



Reputation Management: A Guidebook

10 best practices for industry professionals

You have two key goals when it comes to managing your company's reputation: First and foremost, building the credibility that helps grow your business and bring in the right types of clients and customers. Second, addressing any client negativity that inevitably comes along in the lifetime of a business. We've written this guidebook to give you the tools, best practices and easy action items for success. Don't be intimidated – we can make you an expert!

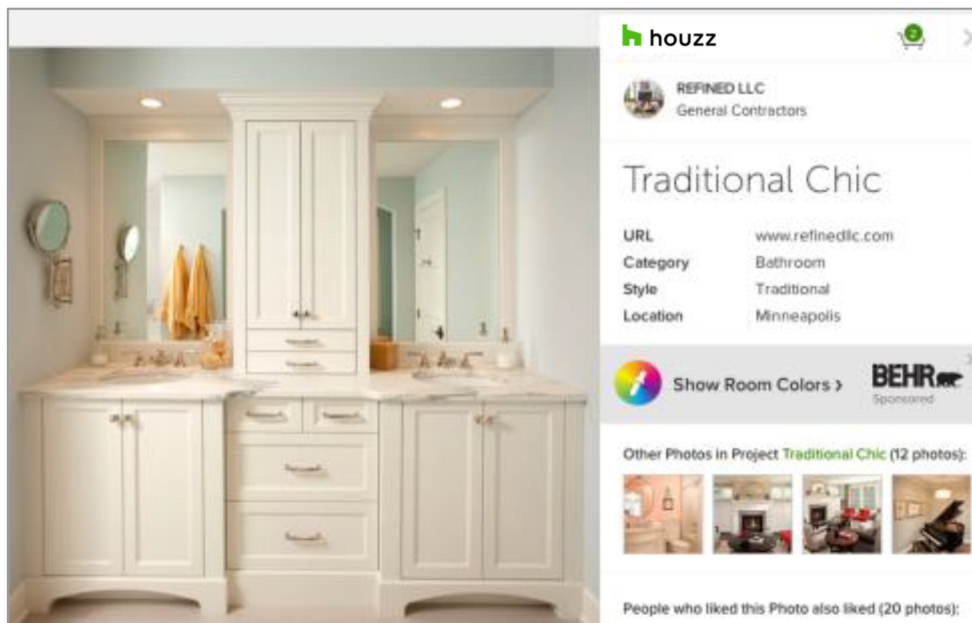
Your Houzz profile acts as a virtual marketing team, working for you 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year: showing prospective clients your work, providing references from satisfied clients and showcasing your expertise, so you can focus on your day job. We're going to show you 10 ways to arm this virtual marketing team to build and manage your reputation – both on Houzz and off.

10 Best Practices for Reputation Management

1. Create credibility with professional photos
2. Proactively request reviews
3. Take control of the review process
4. Collaborate with clients from the start
5. Respond to reviews: both positive and negative
6. Complete and differentiate your profile
7. Build your following and display your affiliations
8. Get ready for the Best of Houzz awards
9. Use discussions to fill in the gaps
10. Optimize your web presence both on and off Houzz

#1 Create credibility with professional photos

It goes without saying: Houzz is a visual platform. Your project photos represent your work and your business in a very powerful way; they are how clients judge your ability to deliver on their vision and the quality of your work. On Houzz, photos are often the first exposure a prospective client has to your business. From a reputation standpoint, professionally shot photos speak to the credibility and professionalism of your business, no matter what type of project or budget level you work with. So make sure your first impression is a positive one that draws in potential new business.



Professional photography is available for any budget level. The Houzz Photographer Network offers great first-time packages for new clients from top photographers in the US and Canada, learn more at info.houzz.com/photographers. Houzz also has thousands more talented photographers in the Find a Pro directory under the Photographers category. As with any pro on Houzz, you can visit each photographer's Houzz profile and evaluate his or her work and fit for your project.

If you are taking your own photos, be sure to think about composition and staging. Houzz offers guides like this one [How to Compose Your Shot for Stunning Home Photography](#)

#2 Proactively request reviews

Once a prospective client has found you through your work, how can building and managing your reputation help close the deal? The Houzz & Home survey of nearly 200,000 homeowners found that when it comes to hiring a professional, ratings and reviews are the most important of all criteria. When it comes to reviews, having that seal of approval from past clients can help close a deal, while not having reviews can actually lose you business.

