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# **HANDLING TENSE PARENT RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH REPUTATION MANAGEMENT FOR THE EDUCATION INDUSTRY**

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Reputation management in the education industry starts with **effective communication** policies that **connect parents to your team**.

Parent satisfaction is crucial to running a successful school. And yet, parents often hear about school happenings through their children, which means it's a third-party account. Getting to the bottom of complaints or concerns can be complex within schools for a variety of reasons.

The complexity of managing effective parent relationships in the education industry also complicates **reputation management** for schools. Ideally, you want to hear about concerns before parents take to the internet to voice their dissatisfaction. That requires some internal communication and processes and is the first step in building an effective reputation management plan for the education industry.

**Learn how** to build and maintain better parent relationships, **improve** your online ratings and **attract more** prospective parents through effective communication.



# 1

## Offer Parents a Clear Way to Share Concerns

Communicate with parents regularly and ensure they know how to share their concerns with the administration. You want to keep conversations one-on-one between your education business and the parent.



That way, you can diffuse the situation and investigate the issue before the parent shares it more widely. Sometimes, issues that seem large to a parent in the moment can suddenly feel smaller once they share it and have a chance to feel heard by your team.

But they have to know who to contact to be heard or they might take matters into their own hands. While it might be challenging to have administration contact information published publicly since administrators are extremely busy, it can be the difference in helping you grow your school through a healthy online reputation and more positive word-of-mouth.

# 2

## Ensure Teachers Listen Closely During Parent-teacher Meetings

Another way to ensure parents have been heard is to have teachers listen to parents during parent-teacher meetings. Teachers are often the first to communicate with parents. They can help escalate concerns as needed and mitigate minor concerns. Open communication can make all the difference in making a parent happy with their child's education.

Some concerns parents might share could have to do with a child not excelling quickly, social challenges, interpersonal issues with other students, etc. Teachers can explain more to parents about what to expect from their child's education. And when that isn't enough, they can refer the parent to the administration.



## 3

## Encourage Teachers to Share Possible Incidents with Administration

When a teacher sees an interaction between students or knows a student is struggling in some way, they should let the administration know. That way, if a parent comes forward with concerns, it's

not the first the administration is hearing about the issue.

This is also a good policy to help look after and protect children from bullying and other peer-pressure situations. Teachers who listen and watch closely for interpersonal issues in the classroom will create a better experience, which can improve your online reputation.

Offer teachers an easy reporting process to ensure the documentation makes it where it needs to go for later reference. Remind teachers of these processes frequently in case they go many months or even school years without the need to document concerns.



## 4

## Manage the Tone Online

Now that you've put the processes in place to ensure parents have a clear and easy way to share concerns and seek resolution for them, you need to consider how to manage the tone about you online.

Most organizations can never avoid all negative comments, reviews or user-generated content. But you can be involved to help show you care about the student and parent experiences.

While manpower and financial resources are often hard to come by in schools and other education businesses, devoting just 20-30 minutes per week and a small monthly investment in social listening tools can make a big difference. Here's a look at how you should be managing the tone online.

### 01 Join Relevant Social Media Channels

Get out there and start mixing and mingling with students and parents where they commonly interact. Parents are your primary audience as far as selling what you're offering. But students can share valuable insights into a day in the life of a student enrolled in your programs. Those personal perspectives can be valuable and give you an easy way to generate content.

### 02 Use Social Listening Tools to Join Relevant Conversations

**Social media management** can be challenging because the public will speak about you without tagging you. That makes some comments and sentiments harder to find and respond to...

without social listening tools. These tools help you see where your school or business name is listed online. You can join the conversation that way on blogs, social media, reviews and more.

### **03 Respond to Online Comments When Appropriate**

At times, it won't make sense for you to join conversations that you weren't tagged in on social media. It might be something deeply personal for the poster or the situation might escalate more by you finding that post and joining the conversation when the poster thought they were anonymous to some extent.

Deciphering between what to comment on and what not to comment on can be one of the largest challenges with social media. But as you get deeper into it, your team will start to recognize what comments help diffuse tough situations and which ones tend to escalate things more.

### **04 Encourage Reviews at the Right Time**

You should encourage parents to review your school. But perhaps think about the timing.

Encourage reviews after students accomplish something or after graduation when parents feel more nostalgic.

While you can't ensure that the parent is happy in the moment you encourage a review, you can be strategic about it to find the best possible time. Education is a challenging industry because it's so personal for parents. They want to see their child thrive and succeed in life but...

so much goes into that. Recognizing how personal the process is for parents can help you better understand them and reach out at the right times.

Additionally, by encouraging reviews, you can also get parents to leave their thoughts and comments in a central location. With so many places to leave online reviews now, it can make it more challenging to show how great you are if you only have a handful of reviews across many different third-party sites.

## 05 Respond to All Reviews

Once you've encouraged reviews, you need to be out there reading and responding to those reviews – both good and bad. And that can be challenging when a parent is upset about something, but the online review is the first you're hearing about it. But being there and adding your voice to the conversation and ensuring you give parents a way to get in touch to resolve the issue is wise.

When responding to heated reviews, try to take the conversation offline. Don't continue to engage in back-and-forth comments publicly for everyone to see. Instead, give an email address or phone number for the frustrated parent to get in touch.

At times, you might encounter spam where bots or people who have never enrolled in your school write a negative review with no context. You can include in your response that you don't have a record of a student or family attending your school with the name listed on the review. But if they'd like to share more, they can contact you via a specific email or phone. You can also flag those reviews as spam for further review from the platform to hopefully see them removed.

# Reputation Management Support for the Education Industry

When your team is too strapped for time or doesn't have a staff member to devote to reputation management, it can make sense to hire an expert. This also ensures that your reputation is handled with precision and gives you the best chance at success to improve your online reputation and earn a higher enrollment in the coming school year.

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