

GOING INC.

VIRTUAL CLEANSE

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR ONLINE IMAGE

WORRIED ABOUT SKELETONS IN YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA CLOSET?
HERE'S HOW TO PERFORM AN EMERGENCY CLEAR-OUT AND
KEEP A GOOD REPUTATION.

Few words could be more chilling in the professional world than “we’ve googled you”. The reality is, though, they have. Your prospective employers. Your current employers. Your colleagues. Possibly even your clients.

That’s why it’s time to extend your grooming from the mirror to the search engine. Yes, this is a licence to google yourself, but not to ego-surf — rather to assess what needs to be deleted and ‘online manscaped’ to make you look your best.

Sydney business and executive coach Peter Black says the reputation game has radically changed. “Just because you’ve got a shiny degree from a well-known institution doesn’t mean you’ll get a job or seal a deal,” he says. “People are checking out your online brand every time you do business with them, especially if they don’t know you.



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You can be guaranteed people have a perception of you before they even talk to you."

But don't forget that the new playing field has an upside. "You just have to actively manage your profile," says Black. "Think of yourself as a one-person business even if you're an employee. Adopt an entrepreneurial mindset and have your own strategy and personal brand that you put out there. It's got to be consistent and aligned and that means divorcing a lot of personal search results from your professional persona. Getting to know privacy settings is not just a good idea, it's essential for the modern man." As are the following online cleansing essentials:

1. THINK LIKE A SEARCH ENGINE

Come up with the words and combinations of words that people would most likely use to search you, including your workplaces and schools. Next it's a case of "sanitising" the results by judiciously deleting where possible, says Black. Start with the obvious that could be detrimental to your brand, noting that if others have commented you may not totally eliminate all traces. But remember there's a lot more out there than Google indexes, so enter "search for dark web" to access ways to look deeper into your digital footprints.

2. BUILD IT INTO YOUR GROOMING REGIME

Black encourages all men to think of online maintenance as part of their morning routine. "You get up and you shave and you shower. It's just as important to be pruning and maintaining your online image. If you don't have the time, pay someone — get a virtual assistant to do it for you. You can source these through LinkedIn in advanced search and nominate which city you'd prefer them to be in. Costs vary but they can be \$50 or \$60 an hour which is good value if you're out there earning a lot more than that."

3. DECIDE ON YOUR APPROACH

"Ask yourself if you're going to manage what's already there, or if you're going to take a proactive, contributing approach. I recommend getting on the front foot because the appearance of currency says to people that you're very much in the game. Then you'll need a basic messaging and marketing plan that ensures you stay on point."

4. GET FRESH

"Google's search algorithms are looking for fresh content. It's not enough to have something that's five years old. You need as much fresh material as possible if you want to appear on that first page of results. Also, if you have something you want to push further down the search engine rankings, the best way to do that is by putting current content out there. Hootsuite.com is a great way to schedule your tweets, blogs and statuses so that there's a constant stream of information to keep you current and contemporary."

5. BE CONSISTENT

"I have the same picture on my LinkedIn account as I do on my Twitter account and that's to reinforce a personal brand,"

says Black. "You can undo a solid professional reputation by showing conflicting identities online."