Gathering many reviews from satisfied clients is critical for reputation management. Not only do positive reviews help close business, but they also help minimize the impact that one negative review can have by making it look like an unusual case. So request reviews from every client, and set expectations early. You can also ask your colleagues to provide reviews.



Houzz has high standards in place for the review process to help ensure the best experience for everyone in our community. The Houzz team reads each review submitted to check that it is legitimate and written objectively. Anonymous reviews are not allowed. This ensures that reviewers stand publicly behind their reviews and that professionals can identify their reviewers.

#3 Take control of the review process

Reviews play a critical role in reputation management, yet professionals tell us they are often uncomfortable asking their clients to review them. So we used Houzz's Pro-to-Pro discussions to ask our pro community to share their own best practices; here are some of their insightful suggestions:

- Set expectations of a review with clients at the first meeting
- Tie review request to your desire to provide great service
- Take note of verbal/email compliments and ask clients to turn them into reviews
- Send thank you notes at the end of each project together with a review request

**Aardweg Landscaping**


I make a 5 star review from my new clients a top priority. At the very 1st meeting I make it a point to let the potential clients know that. I'll say "YES, I want your money, but I want your total satisfaction and a 5 star review on Houzz to let others know that. If at ANY point in our interaction you feel you cannot give me 5 star review, please tell me immediately and I will fix it!"

This fires on all cylinders as far as I can see - it lets folks know that I am totally focused on giving them the best to get that review and it "empowers" them because they know I will work like hell to get that review and if I don't, they won't give it. I always send a review request after the job is done. You should too. I got 2014 Best of Houzz and hope to do the same this year. Shy in business is counterproductive.

 9 Likes October 15, 2014 at 4:47AM

**Frank Builders Co Inc. Concrete-Cincinnati**


When I have a customer that compliments us more than once, I then ask if they would mind putting it online for us. I have had 100% success rate with this.

 4 Likes October 15, 2014 at 5:06AM



#4 Collaborate with clients from the start

Since Houzz does not allow anonymous reviews, each client must have or create a Houzz account to submit one for you. If you use Houzz ideabooks to communicate and collaborate with your clients throughout the project, they will already be Houzz users, so leaving a review will be no problem for them. Plus, clients will see you as a tech-savvy expert who is sharing valuable tools that will help make their project a success; making it even more likely you'll get that positive review! Learn how to collaborate using ideabooks.

Houzz makes it easy to request reviews. Click "Your Houzz" in the upper right corner of the site. Then, select the "Reviews" tab, and click "Get Reviews" in the left navigation area as shown below:

A screenshot of the Houzz website's 'Get Reviews' page. The page has a dark header with a user profile picture and navigation tabs: 'Your Houzz', 'Projects', 'Ideabooks', 'Reviews' (which is highlighted), 'Questions', 'Bookmarks', and 'Activity'. On the left side, there is a sidebar with links: 'Reviews', 'Reviews About Pro', 'Get Reviews' (highlighted in green), and 'Past Review Requests'. The main content area is titled 'Get Reviews' and contains the text 'Send an email to your clients and ask for reviews:'. Below this, there is a green link 'Select clients from your Gmail contacts >'. A 'To:' field with the placeholder '(Enter client email addresses, separated by commas)' is followed by a large text input box. Below that, a 'Message:' field with the placeholder '(Customize the message that will be sent to your clients)' is followed by a text area containing a sample message: 'As a home remodeling professional, my business relies on recommendations from my clients. I would appreciate it if you would write a brief review for me on Houzz.com, the largest and most influential directory of remodeling and design professionals.'

You can customize the message and use it for multiple clients, or adapt your message for each client. A request will go out on your behalf, asking your client to review you on Houzz.



#5 Respond to both positive and negative reviews

Now that you have reviews, managing them – both the positive and the negative – can take your reputation management to the next level and truly differentiate your business from the competition.

