

Chapter 1

Why Build Your Reputation?

'Life is for one generation. A good name is forever.'

– Japanese proverb

One of the lucky ones

Some people are lucky when it comes to career progression. They seem to fall on their feet and into the 'plum' jobs with huge salaries and massive influence. People say good things about them. They attract the endorsement of influential people. They lead committed, enthusiastic followers. They seem to know and are known by all the right people for all the right reasons.

These people get offered the best positions on the best terms. If they want international travel and an exotic life abroad, they get that. If they want a flexible schedule, an ideal job based in their home town so they can enjoy a great family life, that kind of autonomy seems to be available to them. If they want to lead a team, community or project, they quickly find themselves in charge.

They shoot up the career ladder and end up quickly in key leadership positions. More annoyingly, they somehow end up doing the really enjoyable, fun and interesting stuff. They love their job and they love their life. And you hate them.

How did all this happen? Obviously these people prospered because they were in the right place at the right time, right? They just got lucky. They're

WHY BUILD YOUR REPUTATION?

not better than you. They might even be a whole lot worse. They just got the breaks. Or did they?

Success like this is rarely an accident. These are Career Pros. They've always known something you don't. They've networked their way to the top. They've developed a substantial reputation and huge social capital to get them where they are.

The good news is that if they did it, so can you. With very few exceptions, the career approach or success system of the high flyers and influential, respected leaders is duplicable.

Your stagnation or frustration has been because you've never known quite how to replicate that. Until now, that is. Because now you've got the play-book for career acceleration and job fulfilment. And it's all wrapped up in your good name, your personal brand and your reputation.

What exactly is a reputation?

Your reputation is simply the impression that others have of you. You should value it, protect it, shape it and grow it. Done right, it could give you a significant competitive advantage in your career. Your career counts, because it gives you the platform, autonomy and influence to change the world.

Your current reputation may be good, bad or indifferent. But you've got one. If you look up reputation in any good dictionary, you'll find things like this:

1. The general estimation in which a person is held by the public.
2. The state or situation of being held in high esteem.
3. The general opinion of the public towards a person, a group of people or an organization.

BUILD YOUR REPUTATION

4. Your overall quality or character as seen or judged by people in general.
5. The perception of you and your name in society.

Ultimately, your reputation is what people say, think and feel about you behind your back. It's the degree to which you are held in high esteem (or otherwise) by others. When all that's left of you is your business card or your last blog post, it's the memory, the impact and the impression you leave behind. Here's my definition.

'Your reputation is what influences people to think, feel and talk about you the way they do.'

The reason everyone pays

Your reputation wins you popularity contests. It makes people choose you and what you do. It makes them hire you or fire you. It's your REP – the Reason Everyone Pays. What exactly do you want people to pay? Three things:

1. **Respect.** A solid reputation encourages people to treat you as a partner and peer rather than worker or commodity. They'll promote you and defend you. They pay you a fair price for what you do, don't haggle and refer you to others.
2. **Attention.** In today's crowded, competitive marketplace, the challenge for you is to stand out just enough to get chosen. A formidable reputation will do that for you. It cuts through the clutter, the rhetoric and the noise so that people notice you more than everyone else.
3. **Money.** A solid reputation makes you desirable, hireable and promotable. All of which means more control, more choices and more money. You might do what you do JUST for the love of it, but I doubt it. Highly reputed individuals can always leverage their status for premium rates, maximum choice and ultimate autonomy. If they

WHY BUILD YOUR REPUTATION?

want to build a platform and a following, they will. And because they resolve problems and pain for their followers, they'll make money. Money usually follows pain.

If you want people to pay you respect, attention and money, you're going to need a decent reputation that sets you apart from the pack.

You already have a reputation

Whether you realize it or not, you probably already have a reputation. Whether it's a good one or not, we're not sure yet. The truth is, you probably don't know exactly what your reputation is or what you did to get it. But it's likely you've got one.

You don't have to be famous to have a reputation. Reputation isn't reserved for high-profile leaders or thinkers. It's simply the perception owned by others of who you are and what you do. So if you're appearing on the radars of anyone, they're now making decisions about you.

Your reputation could be neutral, weak and inconsequential, which is bad. When people don't know you (or of you), then you're irrelevant. You don't factor into their hiring decisions. They're not hanging on your words. They don't care.

Your reputation could be negative and inhibitive. This is worse than bad. When people perceive you badly or wrongly, your efforts to get on and get ahead will be severely hampered. This reputation may or may not be of your own making. But you'll need to overturn and overcome it if you're going to get things back on track.

