussed in the module.

- Divide participants into pairs or small groups.
- Provide 3 sample reviews each (positive, neutral, negative).
- Ask them to draft responses using SOPs and brand tone.
- Share and discuss answers as a group.

Learning outcomes: Professional communication, empathy, response strategy





Activity – Credibility audit simulation

Participants conduct a credibility audit for a fictional SME (you can create a mock business profile), using a checklist:

- Website design & content
- Social media activity
- Customer reviews
- Certifications or testimonials
- SEO presence

Requirements for participants:

- Rate each area (1-5)
- Identify strengths/weaknesses
- Propose 3 action steps to improve credibility

Learning outcomes: Critical thinking, practical application, diagnosis skills

Activity – SEO keyword mapping challenge

Participants are given a fictional product or service and must:

- Identify 5 target SEO keywords
- Draft a short meta description using one of those keywords
- Create a blog post title optimized for SEO

Learning outcomes: SEO basics, keyword relevance, content planning

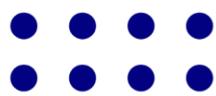
Quiz ([Check your answers Here](#))

<p>1. Which of the following best describes “credibility” in a business context?</p> <p>a) A company's profit margin b) The perception of reliability and professionalism c) The size of its customer base d) The number of employees</p>	<p>2. Which of the following is NOT a component of SEO?</p> <p>a) Technical SEO b) On-Page SEO c) Product Pricing SEO d) Off-Page SEO</p>	<p>3. Which tool helps monitor sentiment from online reviews across platforms?</p> <p>a) Net Promoter Score (NPS) b) CRM c) Social listening tool d) ERP</p>
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True or False

- An SME with strong SEO will automatically have a good reputation. ()
- Credibility can influence both customer loyalty and conversion rates. ()
- Online reputation is solely shaped by customer reviews. ()





Practical Assignments

1. Customer Persona Creation

Based on Marika Hotel's marketing efforts and loyalty program, create two sample customer personas. Include demographics, behaviors, motivations, and preferred channels of engagement.

2. Website Audit Exercise

Imagine you're tasked with further optimizing Marika Hotel's website. Make a checklist of five additional improvements (e.g., multilingual content, online booking enhancements, virtual tours, blog articles, mobile optimization).

3. Loyalty Program Brainstorm

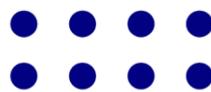
Design a simple loyalty program for Marika Hotel or a similar business. Include: Reward types, how customers earn points or benefits, how personalization can be integrated.

4. Channel Strategy Recommendation

Write a short recommendation (150-200 words) suggesting how Marika Hotel can improve or diversify its multichannel marketing strategy in the coming year.

Support your ideas with at least one data insight from the case study.

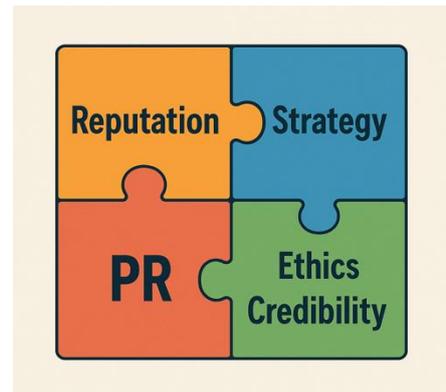




CONCLUSION

Reputation has become one of the most valuable and vulnerable assets for today's businesses, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises navigating the complexity of modern markets. Through this curriculum, we have explored how reputation influences everything—from market positioning and stakeholder trust to online engagement and long-term business sustainability.

Each module in this training offers practical tools, strategic frameworks, and real-life case studies to help learners not only understand the importance of reputation management but to actively shape and strengthen their own. Whether improving market credibility, enhancing public relations, or managing digital presence, the goal has been to equip you with knowledge that can be applied immediately and effectively.

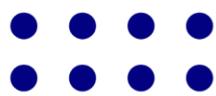


As you conclude this training, we strongly encourage you to reflect on how your business is currently perceived—and how that perception aligns with your values, goals, and customer expectations. Reputation is not static; it is built consistently through everyday actions, honest communication, and thoughtful decisions.

Finally, don't forget to complete the **Digital Self-Assessment Tool (DSAT)** once more. Your progress—from where you started to where you are now—can offer valuable insight and motivation for continued growth.

Building a resilient, trusted reputation doesn't happen overnight. But with the right strategies in place, it becomes one of your most powerful assets.