After your review is posted to Houzz, be sure to thank your reviewer and add your own comment to the review. This is a great opportunity to demonstrate to prospective clients the great relationships you build with each client and the way you engage on a project. It's an additional touch point to show your personality, expertise or attention to detail. Potential clients are reading these details, and pros in the Houzz community tell us these small gestures can help close new business.

Try to resolve negative reviews. Clients can edit their Houzz review at any time. If your client is less than satisfied, look at the review as fresh insight that gives you the opportunity to reach out and make things right. If you demonstrate concern, clients will often gladly update their review and talk about how you turned around a difficult situation.

Address negative reviews head-on. Sometimes you just don't see eye to eye with a client. When this happens, reply to the review with your side of the story, but do it with grace and professionalism. This can completely take the power from a bad review. How? Kristen Petro of Kristen Petro Interiors has actually closed new business because of the way she handled a difficult and detailed negative review. She advises:

"A bad review, when you can respond to it, is an opportunity to explain your company and its process in a way that you can't via your Houzz business description or website. It's a way to give insight into the way your company operates. People who are interested in you will seek that out.

The adage that the customer is always right isn't always true - we do everything we can to accommodate, but sometimes they ask for things that aren't reasonable, or that conflict with our ethics or process. Standing behind the principles and ethics of good business sometimes means saying no to a client. If that yields a bad review, so be it, but you must maintain your professionalism and can't be emotional in your response.

In the end, you want the clients who want to work with a company like yours. If they don't appreciate your process and response to a bad review, it may not be the kind of client you want anyway. It is another level of pre-qualification. We want clients who want to work in a professional way, those who will read our response and appreciate it.

There is life after a bad review!" [Read the review and Kristen's response.](#)



#6 Complete and differentiate your profile

Having a complete profile builds your credibility on Houzz, among other significant benefits. Write a personalized business description that helps prospective clients understand how you differ from your competitors. Perhaps it's by how you work with your clients, or that you are a family-owned business, or the type of work you do, the materials you work with, or your focus on green building practices. Details help make you credible.

Your Profile Strength [Why do this?](#)

Level 2

Profile Strength Tips:

- Describe your business
- Upload 5+ photos of your work
- Get 3+ reviews
- Collaborate on 3 ideabooks with clients

You can easily check your profile completion percentage by clicking on “Your Houzz” in the upper right corner of the Houzz site and checking your Profile Completion checklist as shown on the left. Simply click on any of the tips to take action.

***Insider tip:** having a profile photo of you or your team helps build trust and credibility with prospective clients, far more than a business logo could ever do.*

Houzz also visually differentiates between those pros that have or have not completed their profiles. In the discussions area, pros that have completed their profile receive a bright green “Pro” badge, while incomplete pros have a grayed-out badge.

If you are affiliated with any schools, associations or non-profit organizations, you can display them right on your Houzz profile as another credibility booster. On your profile, click “edit profile,” scroll down to “Affiliations” then type and add the name of the organization to display the badge on your profile:

Affiliations

	AIA Dallas	Remove
	Dallas Builders Association	Remove

university [Add](#)

Auburn University CAD/C (aucadc)

Kansas State University (iapid)

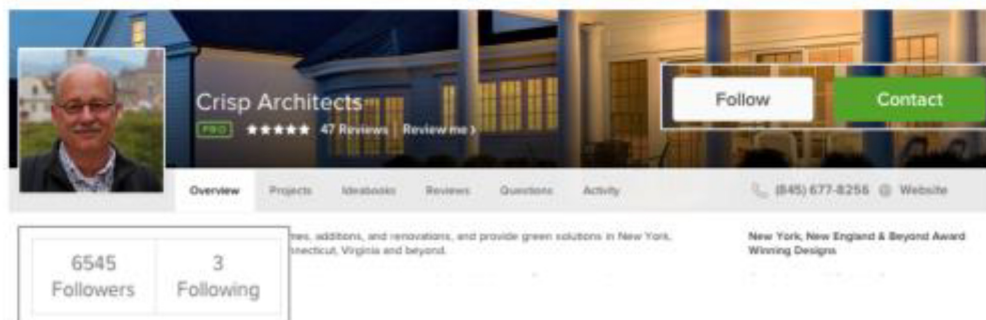
George Washington University Landscape Design Pgm (gwlandscapedesign)



#7 Build your following and display your affiliations

Many pros have more followers on Houzz than on any other social platform. That's because more than 40 million people use Houzz every month, 90% of which are homeowners who are actively building, remodeling or decorating.

