

A FREE UNCOM MEDIA RESOURCE



Who's Talking About You Online?

A guide to monitoring your brand's online reputation, understanding what the numbers actually mean, and knowing when it is time to get ahead of a problem before it becomes a headline.

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

What to track, where conversations about you actually happen, and what a sentiment score really means.

What digital forensics is, and when reputation monitoring is not enough on its own.

Real tools you can start using this week.

CLARITY • CONSISTENCY • TRUST

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

A Note Before You Start

Somewhere online right now, someone may be talking about your organization. A review, a comment, a post, a forum thread. Most of the time it is unremarkable. Every so often, it is the first sign of something that is about to become a much bigger problem.

The organizations that handle their reputation well are rarely the ones with no negative mentions. They are the ones who saw it first, because they were already paying attention.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The conversation about your brand is happening whether you are watching it or not. The only choice is whether you find out first, or find out last.

This guide covers what to monitor, the language you need to know to actually understand what a monitoring tool is telling you, real tools worth using, and what digital forensics means for the moments when watching is not enough and you need to know exactly what happened before you respond.

We built this at UNCOM Media because reputation and digital forensics work is a large part of what we do. Read through it, start monitoring what you are not already watching, and if you get to a point where you need help interpreting what you are seeing, that is exactly what we are here for.

*With clarity,
The UNCOM Media Team*

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SECTION 01

Why Online Reputation Monitoring Is No Longer Optional

Reputation used to be shaped by press coverage and word of mouth in a room. Now it is shaped by a five-star review posted at eleven at night.

People are already forming opinions about your organization from reviews, social posts, comment sections, and forum threads, whether anyone on your team is watching or not. Most organizations only start paying attention after something has already gone wrong, and by then the conversation has usually been happening for days.

Monitoring is not paranoia. It is basic awareness of what customers, employees, and the public already believe about you, so you can respond to small things while they are still small.

WHY THIS MATTERS

If you are not tracking what is being said about you, you are always the last to know, never the first to respond.

SECTION 02

The Language of Reputation: Key Terms to Know

Monitoring tools throw numbers at you fast. Here is what they actually mean.

Sentiment Score

A single number summarizing whether online conversation about your brand is positive, negative, or neutral. It is typically calculated as positive mentions minus negative mentions, divided by total mentions.

BELOW 50% • NEEDS ATTENTION

50 TO 80% • MIXED

ABOVE 80% • STRONG

Mention Volume

The total number of times your brand, product, or name is referenced online in a given period. A sudden spike, up or down, is often the first sign something is happening.

Share of Voice

How much of the total conversation in your industry or category is about you, compared to your competitors.

Reach vs. Impressions

Reach is how many unique people could have seen a mention. Impressions is the total number of times it was displayed, including repeat views by the same people.

Response Rate

The percentage of reviews, comments, or mentions your organization actually responds to. A low response rate reads as absence, even when no one intended it that way.

SECTION 03

What to Track

A complete monitoring setup covers more than just your organization's name.

- ☐ Your brand, product, and organization name, including common misspellings
- ☐ Leadership and executive names
- ☐ Review platforms relevant to your industry, not just the biggest ones
- ☐ Social media tags, hashtags, and mentions, not only comments on your own posts
- ☐ Comparisons to competitors ("[you] vs [competitor]" searches and posts)
- ☐ Customer service complaints, wherever they are posted publicly
- ☐ News coverage and blog mentions

SECTION 04

Where These Conversations Actually Happen

Most organizations only watch the one or two places they already post to. That leaves the rest of the internet unwatched.

WHERE	WHAT TO WATCH FOR
Review Sites	Google Business Profile, Yelp, and any industry-specific directories
Social Media	Public posts and comments, not just activity on your own official pages
Forums and Communities	Reddit threads and niche forums specific to your industry
News and Blogs	Coverage of your organization, and of your industry in general
Employer Review Sites	Glassdoor and Indeed, often overlooked but shapes recruiting and public trust

SECTION 05

Reading the Warning Signs Early

None of these guarantee a crisis is coming. All of them are worth a closer look the moment you see them.

- A sudden spike in mention volume, positive or negative
- The same complaint showing up across multiple, unconnected channels
- A negative review or article outranking your own website in search results
- An employee post gaining unusual traction
- A reporter, blogger, or influencer engaging with a complaint
- Your sentiment score dropping several points in a short window

SECTION 06

What Is Digital Forensics, and Why It Matters

Communication starts with understanding the facts.

Digital forensics is the discipline of analyzing digital evidence, communication timelines, online activity, and publicly available information so leadership can make informed decisions before responding publicly. Monitoring tells you that something is being said. Digital forensics tells you what actually happened.