APPENDIX A – Additional Material

Module 1: Market-Oriented Reputation

Article/Video	Description	Link
Article 🎓	The Dangerous Rise of Corporate Reputation	https://brandfinance.com/insights/corporate-reputation
Video 🎥	Branding and Reputation	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Lv9qjKAUtk
Video 🎥	What Is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)?	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZoKihFLCY0s
Article 🎓	“Why Strong Corporate Social Responsibility Is A Competitive Advantage”. Available at:	https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbesfinancecouncil/2024/11/25/why-strong-corporate-social-responsibility-is-a-competitive-advantage/

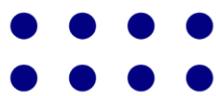
Module 2: Business Reputation in Public Relations

Article/Video	Description	Link
Article 🎓	Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) -	https://www.prsa.org/
Video 🎥	Exploring Public Relations Examples: Impact and Strategies in Business	https://youtu.be/aY0bbUTedeEs
Video 🎥	What is Public Relations? Video by Sketch-22 Illustrated Media	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFvGBdnTuAE
Article 🎓	The Drum (2012). "How Companies Live and Die by Their Reputation." Available at:	https://www.thedrum.com/

Module 3: Online Reputation and Credibility Strategies

Article/Video	Description	Link
Article 🎓	Why Small Businesses Need to Leverage Their Online Reputation	Why small businesses need to leverage
Article 🎓	Online Small Business Reputation Management Tips	Online Small Business Reputation Management Tips
Article 🎓	Why Online Reputation Management is Important: A Guide for Small Business Owners	Why Online Reputation Management is important





APPENDIX B – EXERCISES & QUIZZES ANSWERS

Module 1: Market-Oriented Reputation

Quiz

1. Why is corporate reputation considered a strategic asset? b) Because it directly affects competitiveness and consumer confidence	2. Which of the following factors contributes most to a positive business reputation? b) Transparency, product quality and customer orientation
3. What is the main impact of a bad business reputation? c) Loss of customers, financial damage and difficulty in attracting investors	4. Which of the following is a competitive advantage of a company with a solid reputation? a) May charge higher prices due to consumer confidence
5. How does corporate reputation influence consumer purchasing decisions? b) Consumers trust positive reviews and opinions before making a purchase	6. Why is it important to constantly monitor your business reputation online? c) Quickly identify problems and manage potential crises
7. Which strategy is most effective in managing a reputational crisis? b) Respond transparently, admit mistakes and propose solutions	8. Which of the following elements do NOT contribute to strengthening the company's reputation? c) A total absence of communication with the public
9. Why do investors consider reputation a key factor? a) Because a good reputation reduces risks and ensures business stability	10. What is one of the main effects of positive word-of-mouth? a) Increase brand trust and influence new customer decisions

Module 2: Business Reputation in Public Relations

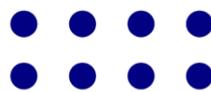
Activity – Connecting Concepts

1. C | 2. E | 3. D | 4. A | 5. B

Quiz

1. What is the primary role of public relations (PR) in business reputation? b) Build mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics	2. Which of the following is a recommended crisis communication strategy? c) Issuing a prompt and transparent response
3. Which of the following is NOT a key stakeholder group in PR? c) Competitors	4. Which metric is commonly used to evaluate PR success? b) Media coverage and brand sentiment analysis
5. Which of the following is a key step in crisis management? b) Monitoring public sentiment and conducting risk assessments	6. What is a key benefit of integrating both traditional and digital PR strategies? a) Maximizing reach and engagement





<p>7. What was the main reason for the Patiswiss PR crisis? b) A poorly handled customer complaint about moldy chocolate on social media</p>	<p>8. Which of the following is a core component of a PR foundation? b) Vision, mission, and core values</p>
<p>9. Which option best explains the importance of clearly defined vision, mission, and core values in Public Relations? b) Ensuring PR campaigns are consistent, purpose-driven, and aligned with the organization's identity.</p>	<p>10. What is a crucial first step in developing a crisis communication plan? a) Assembling a crisis team</p>

Module 3: Online Reputation and Credibility Strategies

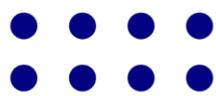
Quiz

<p>1. Which of the following best describes "credibility" in a business context? b) The perception of reliability and professionalism</p>	<p>2. Which of the following is NOT a component of SEO? c) Product Pricing SEO</p>	<p>3. Which tool helps monitor sentiment from online reviews across platforms? d) ERP</p>
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True or False

- An SME with strong SEO will automatically have a good reputation. **(F)**
- Credibility can influence both customer loyalty and conversion rates. **(T)**
- Online reputation is solely shaped by customer reviews. **(F)**





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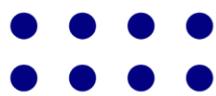
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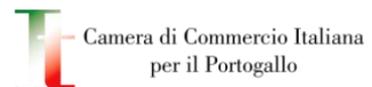


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