

SERVICE TO HELP OWNERS MANAGE ONLINE 'ATTACKS'

Salon owners who feel their business or reputation is being damaged by negative comments or attacks through social media websites are being offered the chance to sign up to an online "reputation management" service.

Guildford-based legal firm **Wright & Wright Solicitors**, which has more than 15 years expertise in acting for the hairdressing sector, has launched the service after witnessing "a dramatic rise" in the number of attacks on brands and reputation through the use of social media, such as **Facebook**, **Twitter** and internet forums.

The firm has joined forces with digital agency **Space01** and will offer to monitor and manage clients' online presence, and can be contacted at JSampson@wrightandwright.com.

Julian Sampson, Wright & Wright partner, said top industry names such as **Errol Douglas**, **Jamie Stevens** and **Leo Bancroft** all used Twitter to great effect but were also proactive in controlling their postings.

The challenge with any social media or social networking presence is that you have little or no personal control over what others post on the site.

"Once posted it can't be erased and with the development of more and more sophisticated search tools and algorithms, it is becoming more and more difficult to hide sensitive information, or rather comments you wished you had never made," he warned.

Julian said reputations often took years to build up but the "viral" attributes of social media could be "incredibly dangerous" and destroy reputations overnight with little control over whether a posting reached one person or thousands.

The greatest dangers to salons were disgruntled consumer firing from the hip (often unfairly) and existing or past employees, all of whom could quickly sabotage an online presence.

"In my recent

experience I have had to prevent Facebook comments against three separate salons by an ex-employee, a current employee and a former customer. I have also had to help a large product supplier manage the comments posted on forums by customers who weren't as impressed by the product launch as had been hoped to the point the brand itself was becoming damaged," Julian pointed out.

These comments ranged from being

factually accurate but derogatory to blatantly spiteful.

Offending material posted online should always be reported to the administrator of the site, for which details should normally be available on the site itself.

"Social media is a fantastic tool but used in anger or emotionally it can lead to unforeseen and permanent outcomes," Julian warned.

ACCOUNTS OFFER FOR NHF MEMBERS



>ONLINEBOOKS: BEING PILOTED BY MEMBERS

The NHF is launching a new book-keeping and accounting package specifically for members.

The web-based **>Onlinebooks** package from accountants **Kingston Smith LLP** is designed to help members keep on top of their books anytime or anywhere and ensure they fully meet their **HMRC** obligations.

It is being launched formally from October 1 at a 35 per cent discount on its normal price to members, with prices starting from just £26 a month.

The system is currently being piloted by members, said NHF management accountant **Simon Thomson**.

"It is potentially a huge benefit and

will, I think, be especially valuable to new members who are just starting out in business.

"It is the comfort factor of not having to go out and find an accountant who understands hairdressing but also knowing you are using a system that is specifically tailored to the needs of the sector," he added.

The package includes online book-keeping, year-end accounts and other tax tools, and uses a range of pre-configured templates designed to make it as relevant as possible to salon owners.

Full details are available on the NHF's website, www.nhf.info



JULIAN SAMPSON:
REPUTATION SUPPORT