Before your organization issues a statement, posts a response, or takes action against an employee or outside party, you need to know what is true, not just what it looks like on the surface. A screenshot can be edited. A timeline of posts can be misread. A single angry comment can look like a coordinated campaign, or a coordinated campaign can look like one angry person, if no one takes the time to actually verify it.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Responding quickly matters. Responding to something you have not actually verified matters more, because you only get to correct the record once before people stop listening.

SECTION 07

When Monitoring Turns Into a Forensics Problem

Most day to day monitoring, a bad review, a critical comment, does not require an investigation. A handful of situations do.

- ☐ A viral post or screenshot that may be altered or taken out of context
- ☐ An accusation that could carry legal consequences
- ☐ Signs of coordinated or inauthentic activity, such as a wave of near-identical negative reviews
- ☐ A leak of internal information or communication
- ☐ Any situation where you need a verified timeline before you can respond responsibly

WHERE UNCOM MEDIA COMES IN

This is exactly the point where monitoring on your own is not enough. UNCOM Media provides digital forensic consulting to analyze digital evidence, communication timelines, online activity, and publicly available information, so your leadership can respond from a position of fact, not assumption.

SECTION 08

Tools That Do the Heavy Lifting

You do not need every tool on this list. You need at least one that actually gets checked on a schedule.

TOOL	BEST FOR
Google Alerts	Free, basic tracking of your name across news and the open web
Google Business Profile	Monitoring and responding to local reviews directly where people search for you
Brand24 or Mentionlytics	Real time brand mention tracking with sentiment scoring across social, news, and forums
Hootsuite or Sprout Social	Combines monitoring with the ability to respond directly from one dashboard
Podium or Birdeye	Built specifically for managing and responding to reviews across many sites at once
ReviewTrackers	Focused specifically on review monitoring and reputation scoring over time
Meltwater or Talkwalker	Enterprise grade media and social monitoring, often paired with formal crisis response

Tools surface what is being said. Deciding how to respond, especially when something is legally or reputationally sensitive, is still worth a second set of expert eyes.

Responding to Reviews and Public Comments

Respond to the good ones too, not just the bad ones.

A thoughtful reply to a positive review reinforces loyalty and shows every future reader that someone is paying attention. For negative reviews, respond promptly, without getting defensive. Acknowledge the concern without admitting fault you have not confirmed, and move detailed back and forth to a private channel instead of arguing in public. One named person or a clear approval process should own these responses, so the tone stays consistent no matter who is on shift that day.

SECTION 10

When Something Goes Viral for the Wrong Reason

The first ten minutes matter less than most people think. What you do in the first few hours matters enormously.

- ☐ Do not respond in the first panic-driven minutes. Verify what actually happened first.
- ☐ Loop in the right people immediately: leadership, legal, IT, and whoever manages your social accounts.
- ☐ Prepare a short holding statement while you gather the facts.
- ☐ Correct misinformation calmly and factually, without amplifying it further by over-engaging.
- ☐ Keep watching how the story evolves. One post is not a response plan.

SECTION 11

Building a Simple Monitoring Routine

Consistency matters more than sophistication. A simple routine you actually follow beats an elaborate one that gets ignored after the first month.

CADENCE	WHAT TO DO
Daily	Scan alerts and mentions, respond to new reviews
Weekly	Check the sentiment trend, close out any unanswered comments
Monthly	Review the sentiment score trend and share of voice, report findings to leadership
Quarterly	Run a full reputation audit across every channel you track

SECTION 12

Getting Ahead of It: Proactive Reputation Building

Reputation management is not only defense.

Encourage satisfied customers to leave reviews before you need the goodwill. Publish content that reflects your values so there is a real, visible track record for people to find. Engage authentically on an ongoing basis, so you already have relationships and attention before anything goes wrong. Make it easy for people to reach you directly, so a frustrated customer messages you first instead of venting publicly because it felt like the only option.

WHY THIS MATTERS

An organization with an established, positive presence has more benefit of the doubt when something does go wrong. Reputation you build in advance is reputation you can spend later.

SECTION 13

Quick-Start Checklist

Everything in this guide, in one place.

- ☐ Set up at least one monitoring tool covering your name, leadership, and products.
- ☐ Track reviews, social mentions, forums, news, and employer review sites.
- ☐ Know your current sentiment score and what counts as strong versus concerning.
- ☐ Respond to reviews and comments on a consistent schedule, good and bad.
- ☐ Know the warning signs that a situation needs verification, not just a reply.
- ☐ Understand when a situation calls for digital forensics instead of a quick response.
- ☐ Build proactive reputation, do not only play defense.

A FINAL NOTE

You cannot control everything people say about your organization online. You can control whether you are paying attention when they say it.

NOW YOU KNOW WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Let's Make Sure Someone Is Watching.

Monitoring tools surface the noise. Knowing what it means, and what to do about it, especially when the facts are not yet clear, is where UNCOM Media's reputation and digital forensics work comes in.

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