Your reputation could be strong and positive. People speak well of you. Life and work are a whole lot easier. You get perks, favours and shortcuts. Opportunities open up for you. Good things happen to you.

BUILD YOUR REPUTATION

Your name and personal brand are powerful weapons in the corporate career battle. The decision to promote you to partner or the boardroom will be taken when you're not in the room. Your credentials as a leader of people or thinking come down to the power of your name. When you control that, you control your world.

The dangers of a poor (or no) reputation

A bad reputation will kill you. You'll struggle in your career, which will adversely affect your personal life. You'll take on roles and jobs because you have to, not because you want to. You'll find yourself in the despicable position of fulfilling other people's dreams and achieving other people's goals.

A poor reputation means you'll struggle to earn what you're worth. You'll find it hard to secure a job you enjoy in a place you like living with people you enjoy the company of. You'll get frustrated by a lack of voice, a shaky platform for your ideas and no engaged following for your thoughts.

You'll be at risk when you put forward good ideas and suggestions. Your credibility will suffer and people won't take you seriously. It can take you years to eradicate the effects of a poor reputation. People seem to have long memories. Records go back a long way. Stuff online never seems to go away.

It's similar when you have no reputation. Google yourself and see what comes up. If it's nothing on the first couple of pages, you're invisible. In a void of reputational collateral, people make up their own minds. They distrust. They assume. They ask the wrong people about you. They get a distorted picture. You can't afford to be anonymous.

If you don't build your reputation, others will do it for you. If you don't claim that authority space, somebody else will. You can't ignore your

WHY BUILD YOUR REPUTATION?

reputation. You don't have the luxury of being ignorant of what others think about you. Shape it yourself. Try to own your personal brand.

There are some suggestions later in the book to help rebuild or restore a broken or bad reputation. The best strategy, though, is to build it true and strong in the first place, and guard it with everything you've got.

Ten big benefits of a stand-out reputation

Your reputation is your personal share price on the stock market of life. It dictates how much people will invest in you. It's your most valuable career asset. It says the people that count should choose you and nobody else.

Your reputation defines how people perceive you. It propels you into positions of leadership and influence. It gives you meaningful work and interesting projects. It lends credibility to your ideas and your inventions.

A good reputation as any kind of high performer, influencer, player, expert, authority or contributor in your space gives you the following 10 benefits.

1. **Stand-out status.** You're not alone. You have competition for openings, placements, projects, places, promotions, deals, mentors, funding, backing, endorsements, sponsorship, perks, privileges. Can you rise above the noise to claim your prize?
2. **Media attention.** Reporters need experts. Journalists require facts, insight, quotations and opinions from people in the know. Media interest seeks out those well-reputed authority figures.
3. **Influence.** Your good name and expert status will make people take action. People are naturally conditioned to respect authority figures. That means people will pay attention to you and what you stand for. They will hunt you down as the ultimate source,

BUILD YOUR REPUTATION

because nobody else will do. That's when you can sell your ideas, your case for promotion and your contribution.

4. **Strategic alliances.** People want to partner with you when you're somebody of significance. They want your ideas, your influence, your endorsement and will want to collaborate with you. This in turn opens you up to new audiences and opportunities.
5. **Prestige and popularity.** In every buying or hiring decision, everyone wants the best. Gold medal, not silver. Top prize, not second. As a stand-out performer, authority or expert, you gain prestige and popularity. People will revere you and rave about you. They will chase you and want to work with you. People admire and share your 'art'. They spread your messages and are privileged to do so. They recommend you to their contacts, friends and lists. Reputation gets you on the podium in life's many popularity contests.
6. **Premium rates.** People with the best reputations and expert authority status have the most control and the strongest bargaining chip in negotiations. They usually earn more and seem worth more.
7. **Satisfaction and fulfilment.** With a good reputation comes choice. Choice to do more significant, enjoyable and fulfilling work. Choice to work where and how you want. Choice to wear or not wear a tie. You get the idea.
8. **Protection and forgiveness.** If your reputation is good, people will guard your actions. They'll back you up and defend you when you're attacked. When you mess up, they'll forgive you and give you the benefit of the doubt.
9. **Open doors.** When your reputation works for you, marketing yourself and your ideas is so much easier. It takes less effort. You gain acceptance and buy-in so much more quickly because of who people think you are – rather than 'I don't know you', they think 'I can't live without you'. Doors open before you that

WHY BUILD YOUR REPUTATION?

would otherwise be closed. People will buy you, saying 'where do I sign?' instead of 'who are you?'

