

Foreword by Brian Solis  
Author of What's the Future of Business?

# REPPED

30 DAYS TO A BETTER ONLINE REPUTATION



# ANDY BEAL

Coauthor of Radically Transparent

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30 DAYS TO A BETTER ONLINE REPUTATION

ANDY BEAL

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Andy Beal/Marketing Pilgrim LLC  
8711 Six Forks Rd, #104-200  
Raleigh, NC 27614  
[www.andybeal.com](http://www.andybeal.com)

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*For my beautiful wife Sheila. It would take an entire book to fully  
express just how much I love you.*

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

IT HAS BEEN six years since I wrote my first book, *Radically Transparent*, and I thought—I may have actually vowed—that I would never write another book. I simply didn't have it in me. Then, during a thirty-minute drive downtown, the concept, structure, content, and title of a new book came to me. I was on my way to the Raleigh Rescue Mission, a Christian emergency and recovery shelter for the homeless where I sit on the Board of Directors as well as teach ukulele classes. You often hear the phrase “divine intervention,” but I truly believe this was a case of divine *inspiration*. With that in mind, I would like to first thank God for not only giving me the idea, but giving me the stamina and eloquence to write *Repped*.

Very closely behind, I thank my wonderful wife, Sheila. If God is my rock and foundation, Sheila is the cement that keeps it all together. She's my best friend, my encourager, my career counselor, my spiritual advisor, and my biggest fan. She is the love of my life.

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Lastly, if you've made it this far, I'd like to thank you, dear reader. Not only did you purchase this book, but you also read it, and you read all of acknowledgements above.

Thank you!

# FOREWORD

WITH THE SOCIAL web and proliferation of apps, smart phones and always on Internet access, we are becoming a society of accidental narcissists. I don't believe we set out to become self-obsessed and, to be honest, it's not all that bad. Today's digital lifestyle made self-expression not only possible but also acceptable. Selfies! What once would have been frowned upon as anti-social and narcissistic is now a form of everyday self-expression. It's the new emoticon in many ways.

Sharing our lives is easy and it's rewarding as friends, family, and followers react with Likes, shares, comments, et al. With each update we receive positive reinforcement and are heartened to share more. We now are at the center of our own universe and with each day that passes, we share more of our lives and encouragement pushes our behavior toward extroversion. The words privacy and publicity now take on entirely new meanings as we place on display the very thing our ancestors cherished as privileged. With each update, post, selfie, we share a bit of ourselves that in their own way contribute to a semblance of our digital persona. This, though, works for and against us...

Online, just like in the real world, actions and words speak loudly. Unlike real life, though, your digital footprints are there for anyone to find on Google, social networks, and in communities. These disparate pieces are then assembled by employers, schools, friends, lovers, enemies, and anyone and everyone who wish to learn something more about you. Whether pure, sinister, or simply inquisitive, whatever the reason, today these pieces construct a

semblance of you and whoever sifts through your online legacy is left to their own surmise. This is too important to leave to chance. Online is the new real world. This is your life.

Getting repped is something we should think about but rarely do. We should be more methodical about what we share and why. But online engagement is teaching us to think in the moment instead of anticipating how those moments collect and assemble into something we didn't initially foresee. Andy Beal is on to something here. And, if we each think deeply about it, we are indeed the masters of our own digital fate by choosing what we share and how we reward those who guide us online. At the same time, we are also the beast of our own burden by sharing whimsically.

As Andy defines, repped is the result of conscious contributions that are intentionally additive. By investing in positive reputation updates, whether for you or someone else, ratings rise. Relationships flourish. Trust builds. Thus, we enhance and shape an individual's online profile to a more deserving standing. Again, it's intentional.

If we do nothing and continue to post along our merry way, we become the victim of chance and circumstance. What others see and assume, the impressions that form, the opinions that arise, and the decisions they make as a result are defined for us if we do not first define and reinforce what we want them to be.