Building a following on Houzz increases your business credibility.



So ask your clients and colleagues to follow you on Houzz – it's easy for them to find and click the "Follow" button on the top right of your profile.

Building a following also gives you a new channel of communication. Houzz displays your key activities to followers in their news feed. You can also post updates – like specials or events – directly to your followers using the "Your Updates" function located just above the newsfeed on your profile page.



#8 Get ready for the Best of Houzz awards

Did you know that you enter the Best of Houzz awards for Customer Service simply by having your clients submit reviews? Earning a Best of Houzz award is an enormous credibility builder, and has become a coveted and powerful marketing tool for professionals on Houzz.

Winning pros:



- Place the winner badge on their website, business cards and email signature
- Send out press releases and secure articles about their award

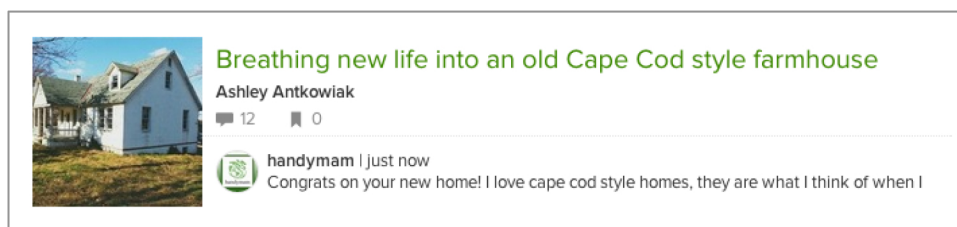
To be eligible, you need to have at least one review from a client whose project was completed in the past calendar year. For Best of Houzz 2016, you will need to have at least one review for a project completed in 2015.

Consumers nominate you for the Best of Houzz Design award by saving your photos to their ideabooks, another great reason to showcase your best work on Houzz. [Watch this video](#) for more information about the Best of Houzz awards program.

#9 Use discussions to fill in the gaps

Have an area of expertise not touched on by your client reviews? Showcase it and build your reputation by participating in Houzz discussions. Every discussion you participate in becomes part of your Houzz profile, arming that marketing powerhouse with even more compelling content to share with prospective clients.

Start by visiting the “[Advice](#)” area on Houzz. Search for a conversation that interests you – perhaps color consultation, curb appeal, historical renovations, patios, plants or kitchens. Answer any question in a way that shows off your personality and expertise; answering three questions a month is a sufficient level of activity, but more participation is encouraged and can only benefit your reputation.



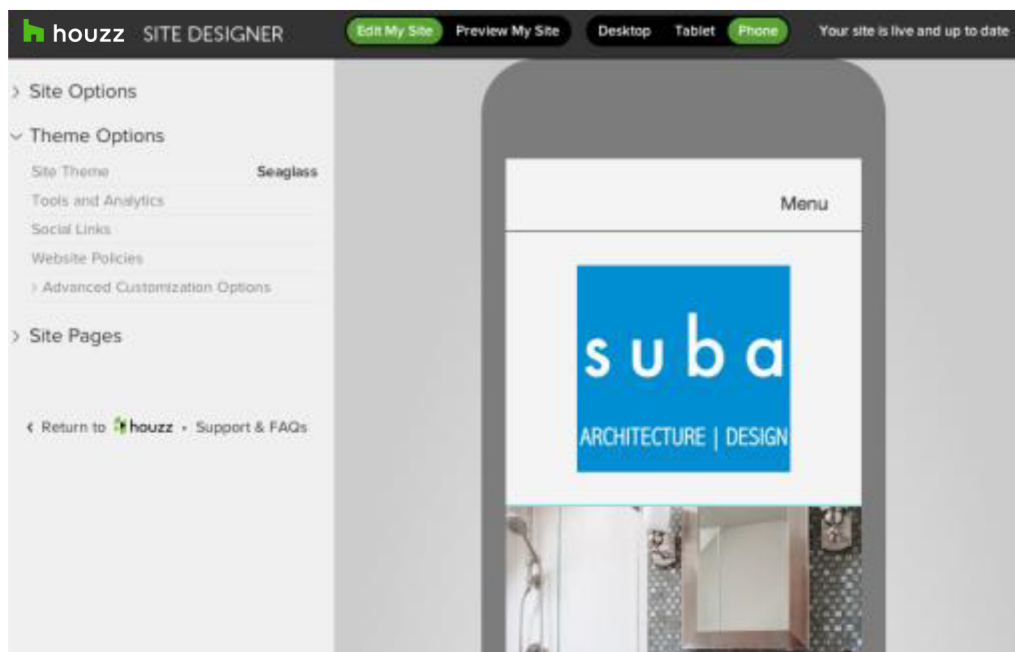
Don't worry if the person asking the question is out of your area, or working on a DIY project. The Houzz audience is diverse and global. The idea is to answer each question for the tens, hundreds or thousands of people who may be visiting your profile and who are using those discussions as a way to gauge your expertise, and what you would be like to work with.