10. **When you build a formidable reputation, interesting things happen to you.** Good things. You'll naturally attract influence and connections. You'll gain valuable career opportunities. Life somehow becomes easier and more fun.

Your good name goes before you in ensuring that the best deals, opportunities, promotions and projects come to you instead of your competition. It makes you more and more indispensable.

You might not ultimately land that dream job or carve out that perfect career. But by cultivating your value and your reputation, you increase the chances that it will happen. With all these massive upsides, your reputation is worth investing in and guarding. This book shows you exactly how.

Reputation is the ultimate social proof

The power of social proof is immense. Robert Cialdini's seminal work *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* blew the lid on the power of how people make choices based on what others do and say. You are a social animal. You are influenced and conditioned by other people around you. This is sometimes called the herd mentality.

If one person follows you, others will follow them following you. It just takes one fanatic to start a movement, and one dedicated follower to kick-start a campaign for your election. But it takes a multitude to get you noticed. A crowd is usually louder than a lone voice.

If you get approval, good word of mouth or endorsements from influential people, it boosts your reputation. If you get your thoughts and

BUILD YOUR REPUTATION

ideas shared and read by peers and followers, your reputation grows. All because people watch what other people do, and then do the same. They assume those people or influencers know what they are doing, and they copy.

It's an accepted fact that what buyers say about a product or service affects people's purchasing decisions. This includes customer testimonials, case studies and online reviews. The word from our peers is much more trusted than product descriptions from manufacturers. Some other examples of social proof in action:

- Restaurants and bars with full tables. People assume the food is good and the place is popular. Same with queues or lines outside night clubs or at fairground rides.
- The frenzy for concert tickets, both online and waiting in line.
- Online reviews for mobile apps, books, vacations and movies.
- TV shows using 'canned laughter' or recorded applause to make you laugh and clap.

When others say you're great, word gets around. You're good because others say you are. That's how viral videos and word of mouth works. People share stuff all the time. Now more than ever. Good and especially bad. Give them good things to say and report on, and your reputation is now being shaped for the better.

The nine unbreakable rules of reputation

People have tried to break the following rules of reputation. And failed.

1. **You can't totally control your reputation.** You can influence it but not 100% control it.
2. **Reputation is not a quick fix.** It's a long-term game, not a short-term play.

WHY BUILD YOUR REPUTATION?

3. **Reputation is not fame.** Just because you're famous doesn't mean your reputation is good.
4. **Your reputation will be attacked.** The higher up you go, the more you'll get shot at.
5. **Perception beats reality.** No matter what's real, it's what people think that counts.
6. **Lack of scandal does not mean a good reputation.** Not getting it wrong is not getting it right.
7. **Everything is in the public domain.** There are no secrets. It's all out there one way or another.
8. **You can have multiple reputations.** Different situations, different people, different perceptions.
9. **Invisibility is not an option.** If you don't define your reputation, others will do it for you.

Let's deep dive these so you're fully aware of how they all work for you and against you.

Rule 1: You can't totally control your reputation

You're an ambassador of your company's reputation and the guardian of your own personal reputation. As a leader, influencer and rising star this should be easy. You're a master of control, right? You haven't got where you are today without having some control over people, messages, direction.

Alas, you have less control over your reputation than you'd like. It's like beauty – it's in the eye of the beholder. People are fickle, flakey, opinionated, complicated and emotional. You can't force people to like you and trust you.

You have a certain amount of control over personal brand. You can monitor what appears out there to some degree. Even the stuff you're not in total control of. You probably have no say in how your business card or

BUILD YOUR REPUTATION

company website looks. You may have restrictions on using social media or what's allowed on your LinkedIn profile.

Once your personal brand, your ideas and your work are out there, it's largely out of your hands. You can't easily control how people will perceive it. You can hope they'll like it and they'll dig you. But you can't make people love you.

Some people will love you for wearing a tie or looking smart. Some people will hate you for it. Once you let the arrow fly, you can't influence 100% where or how it lands. You'll never please everyone and, actually, you shouldn't want to. Just the people that count.

The key is to create the best possible version of you, your work and your character. Then promote it to the best possible people who make the most critical decisions about your future. That's the smart way to play and win with your career.

