

## Understanding and Talking back to Social Media

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Clearly the Social Media websites and blogs will continue to grow in their numbers. The number of these websites and blogs already is in excess of five million and growing. Granted, not all social media may apply to your business, but many are simply social and the conversations may relate to travel, politics or any consumer service or product.

Social media is not going to go away, nor is it going to be regulated by the government, as some businesses may be hoping. Legal sanctions just don't apply to the Internet due to its global nature. Whether the online chatter is positive or negative, in regard to your service or product, you need to know about it and you need to reply quickly to manage your online reputation and to offset a negative comment or validate a positive one.

The people who are taking their time to create social media as it pertains to services, products or social issues are simply satisfied or dissatisfied individuals and their comments may not be grammatically correct or their photos may be an isolated situation, but the end result is the same in regard to how it may affect the reader. Plus, the online chatter about a service or product on one of these sites may not be an isolated incident. An online shopper may find one negative comment and then google a search phrase that relates to the comments about your product or service and find similar comments on other social websites or blogs.

No matter what your service or product, you need to be proactive; stay informed about online chatter and respond quickly and effectively. This, of course, raises the question of how to accomplish this since there are so many social media websites and blogs and possibly a number of terms or phrases that relate to your business? You can't assume no one will express an online opinion. A good benchmark may be; how many people actually come into contact with your business or may want to purchase your service or product? On the other hand, you may have a small number of customers, but that being the case a single online comment can have greater impact on your bottom-line.

You can, of course, try to manage your online reputation yourself by surfing a few websites now and then, but you are more than likely limiting your efforts to a few social media sites that pertain only to your business segment. The problem here is that you are missing the real essence of "social media". These are emotional comments and reviews from past customers and they may be using any number of social websites and blogs. For travel, if they started their online research with Travelocity, Trip Advisor or IgoUgo they are likely to return to that site to express an opinion. On the other hand, they may want to reach a specific segment of consumers with their comments and go to social media sites or blogs unrelated to your business.

You need to consider Social Media another form of marketing and the first rule of marketing is knowing what the consumer wants or needs. So you need to stay informed about all social media and you must respond to consumer online chatter. How you reply to a negative comment compared to a positive one is important. You don't want to be too defensive about a negative comment or overly compensatory. Nor do you want to gush too much when someone is complimentary. Your goal is simply to demonstrate that you are informed and responsive to your consumers and your reply should be one that addresses the specific issue and make it brief and professional.

### **About Lodging Interactive**

Lodging Interactive is a leading provider of Internet Marketing Services to the travel and lodging industries. The company provides a portfolio of effective Internet Marketing Services to hundreds of hotels, resorts, timeshares and bed and breakfasts worldwide.

The Company also offers effective online tools and services: [hotelBLAST.com](http://www.hotelBLAST.com), a self-service email marketing system, [ChatterGuard.com](http://www.ChatterGuard.com), an online social media monitoring and reputation management system, [CommentCards.com](http://www.CommentCards.com), a full-service business-2-consumer comment card service, interactive [Google mapping services](#), [eProposal Rapid RFP Response System](#), an online RFP response tool for Sales Managers, and [RFPLink.com](http://www.RFPLink.com), a group RFP lead generation and reporting system.

Lodging Interactive clients include branded properties such as Marriott, Sheraton, Hilton, Radisson, Crowne Plaza Hotels, Doubletree Hotels, Candlewood Suites, Best Western, Wyndham Hotels plus numerous independent properties.

The Company is headquartered in Parsippany, NJ and can be reached at 973-402-4970 or by visiting its website at [www.LodgingInteractive.com](http://www.LodgingInteractive.com). Lodging Interactive's [HotelCast2.0](#) can be heard by visiting [www.LodgingInteractive.com/podcast.htm](http://www.LodgingInteractive.com/podcast.htm).

Lodging Interactive is a proud member of the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA), The California Hotel Association, and a supporter of the Hotel Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMIAI). For more information you can also contact Richard Walsh, Vice President of Business Development at [rjwalsh@lodginginteractive.com](mailto:rjwalsh@lodginginteractive.com) or at 973-402-4970.

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