



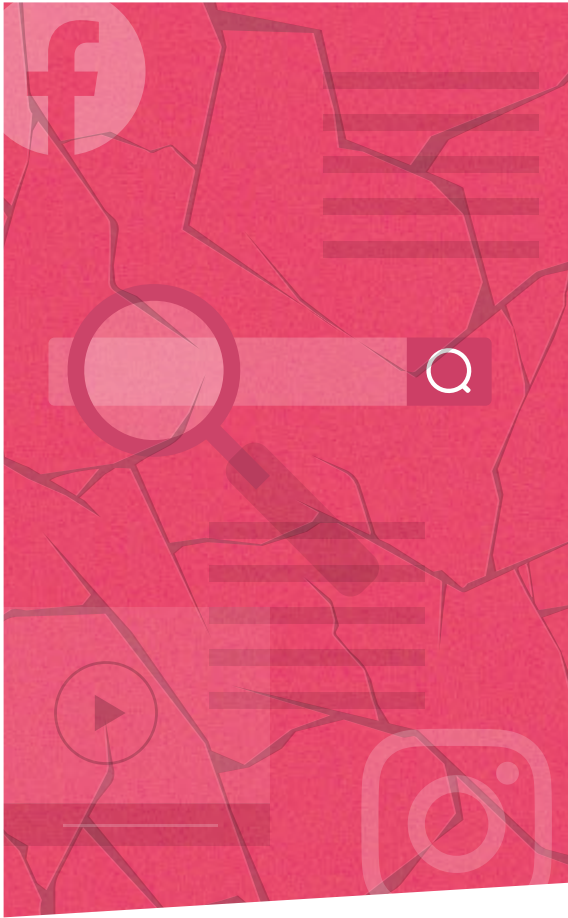
Protecting your personal reputation... online

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Performing online research has become an innate reflex for millions of people. The latest Google study claims 3.8 million searches are conducted globally every minute. This data point tells us much about our reliance today on the internet to find information.

We trust Google to give us the answers to questions such as the “best restaurants in London”, “top works of fiction” or “nearest supermarket”, most likely never questioning the composition of the results we see. Indeed, online search

engines influence the most menial choices we make every day. Opinions are moulded by a quick glance of online search results, with 98% of users never clicking past page one of Google. So, what happens when we start ‘Googling’ people we are sitting next to at a corporate dinner? And what happens when they start searching for you? This practice is increasingly more common and, as such, it is essential for us all to assess and protect our reputations online, to ensure that what is returned on search engines is accurate, contemporaneous and faithful to reality.



Digitisation and data shared everyday

With the world increasingly moving online and the digitisation of archives and records, the amount of information uploaded every day is staggering. Spurred by the omnipresent 'internet of things', our smartphones and the use of connected devices, we are most probably unaware of how much data we share per second. According to Raconteur's 2019 research, users generate 28 petabytes of data daily only from wearable devices, such as Apple watches. That equates to over half of all the entire written works of mankind, from beginning of recorded history, in all languages. That still pales in comparison to the number of photos, movies, messages, voice and video calls shared

and stored. Every day, we upload 95 million photos and videos on Instagram, we send 65 billion messages over WhatsApp and we make two billion minutes of voice and video calls. It is therefore unsurprising that around 40% of online information related to a person or a firm is unknown to the subjects themselves and that risks of reputational damage originating online are increasing.

The ‘cracks’ in your digital footprint

Bishop Joseph Hall, 17th century clergyman and academic, famously said, “a reputation once broken may possibly be repaired, but the world will always keep their eyes on the spot where the crack was.” The origin of the crack today is your digital footprint. Companies house records, old digitalised planning applications,

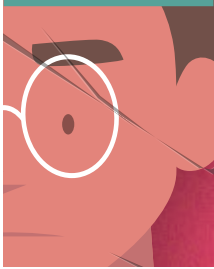
open Instagram accounts, geo-tagged posts, public Facebook pages, old Twitter feeds are all great sources of ‘publicly available information’ easily found online.



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They can also be a starting point for a sensationalist story. So much so that investigative journalists are increasingly turning to tech-powered tools to source articles in a time-efficient manner by mining the web and social media. The news site Vocativ and The Press Association’s RADAR project (Reporters and Data and Robots)



even incorporate artificial intelligence (AI) to trawl the deep web for the information not readily returned by search engines.

While it is fair to say that every individual could be the victim of his or her own digital footprint, it is those more publicly visible who are more at risk. Younger generations of affluent families end up featured on the front page of the Daily Mail as a result of inflammatory photographs posted on certain Instagram accounts, which are monitored by journalists. Chief executives come under fire for lavish lifestyles and offshore structures, found out via information pieced together and harvested online. The examples can go on.

The media however is not the only source of concern. Ensuring you are well represented online is vital to your direct career

and commercial networks. A negative due diligence report can be the cause of a business deal going sour. For the younger generations, an 'unkept' online profile can result in an unsuccessful college or job application.

Kintsugi, **protecting your** **reputation online**

Bypassing the obvious security and physical risks linked to oversharing online, remediating a reputation is harder than it appears. It is difficult to remove unsavoury information online which you do not have control over.

To mitigate reputational risks online, the best practice is first to exhaustively assess your digital footprint, next to find the vulnerabilities and finally to repair the cracks. Start by running an audit of you and your immediate

family circle's digital footprint, what we call the 'second layer', so that you are aware of what can be found out about you online. Address, if necessary, via legal means, any

social media platforms, to restrict your updates and information to those who should be able to access them. Your profile will then be more resilient to online reputation risks.

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information which should not be available online. Then, ensure your profile is suitably developed, that your personal narrative appears clearly and correctly online, amending all inaccuracies. Develop it by creating appropriate online assets, such as official family websites and professional social media accounts, to help build a strong digital footprint while retaining privacy. Finally, always review your privacy settings on

The Japanese call it the art of 'Kintsugi', repairing cracks and filling areas of weakness in a precious bowl using powdered gold.

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Digitalis is a digital risk and online reputation firm, primarily focussed on the specialist areas of narrative management, reputation risk and mitigation. Digitalis has no connection to JM Finn.