6. DEFEND YOUR GOOD NAME

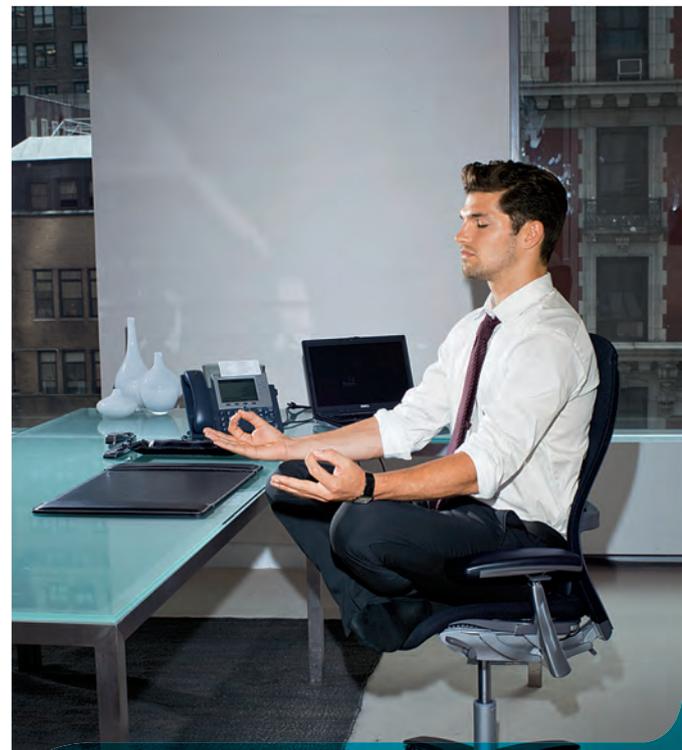
For those hard-to-get-out search-engine stains like bankruptcy filings, troll attacks and really bad photos, there is always US business Reputation.com, which offers to "promote accurate information" and "bury misleading materials" for a yearly fee of a few thousand dollars.

7. DON'T BE INVISIBLE

In times of increasing transparency, Black believes it's "perilous" to withdraw from having an internet presence. "It's as concerning not being able to find someone online as it is to find negative material about them. I had a very senior lawyer tell me he's 'not into that Facebook stuff'. Social media is one of the new major corporate risks. With an attitude like that he's sending out the message that he's not relevant."

8. DON'T PANIC

"There are going to be search results you may not like that you can't do anything about. This isn't always a bad thing. It's been proven that people actually prefer to take a balanced view of things. It's not always ideal to have a squeaky clean image online. There's the humanity element where those assessing our reputation know that we all have lives outside of work."



SHARPEN YOUR FOCUS THROUGH MEDITATION

Research shows that meditation delivers creativity, focus and stress relief. Use these techniques from Sharon Salzberg, author of *Real Happiness: The Power of Meditation* (\$25, Hay House UK Ltd).

BEFORE WORK

Duration: five to 15 minutes (depending on how late you're running).

→ Sit on a pillow or lie on your back. Take four deep breaths, feeling the air enter your nostrils, fill up your chest and exit your body. Then, breathing normally, pay attention to where you feel the swooshing air the most — nostrils, chest, abdomen. Put your focus on that area, noting the sensations there — vibration, warmth, whatever. (Silently repeating "inhale... exhale..." can stop your attention wandering.)

→ When other thoughts crop up, as they inevitably will, don't throw in the towel or beat yourself up for slipping. Just think of them as clouds in the sky and let them float by. The act of simply coming back to your breath — that's what meditation's all about.

BEFORE A MUST-NAIL MEETING

Duration: one minute.

→ The more times you can pack this into a day, the better. Do one simple thing. Maybe you finish your coffee and rinse out the mug. Really concentrate on the sensations of what you're doing and give your mind

permission to settle on one thing instead of flitting between the 23 buzzing items on your to-do list. You'll finish even a boring task feeling less scattered, more energetic and fulfilled.

RIGHT BEFORE BED

Duration: 10 to 15 minutes.

→ Sit comfortably or lie down. Bring your attention to the top of your head and notice what sensations are there — tingling, say, or itching or aching. (Maybe you notice an absence of sensation, which is fine too.) Very slowly, slide your attention down the front of your face, scanning for things like tightness or pressure in your forehead, eyes, nose, mouth, and cheeks.

→ Return your attention to the top of your head, then move down the back of the head, over the curve of your skull. Is your neck tight or sore? You aren't trying to do anything about the feelings, simply notice them.

→ Continue slowly inching over your neck, chest, and abs, then back up to the neck and down the back. Finish by sensing your pelvis, legs, and feet. Concentrate on your heels against the floor or mattress. Lose yourself.

WORDS ANDREA BARTZ MAIN PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN MANNO, BRIAN FINKE.