
I
N
S
I
G
H
T
S

FOR FAMILIES



Reputation Management



**November/December
2018**

INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant.

Most kids and teens have active online lives. Combined with the potentially poor judgement of adolescence, they may be creating an online presence that will have a lasting effect on their reputations and future opportunities.

Your online reputation is your reputation.

There really is no divide between how we act and what we say online versus offline. The difference is that the audience is bigger online and the posts are permanent. It is important that kids and teens understand the lasting effects of digital activity and how it can reach beyond the screen to impact your future life.

Michael Fertik, CEO of ReputationDefender.com, says, "It's important to talk to your kids about their online reputation, especially on social networks, and how it can affect their real lives." The following are his "Five things your kids should know about their online reputation":

1. If it's online, consider it public information.

There's no way to guarantee that what you post online will stay where you intend it to be viewed. Before your child posts anything, they should consider whether it is "public information" — would they want their principal, grandma, or college admissions reviewers to see it?

2. Your internet persona stays with you forever

The Internet doesn't forget, and is far more like a "permanent tattoo" than we realize. College recruiters look up information about prospective applicants. Hiring managers and recruiters look at online reputations before hiring.

3. Practice good privacy

Privacy settings aren't perfect, but they provide a level of protection for social media. If your child is on a social networking website, make sure she knows how to keep updates from public view. It helps for parents to use the same website to familiarize them with the settings.

4. Your actions online affect others

Many teens assume that anything is okay to share with online friends. For example, a teen may write, "I wish my Dad would quit his job! He says he hates his job and his boss." While that may seem like an innocuous rant to the teen, if word spread to the father's boss, it might cause trouble. Teens have to learn that what they share online does not only affect them, but may have consequences for others.

5. Keep personal information private

One of the cruelest forms of cyberbullying occurs when a bully hijacks another student's account, locks them out, and then pretends to be the victim. By the time your child has regained control of the account (if ever), her name and reputation could be smeared across the internet.

To help ensure that your child never has her information stolen, teach the importance of keeping personal information (such as their full birth date, phone number, and address) out of her social networking profile. Also, work with your child on creating a strong password. Specific tips include using a combination of uppercase and lowercase letters, symbols, and numbers. Another good option is making a mnemonic phrase into a password. For example, "I, John Brown, was born at 5:00 in the AM" becomes "IJBwb@5itAM." <http://bit.ly/2zFydOr>

Careless posts now = lost opportunities later

The things we say and do have always been a building block for our reputations — even before digital tools. Kids have always said and done things they regret as adults. Now those things may haunt them later in life through the internet.

According to the news site, Crimewire, "It takes 15 minutes to ruin your life online. One momentary lapse in judgement can cost you your job, relationships, and your life. For kids, the risk is even higher. As young brains haven't developed enough to understand the long-term consequences of an action, they're more likely to engage in high-risk behaviors online. And these risks can easily spell devastation that can last a lifetime." <http://bit.ly/2Rc7lxq>

There are countless stories about students and student athletes losing scholarships or college acceptance letters due to explicit, sexist, racist and inappropriate posts. Recent graduates are also losing job offers over comments, or photos and videos of drunken or sexual behavior. And young employees have been dismissed over social media posts that show disrespect to the company or show them lying about missing work because of illness when they were really playing hooky.

If your teen doubts the risks of social media activity, a simple web search will show countless stories of these scenarios, along with research studies that have found one in 10 young people have been denied a job due to social media use. <http://bit.ly/2Oi4cMT>

Read more internet safety tips for parents and teens

Teaching your kids about online reputation management

<http://bit.ly/2Rc7lxq>

Social networks known to be used by internet predators

<http://bit.ly/2Rdqu0Y>

Talking to kids and teens about social media and sexting—Tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics

<http://bit.ly/2OpD52l>