Rule 2: Reputation is not a quick fix

In the world of work and business, your 'go-to' status won't happen overnight. It won't even happen by chance. You're building a platform here. A house if you like. Brick by brick. Comment by comment. Conversation by conversation. Even if you could build it fast, how sturdy would it be? How robust in repelling the changing winds of public opinion? How flexible in surviving the changing allegiances or strategies of hiring individuals? How vigorous in coping with the rapid changes in technology and trends?

You don't want to be a one-hit wonder. Any fool can get hired or booked once. The best, most sought-after thought leaders and prime promotional candidates didn't start out yesterday. It's a slog. It means some heavy lifting. It's going to take a little time. And it's going to be so worth it!

WHY BUILD YOUR REPUTATION?

There's nothing wrong with legitimately cutting some corners to get there faster. But be under no illusions, building a great reputation requires a consistent, focused effort. Tortoise and the hare. Slow and steady wins the race. Marathon, not a sprint, and all that. With a few spurts here and there.

Rule 3: Reputation is not celebrity

If I offered you a million followers on Twitter, instantly, would you take them? Probably yes. After all, you'd be seen as popular, because perception is reality, right? If people see that you're popular, and believe that you're popular, then a million people can't be wrong. Ergo, you're good.

But think about it. What if those 1million followers were dead accounts, dummy profiles or just robots? Okay, what if they were real people but had absolutely no interest in or relevance to what you do? They don't work in your world or live in your country. They don't like what you like, do what you do or care what you think. They wouldn't read your tweets, respect your opinions or share your ideas. Do you still want them?

Look, you're not a celebrity here. You're not famous. You probably don't want to be if you've got your degree and gone into corporate life. Only professionals with very big egos do 'fame'. That's probably not you. If it was, you'd be on some talent reality show, playing in a rock band or following some risky, world-changing entrepreneurial path.

Celebrity is quick fix. Overnight success. Art. Fame. Adulation. Some of that is alright, but let's get real. You're building a career. Brick by brick. Conversation by conversation. Word by word. You're climbing the ladder. Nobody will give you the top job no matter how good your MBA is or what school you went to. You've got to earn it. Practise your craft. Build up your career capital. Be so good they can't ignore you.

BUILD YOUR REPUTATION

Rule 4: Your reputation will be attacked

There are too many examples of well-known people who have felt impregnable, only to be toppled. When you make a name for yourself, you'll make enemies. People will be jealous of what you're doing. For some rivals, you're in their way. You stand between them and their goals.

Career management can be adversarial. Brutal even. Lazy people will despise your efforts. Corrupt people will fear your integrity. Good people will be jealous of your greatness. Safe people will be distrustful of your risk-taking. Shy people will be suspicious of your self-promotion.

You won't win over everyone. You're not immune to a crisis. And you WILL be attacked. When that happens, you'll hopefully be robust enough to withstand it. Your advocates will hopefully be loud enough in number and influence to fight your corner. You will hopefully be in a strong position to ignore (as one swats away a fly) or refute (as one confronts a liar). Just be ready.

Rule 5: Perception = Reality

What people see, think, do, feel and say when they come into contact with you, your name or your 'art' counts more than what's real about you. Change the perception and you change the reality. It's not enough to be the best. You have to *be seen to be the best*. What people think and see is what really counts, not what is actually the case.

If they think you're unreliable, you're unreliable. Even if you're really not. You may not know that they think you're unreliable, nor WHY they think you're unreliable. Because they believe it makes it so. Your goal in building and managing your reputation then becomes to give people as much reason as possible to think and believe the right things about you.

The good news is that you can influence how others perceive you and thus your empire. You can't really control it, since they'll think what they think.

WHY BUILD YOUR REPUTATION?

But your strategy is to give them so much good stuff to talk about, they don't see any bad stuff.

In that regard, you can craft your personal reputation. There are a small number of leaders in every industry or profession who do just that. They are the 'stand-out' key people of influence. Almost everybody knows them, rates them and raves about them. They are the obvious choice and trusted voice.

These beacons of influence are often no better than anyone else. But they are perceived so by their staff, peers, tribe, fans, followers and stakeholders. Regardless of any personal standards you hold yourself to, being seen to do and say the right thing is mostly what makes your reputation.

Make the strongest possible case for your brilliance and authority. This makes it hard for people to misinterpret. Create an abundance of good stuff that outweighs any bad stuff. Monitor and manage the conversation. Perceptions can change and where yours are negative, your job is to change them for the better.

