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Wild West 2.0: How to Protect and Restore Your Online Reputation on the Untamed Social Frontier

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One of the intriguing and, in some cases, disturbing aspects of “Web 2.0” is the ability for anyone anywhere to damage the reputation of a person or company simply by posting disparaging information on the Internet. The rise in popularity of social networks has led to the widespread availability of personal information, making matters even worse.

*Wild West 2.*0*, whose title re-interprets World Wide Web 2.0, is a timely book that both explains how online reputation-bashing occurs and offers strategies to defend against it. Authors Fertik and Thompson, experts in the field of online privacy, spend a good deal of time discussing the “new digital frontier,” demonstrating its many similarities to the “Wild West” of a bygone era. They discuss the vulnerability associated with an “online reputation” and detail the impact of “anonymous cowards” as well as “the damage done by search engines” such as Google.

The authors make the important point that anyone can create and post content on the Internet, creating an environment in which “everyone is equal.” In addition, once information is posted, it is virtually impossible to retract it, so it could very well remain on the Internet indefinitely. The implications of this are chilling, especially if that information is designed to damage the reputation of a person or a business.

One of the more interesting chapters, “Types of Internet Attacks,” outlines what to guard against, such as “the half-truth,” “the breach of privacy,” “Googlestuffing,” and “E-Mobbing.” Because it provides readers with the ability to recognize and gain a broad understanding of these attacks, this book is valuable to any business reader.

Fertik and Thompson also provide sensible advice about assessing any damage to one’s reputation online. They offer two highly useful tools: a “reputation road map” and an “online reputation audit.” Examples and detailed instructions are included for each.

The final few chapters in the book cover proactive strategies for “recovering from online smears” and tactics for protecting an individual or business from harm in the future.

The advice provided by the authors is both informed and wise, and it is supported by compelling facts and specific examples. The book is easy to read and written in everyday language, so it will be useful to even a non-technical reader. *Wild West 2.*0* is essential reading for professionals, business owners, and other individuals who need to understand how the Internet can be used to tarnish a reputation—and how to effectively protect against it.
BARRY SILVERSTEIN (June 15, 2010)

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