Think about it this way. When you look in the mirror, you see a reflection of who you are right now. What if you could transform that reflection each day into someone you hoped to see staring back at you? With *Repped*, we become architects of our desired reflection. If heedful, this digital reflection will ultimately work for us rather than against us. It's more than how we see ourselves, of course. It's the broad strokes we paint in addition to the fine detail that we dab to paint a portrait that helps us now and in the future.

*What separates reality from aspiration are your actions and words.  
You earn what you deserve.*

It is what we share and how we build relationships that communicate who we are, not only to those whom we know, but also those whom we wish to know as well as those who are seeking to know more about us. It takes work yes. But then again so does anything that matters in life. Where everything begins though is what's important. Most jump into online reputation management without taking what is quite honestly the most important first step...connecting the threads of who you are, your aspirations, and who it is you want others to see.

Now's the time to consider how you want to be repped. Now's the time to consider the value of online reputation management and come to terms with what you want to invest into and take out of your digital life and the digital lives of others.

*Repped* will help you earn digital significance. Equally, *Repped* will help you bestow significance unto others. The value you assign to engagement affects what you place and take out of this so-called digital life. The value we take away must only be surpassed by what we invest. This is the foundation for your digital legacy.

Give *repped*.

Get *repped*.

Brian Solis (@briansolis), digital analyst, anthropologist and author of *What's the Future of Business (WTF)*



# INTRODUCTION

**Repped** (verb)—*Slang*: to add a positive reputation rating to an individual's online profile.

WHEN I SET out to write *Repped: 30 Days to a Better Online Reputation*, I endeavored to publish a book that would explain the complex world of online reputation management in a way that was both practical and easy to understand. In the six years since writing *Radically Transparent: Monitoring and Managing Reputations Online*, a lot has changed. Social media has exploded in growth and just about everyone has a Twitter account, Facebook page, or some other kind of socially connected profile. Along the way, we learned that our voices can carry much further than ever before and if an individual, business, or organization lets us down we're not afraid to complain. Loudly. Relentlessly. Fearlessly.

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## WHO SHOULD READ *REPPED*?

*Repped* is for everyone. It's for the twenty-something, fresh out of college, who realizes that his student indiscretions are hampering his job search. It's for the small business owner who's trying to build a loyal customer base that will spread the word about their love for her products. It's for the CEO of the Fortune 500 Company who's trying to rebuild a tarnished company image. And, *Repped* is for you, because whether you realize it or not, you have a reputation to protect online.

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## FROM REPUTATION ZERO TO HERO

*Repped* is written as a 30-day guide. Each chapter is a different day with a different focus. Just like the “get six-pack abs in a month” or “get ripped in 30 days” exercise videos that are so popular, *Repped* uses a similar approach. Anyone can commit to anything for just 30 days. And, if you follow through on your daily commitment, you’ll see tremendous results at the end of those 30 days. Instead of building a ripped body, you’ll build a rock-solid online reputation.

My goal, my hope, is that by reading *Repped* you will avoid becoming the next Anthony Weiner, Amy’s Baking Company, or BP. You’ll learn that a great reputation starts with a great character. You’ll discover that the key to an amazing fan base is to be an amazing company. And that the only way you’ll keep your reputation healthy is to keep listening to your customers, employees, coworkers, and business partners.

Just like a commitment to follow the exercise videos, building a great online reputation requires commitment on your part, but give me just 30 days and I promise you that you’ll get *Repped*!



# WHAT IS ONLINE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT?

*“Conversations about our brand are happening everywhere, and with the Internet as the great equalizer, it doesn’t matter if you know the brand intimately, or if you’ve had just one bad experience, it will be heard.”* —**Sir Richard Branson**

OVER THE NEXT 30 days, you’re going to take your online reputation from zero to hero, but before you dive in to the necessary tactics, it’s important to understand what online reputation management is, and isn’t.

In *Radically Transparent: Monitoring and Managing Reputations Online*, my coauthor, Dr. Judy Strauss, and I spewed thousands of words in our effort to explain the concept of online reputation management. That was waaay back in 2008. Thanks to BP (oil spill), Tiger Woods (affair), and United Airlines (breaking guitars)—to name just a few—we now live in an age where most people have at



least a superficial understanding of the need for online reputation management.