Rule 6: Lack of scandal does not mean a good reputation

A good reputation doesn't happen by NOT doing bad things. In a celebrity-obsessed culture, personalities lead the news. We are fascinated less by companies than by the people who lead and work for them. A tenacious media, a hungry public and a good story are a potent combination.

Some people try a 'head down and keep quiet' approach. People mistakenly think that if they 'keep their nose clean' and do a good job, they'll get promoted. Not true. You may stay out of trouble, but you're doing nothing to make your case for advancement.

You could be working in an immoral, corrupt environment. One where merely staying out of the limelight constitutes virtue. Get out of there and get building a serious reputation for making a positive difference.

BUILD YOUR REPUTATION

Just by being average or mediocre, you certainly beat the useless and the lousy. By doing nothing, you can beat the person who does a bad something. You can do better than that though. Your standards are too low. The keyword is BUILD a good reputation. Not HOPE one comes to you by default.

Rule 7: Everything is in the public domain

Deciding how information appears in public is a fine line between control and transparency. That's why PR departments and media experts are paid huge sums to ensure the good stuff is shared and the bad stuff is buried.

Be transparent. Everything finds a way to get out eventually. There are no secrets. Everything is visible. The new world of internet, digital and mobile means *leakage* is both inevitable and instant. You can't control what gets out there.

What happens in the boardroom often doesn't stay in the boardroom. Emails sent, phone calls made and private conversations conducted all too often become public domain. Despite what you might want to keep behind closed doors, much can be found out, particularly if it is deemed to be in the public interest.

You have control over much but not all of your world. Private thoughts quickly become public perceptions. Emails aren't private. Think twice before you hit 'send'. Conversations aren't 100% private. Meetings aren't 100% secluded.

Deleted files aren't gone. They're on your system somewhere. Be careful about what you say online and on social media. It may stay there forever. People can take screenshots of stuff you post so it's permanent even when you take it down.

Think ahead on your actions. Some hustle and risk-taking is all well and good. But make it strategic and calculated. It all ends up in the public

WHY BUILD YOUR REPUTATION?

domain. Everyone is an amateur detective. Stuff gets found out. Keep your nose clean.

Rule 8: You can have multiple reputations

You can't be good at everything and you can't be popular with everyone. Your reputation in your community or neighbourhood might be different to your work. What people think about you at your church, mosque or synagogue may be very different to how you're viewed at home. Your online persona could be unrecognizable to your hallway (face-to-face) reputation.

Your reputation for certain activities will vary. You'll have a reputation for the way you drive and the way you do DIY projects. One for speaking in public and one for listening in private. Reputation is also situational. It depends where you are, what you're doing and who your stakeholders are.

Reputation is sometimes like self-esteem (what you think about yourself). Your overall self-esteem is made up of lots of little self-esteems (the way you think you drive, talk, walk, present and network). Your overall reputation is made up of how people see you in different situations doing different things. Your aim is to be congruent. To be consistent across situations, audiences and platforms.

Rule 9: Invisibility is not an option

Anonymity is not the answer. Sticking your head in the sand and pretending that the internet doesn't exist is impossible. Even if you accept the power of the internet, it's inconceivable that you could be invisible or 'unfindable' online.

I like the joke by Lori Randall Stradtman, author of *Online Reputation Management For Dummies*. 'Where's the best place to hide a dead body? On page 3 of Google's search results.'

BUILD YOUR REPUTATION

Of course, *it's still on Google*, even if few people are looking. And it's permanent! Personal branding expert William Arruda goes further. 'If you don't show up in a Google search of your name, you don't exist.'

Bottom line, if you're not researchable, you'll be neglected and forgotten. You'll be viewed as irrelevant and even suspicious. If they can't be bothered to dig, that's usually not a good sign. It means you don't really matter.

If you want what you do to count, yet you don't give people the evidence for your brilliance, then you're leaving a black hole of reputational collateral. What people can't find, they make up or decide for themselves.

The importance of reputation for leaders

Few people in positions of influence and responsibility (henceforth leaders) give much attention to their own personal brand and personal reputation. Yet as a leader, you are the guardian and ambassador of whatever and whoever you lead.

This applies to your company or your community. The corporate reputation stands and falls on the personal reputation of its people and particularly its leader. You drive the brand, set the culture and model the values. As a leader, your personal reputation is inseparable from that of your company.

