



RBC finds the comfort zone with BrandProtect

With up to 10 brand identities to manage at any given time, RBC decided it needed to find more efficient ways to monitor brand usage online. As web-based activities began to proliferate several years ago, brand managers quickly realized that monitoring brand activities was a job that was beyond the capabilities of in-house resources. For four years, RBC has been working with BrandProtect to ensure that its billions of dollars of brand equity would not fall victim to misuse and abuse.



Royal Bank of Canada and its subsidiaries operate under the master brand name of RBC. With 70,000 full-and part-time employees serving 15 million clients through offices in North America and 34 countries around the world, RBC is the largest bank in Canada. It offers a full range of financial products and services of personal and commercial banking, wealth management services, insurance, corporate and investment banking and transactions processing services on a global basis. RBC also provides services through subsidiaries in the United States and in the Caribbean. According to the Brand Finance Index of Canada's Most Valuable Brands, RBC ranks as the country's number one brand with a brand equity value of \$5.05 billion, up from \$4.53 billion the previous year.

While brand policing has always been a paramount concern for large financial institutions, it has become especially critical with the proliferation of Web activities and blogs. When you have as strong a reputation as RBC's to protect, the job of maintaining the trust of customers and business partners gets that much larger.

As Manager of Brand Standards for RBC, Lise Buisson knows that the job of protecting the bank's brand online involves a lot more than finding out when someone has cut and pasted a logo onto

their site without permission. "As brands become more valued, any improper use of your brand can become a reputational risk. When someone displays your logo for example, it becomes a de facto endorsement, whether we have approved it or not. We have to be careful about things like that."

Trust is everything in the banking business, adds Buisson. "People look to our brands with the assumption we will protect them. It's not about fake products. It's about harming our reputation through broken promises. Our response to these incidents becomes very important to our partners and our customers. For example, we have mutually exclusive agreements with a variety of properties who don't want to see our name on a competitor's site." A misuse of a brand on a small website may appear to be "small potatoes" when compared to the potential damage of a phishing or spoofing attack, but keeping tabs on brand usage is critical to instilling that trust.

"A brand represents good will and much more and as we see the value of our brand increasing, it becomes important to have in place stricter policies and monitoring around online brand usage."

Putting it all in perspective

Buisson engaged the services of BrandProtect to monitor online brand usage across its entire portfolio. The BrandProtect service combines advanced technology, round-the-clock monitoring, proven best practices and exhaustive human analysis of all brand-related activities. It scours millions of domains, Web pages and Internet links to uncover infractions. It then categorizes and ranks them according to their severity, as well as initiates proactive and escalating response protocols to threats when required. All information is captured in detailed reports that outline the most relevant and highest priority threats.

After two months of initial setup, Buisson received her first reports from BrandProtect. "We decided we had wanted to look at everything, but these reports were showing thousands of instances of inappropriate brand usage every month. It was overwhelming."

These initial stages proved to be a valuable education. "We didn't expect to see what we saw. We were inundated. No one realized how easy it was for someone to come to our site, grab a logo and put it somewhere else. It forced us to sit down as a group and figure out what we could do."



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For more information:
www.brandprotect.com
onlinesales@brandprotect.com
1.866.721.3725



She quickly discovered that a majority of the infractions noted were harmless and did not require a second thought. "In most cases the users were well meaning," she says. "It could be a charity site or mortgage partner using our logo. I would say that 90 % of these incidents were quite harmless."

Buisson says that the next step in their strategy was to get the reporting activities to a manageable level. "That's where BrandProtect came into play. They helped us make decisions in order to narrow the parameters down to a manageable list for us to review. Now we don't have to spend hours reading about every single infraction. We get a list of those activities that represent areas of concern for us. Items are flagged by BrandProtect if a situation changes. Now when we see a report with 100 names we don't worry because we know that anything that needs action will be flagged."

"The main criterion for flagging is brand usage that encroaches on the bank's reputation in its delivery of financial services. BrandProtect immediately flagged and dealt with a bank in the North Sea region that had used our logo and positioned themselves with another name. When anyone misrepresents themselves as an affiliate of ours, it makes us very nervous."

Where concerns are raised, RBC will take the appropriate measures, from issuing a polite request to the user to cease using their brand to initiating legal action. "In the vast majority of cases a polite letter is enough," says Buisson.

BrandProtect bringing comfort and peace of mind

Once a year RBC reviews its branding policies to ensure that the reports continue to reflect their top priorities. It has also established a number of policies to ensure that the appropriate follow-up measures are used when required. "If for example, we find advertising of our logo on a gambling site, we now have a policy about that," she says. "Most of the time these are easy to manage"

Buisson says that as Internet activities continue to escalate, she has come to realize that the job of monitoring online brand activities properly would simply have been too much for departmental staff to handle. "Even though we don't have a physical product out there, we have a big need to monitor what's happening with our brands in Canada and around the world. If we had to do the monitoring ourselves we would have had to hire at least one additional person, as well as coordinate follow-up with fraud and legal authorities, online domain organizations and IT security specialists. To do the whole job would require five in-house people plus the technology costs."

BrandProtect alleviates a considerable amount of the pressure she says. "I'm a big proponent of going to the experts and sitting down and working with them. It's very reassuring to work with a company that's looking out for us. It certainly helps some of us sleep at night."

About BrandProtect

As the leader in internet reputation management, BrandProtect empowers organizations to gain control over how they are represented online by uncovering and mitigating the issues that put their reputation at risk and erode customer trust. BrandProtect's Response Services help detect, uncover and mitigate brand and trademark infringement issues, phishing attacks, web traffic diversions, website integrity issues and defamatory discussions. BrandProtect was the first company of its kind to be offered full membership by the Forum for Incident Response and Security Teams (FIRST). It also has relationships with more than 4,000 Internet Service Providers globally, accounting for more than 90 percent of the traffic flowing across the internet.