Just in case you call a large rock "home," and you've come out from under it just to read this book, here's a new definition of online reputation management in one sentence:

*A deliberate effort to increase the number of positive Internet discussions about you, while limiting the damage of any negative ones.*

Easier said than done, right?

Notice that online reputation management is not solely about manipulating what shows up on the first page of Google. Certainly, managing the search engine results is a vital part of online reputation management (we'll cover that on Day 18), but there's so much more that goes into building a great reputation, which you'll explore over the coming days.

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## WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

Why should you care about your online reputation? Well, if you're a farmer in Elbonia\* perhaps you don't need to worry about what people are saying about you online. And indeed, there are many individuals and companies that are blissfully unaware of their online reputation, and likely won't ever read this. For the rest of you, a single statistic might just get your attention:

*90% of us trust the recommendations of others (Source: Forrester Research)*

Notice, this is 90% of *anyone* else. Not just friends or family recommendations, but the recommendations of any random stranger that happens to have a computer connected to the Internet. With the rise of social media, you and I have placed our trust in the endorsements and critiques of complete and total strangers.

Is that fair?

Ask any business owner with a 1-star Yelp review, or an individual with a Klout score of 15, and you'll probably get "no" for an answer. However, just because your reputation is now being decided by anyone else but you, doesn't mean that all is lost. You're going to learn how to build, manage, monitor, and repair your online reputation. How well you succeed will be determined by one very important factor.

Your character.

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## HOW'S YOUR TREE?

Were he alive today, our 16<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America, Abraham Lincoln, wouldn't make for much of a theater critic, but he might find his calling in the field of reputation management. To this day, Lincoln has one of my all-time favorite quotes on the subject:

*"Character is like a tree and reputation like a shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing."*

No, this is not a botany lesson. Instead, it's one of the most important lessons you'll learn in your 30-day quest for a better online reputation. Your reputation will only ever be as good as your character. Sure, just as hand puppeteers can contort their fingers to display a bunny shadow on a brightly lit wall, so too could you manipulate your reputation to be something other than your true nature. But, how long would you be able to hold that pose? It wouldn't be long before your audience realizes that you're not a cute, fluffy bunny after all, just a bunch of knuckles and fingernails.

It's the same with your reputation, but that's something you can use to your advantage! As we explore different tactics for improving your online reputation, keep in mind that by simply being a better

person, a better company, a better non-profit, you'll automatically start to improve your reputation.

Take care of your tree, and the shadow will take care of itself.

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## NOT JUST FOR COMPANY BRANDS

What reputation are you trying to improve? Your personal name? Your company brand? Your products? Your...?

As you make your way through the upcoming lessons, try not to get caught in the trap of thinking that some of the advice only applies to company reputations, or skip a recommendation that you feel is aimed at individuals. I'll be sure to point out any strategy that works better for personal versus corporate reputation management, but, for the most part, the two are interchangeable. In fact, on Day 2, you'll see just how closely personal and company reputations are entwined. What is important is that you actually do something with the lessons you learn.

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## DON'T WAIT FOR A REPUTATION HEART ATTACK

Fellow reputation management practitioner, Tony Wright, is constantly imploring his clients to be proactive in their reputation management. He tells them:

*"Trying to improve your online reputation during a crisis is like trying to eat healthy food during a heart attack."*

The absolute worst time to try and improve your online reputation is during a full-blown reputation crisis. You need to start right now! Today is the day to start improving your online reputation, while things are calm, you have the resources and time—and you're not trying to put out reputation fires. As we work

through the next 30 days, start making notes of strategies and tactics you can implement immediately. Don't think that you can put off taking control of your online reputation simply because you don't foresee any upcoming issues with your online reputation.

You don't want to be the farmer in Elbonia whose tree catches fire while he's eating a Big Mac and large fries!

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## **TODAY'S EXERCISE**

Take an honest look at your character and make a note of any changes needed before trying to improve your online reputation.

*\*Yes, I am big fan of Scott Adams' Dilbert comic strip.*