#10 Optimize your presence for credibility online and off



Clients look at a company's website as evidence of a legitimate business, one that is both savvy and solvent. While it's great to have a presence on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn, social sites aren't compelling substitutes for a company website. Perhaps your site is dated or expensive to maintain. To help our professionals ensure a consistent brand experience, Houzz now offers free, mobile-optimized websites. The sites are created from the content on your Houzz profile – so your photos, client reviews and much more are available to include on your custom site in just a click.

If you do have your own website, make sure it is helping, not hurting, your credibility. More than fifty percent of Houzz users access the site from their mobile devices. When they visit your site, are they landing on a site that is professional, current, and totally accessible for anyone using a cell phone or table? [Learn more or get started](#) with your own free Site Designer website.



"I love how my Houzz website looks and how quick and easy it was to put together. I had a website but it was getting old and I needed a way to keep it current and update it easily."






- Suanne Bassett, suba



Adding a Houzz social button or badge to your website is another great way to optimize your site for credibility. Pros tell us it signals to clients they are web-savvy, that clients will be able to collaborate with them using Houzz tools, and that they invest in managing their online reputation. It's easy to pick a button or badge and add the code to your site.

Houzz Badges for Your Website

Select a design


- ☒ Featured on  houzz
- ☐  houzz
- ☐ 
- ☐ 
- ☐ 

Copy and paste this code onto your site

```
<table style="width: 54px;"
cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0"><tr><td>
<a href="http://www.houzz.com/pro/james-
crisp/crisp-architects"></td></tr></table>
```

Now that you've invested time and effort building and managing your reviews, get the most out of them by placing them on all your touch points.


Reviews for
Barnett Construction

[See all Reviews](#)

We hired Barnett Construction for a couple of large projects a few years back. One was a complete 1st floor ma... [Read More](#)

Our 100+ year old house had 50ish year old, dated Aluminum siding that badly needed replacing. We wanted to i... [Read More](#)

Barnett Construction is one of the best in the business. Richard Barnett constructed a deck and screen room f... [Read More](#)

[See All Reviews](#)
[Review Me](#)

Once you have 3 reviews, you can place the Houzz review widget on your website or blog. Choose the reviews you want to display, and make it easy for clients to review you.

Houzz also has a Facebook app that displays your reviews, projects, ideabooks & discussions on your Facebook business page. [Watch a short tutorial](#) to learn how.

And of course, you can link to all your social pages from your Houzz profile:



[See all Houzz buttons and badges](#)



Offline, show prospective clients and customers you are Houzz-savvy with window stickers, car and truck magnets, and job site signs. Find them in the Pro Center.



That's it! Building content, managing your reviews and promoting your brand through these 10 simple guidelines will help strengthen your reputation and give prospective customers greater confidence in your business.

Helpful Houzz Links

Support Team	www.support.houzz.com
Pro Center	www.houzz.com/pro
Photographer Network	info.houzz.com/photographers
Buttons & Badges	www.houzz.com/buttonsandbadges
Free Website Builder	www.houzz.com/sitedesigner
Get a Free Profile	www.houzz.com/pro