



What
advisors
should know
about

SEO and ORM

Managing Your Online Existence

Think about the last time you researched anything. From the best pizza parlor in your town, to reviews on a car you are thinking about buying, chances are you included an online search for answers.

Your prospective clients will likely do the same due diligence before they entrust you with their money. That is why search engine optimization (SEO) and online reputation management (ORM) should play a role in your online marketing strategy.

If you have never done an online search for your name, take the time to see what the internet says about you. Then you can focus on SEO and ORM.

Why does SEO matter for advisors?

A solid website is essential in digital marketing today, but concerns for advisors include driving traffic to your website and being searchable. Search engine optimization addresses the question – are people able to find you online?

There is a lot of science and research connected with SEO practices, and the search engines are frequently changing the rules to get ahead of people trying to manipulate the process. Successful SEO is less about quick tactics and more about creating a framework to build the online presence you want.

“The goal of effective SEO is to become more visible through valuable content, so you can own more search engine real estate,” said Allan Slider, president of FinancialAdviceNetwork.com.

Slider works with more than 2,000 advisors each year through Advisorology, the parent company of FinancialAdviceNetwork.com, on improving their web presence beyond a website build-out. The strategy he uses with advisors doesn’t provide a quick fix, but instead teaches advisors how to grow their online footprint and showcase their credibility and expertise across multiple outlets on the internet.

What is Online Reputation Management?

Connected closely with SEO is ORM. Online reputation management focuses on improving the information that is easily accessible online related to your name and firm name, both personally and professionally, and what other entities have said about you.

When people search for you, what appears online in the results, and is it a fair representation of what you want to portray?

In some cases, outdated or incorrect information might appear about you or your firm online. This frequently happens with scraper sites, which publish indexes of professionals and individuals with information purchased from lists. In consulting with clients, Slider guides advisors on how to get that information updated or removed if possible.

“Sometimes the best solution is to remain focused on boosting the visibility of accurate and positive information,” Slider said.

How do you control the conversation?

Whether you choose to take on SEO and ORM yourself, enlist resources from your website company, or use a third-party service there are both simple and more in-depth ways to improve your presence.

“You really can’t have too much positive, accurate and controllable information about yourself online,” Slider said.

The service Slider provides advisors includes research about each advisor and then links positive mentions on the internet including a comprehensive profile page with information clients would be interested in. This is not in place of a website. That profile page serves as a part of a strategy to make the most of the good content connected to the advisor on the internet.

“Even outside community involvement can be part of the content to connect the dots,” Slider said.

Am I damaging my own reputation?

Celebrities and politicians often have to answer for some of what they post in a moment of lapsed judgment on social media. If you are an avid social media user, what will potential clients be able to see from you?

In some cases you may have posted or liked things that although harmless in nature, might not be something you would be comfortable with clients associating with you. You can conduct a simple check before you post – would I be embarrassed if a client saw my name by this?

How quickly can I improve my online presence?

There is no magical SEO formula for advisors to use, even if you are promised one from a costly service. There are many steps you can take and reputable companies that assist in SEO and ORM, so be aware of what you are actually paying for. Ask for examples of other advisors they have helped when analyzing which companies to use for SEO and ORM.

You will also need to decide how much time to dedicate to SEO and ORM, so your focus can remain on providing your existing clients the service they deserve.

5-Minute ORM Exercise



Take five minutes to see what the internet is saying about you today. This exercise is simply to raise your awareness.

1. Search for your name and firm name online (most clients will use Google, Yahoo or Bing).
2. Take note of all references on the first page of search results.
3. Skim the second page of search results.
4. Evaluate how much is content you control.
5. Note any incorrect or negative mentions.

Take aways from that exercise:

- ▶ Did what you see represent who you are as an advisor and as a member of the community you live in and serve?
- ▶ Were there items on the second page that should be on the first as content you would want prospective clients to see?
- ▶ Are there any mentions that concern you? Is the information inaccurate or outdated?

Even if the results were not what you wanted, take the time to evaluate what you can do on your own and when you should call in the professionals to help you create a strategy that encompasses being found, and providing a true representation of who you are.

3 SEO Tips from an Expert in the Field

There are many levels to comprehensive SEO and ORM. **Allan Slider, president of FinancialAdviceNetwork.com**, provides the following three tips based on his conversations with advisors.



1. Start on the homepage of your website.



Update that content to say who you are, what you do and where you do it. This is especially important if you use a website service with boilerplate content. If you want to rank in results for financial advisors in your geographical area, you will need to have the type of content search engines are looking for, to prove you are a relevant resource.

2. Optimize your professional profiles.



Some professional profile pages (like FPA or other association websites) may rank higher than your own website because of their quality links, unique content and social media prominence. Take advantage of the ability to personalize these pages, and be sure to include the keywords you are targeting. If you can add links within the content, work in your most valuable keywords and make the most of this opportunity.

3. Make the most of linking opportunities.



Advisors can emulate the linking strategy used on FinancialAdvicenetwork.com advisor profiles. These pages serve as a hub of information about each advisor, highlighting their expertise and lending credibility. Some examples include designations and association websites, mentions in the media, articles, press releases and involvement in the community.

As an advisor, there are many opportunities to improve your digital presence. While some techniques can be done in a few minutes each day, others can be outsourced to professionals who stay on top of changes in the search engines and related strategy.

If you outsource, understand the cost and potential return on that investment, so you can decide if it makes sense for your practice. This can include selecting a service for a monthly fee, annual fee or closed end contract.

There are many companies dedicated to providing these services, so look for differentiators in the value provided. One element to consider is whether or not they are familiar with the financial services industry, and the regulatory restrictions on marketing. Whether you decide to manage it yourself, or call in an expert, start by researching who you are online.