More dangerously, your good name is often shaped by the media and the public. If you don't give it to them, somebody else will. And if nobody else will, they have the means to find it out. Julian Assange, founder of online site Wiki Leaks, has made a career out of insider knowledge – exposing scandal, cover-up and conspiracy.

WHY BUILD YOUR REPUTATION?

You're unlikely to be next, but a decent hacker could probably find your bank account details, passwords and your web browsing history in a few seconds. How would that play out in the public domain?

If you get a moment, Google *Playing to Win in the Reputation Economy*, a study of leaders by The Reputation Institute. They surveyed 301 business leaders across 28 industries and 29 countries and found that 78% acknowledged they were living in a new world where who you are as an individual is directly tied to company success.

'The world and your operating environment has become more complex. More stakeholders care about you ... they want to know who the ... people behind the brands are. They have access to mission-critical information about you 24/7 and can disrupt your strategy with a single click or bad review.'

You don't even need to be at the top of the food chain to get it in the neck. The report goes on: 'But who does the CEO call when they want to know where the reputation risk lies across key stakeholders in your largest markets ... YOU!'

Career success means reputational scrutiny

We're in the Information Age or Knowledge Economy. Your empire is not just bricks and mortar. Its value comes from hard to define stuff like engagement, talent, relationships, culture and innovation. You play a part in that. Your personal share price on the stock market of life dictates what people are willing to pay for you and invest in you. Your reputation matters.

What people know, think and say about you matters. Your reputation is out there. It's in the hands of your stakeholders, your peers and the people in your empire. The higher up you go, the more your personal reputation can make or break your career and even the company you work for. Your

BUILD YOUR REPUTATION

personal reputation is inextricably linked to that of your company. You represent them on the public stage.

As you go higher, you also encounter more reputational scrutiny. Your narrative becomes public interest. Your good name will get you through doors, which is good. At the same time, your own personal reputation becomes inextricably linked to everyone and everything you represent.

As a leader, you are an influencer and change agent. Much of what you do, think and say plays out across communities and online platforms. There are few secrets and almost total transparency. What you say and do, your personal standing and your good name – it all helps promote the company's brand. It affects public trust in the company's activities.

What people know and say about you can be good 'coin' for you. As long as they don't use it against you, in which case it's going to cost you a small fortune to make it go away. Knowledge, and thus reputation, is currency. Earn it well and trade it wisely.

Everybody is a leader and an influencer

If you're thinking you're not really a leader and that your personal reputation has no bearing on the corporate one, think again. It's said that even the most introverted person in the world will influence thousands of people in their lifetime. This is good news and bad. It gives you power and significance. It also gives you responsibility and accountability.

It's not just the people at the top who lead. If you're in charge of just one person, you're a leader. If you have a say in the life of just one other human being, you're a leader. If you run a team, a project or a campaign you're a leader. If you head up a department, a division, a country or a region, you're a leader.

If you're still arguing this, you want to be a leader, right? You've got plans and ideas you think could make a difference. You've got a significant

WHY BUILD YOUR REPUTATION?

contribution to make. You're not just here to make up the numbers. To give you the freedom, the power and the platform to do that, you must be out front. Inspiring people. Doing the stuff you do best. Building a great profile.

Your career is at stake and to have maximum control, you're going to need all the leadership and influencing skills you can muster.

Your reputation drives company success

When business leaders are asked about the tangible benefits of a good personal and corporate reputation, four wins come up:

1. Drives competitive differentiation.
2. Attracts and retains top talent.
3. Allows better collaboration and partnership with key opinion leaders and policy makers.
4. Enables better crisis management.

In an article entitled 'Connecting Marketing Metrics to Financial Consequences', Wharton Professor David Reibstein pointed to studies showing that 50% of corporations' value today is composed of intangible assets (such as intellectual property, customer loyalty, reputation and relationships), up from just 20% 40 years ago. And it is primarily these intangibles, not hard assets, that dictate a company's valuation by the stock market.

Personal and corporate reputation is a bottom line discussion. When leaders take it seriously, they are given the leeway to try new things and take risks. They buy some forgiveness, inoculation and time if things don't go so well.

Your good name goes a long way. It's worth looking after. Let's get you in the game and embark you on the journey of an irresistible personal reputation that will open big career doors into even bigger opportunities!

BUILD YOUR REPUTATION

When leaders get reputation wrong

Your reputation is in many ways the most valuable thing you own. It can take years to build and be destroyed in an instant. You only need to look at the PR gaffes and howlers throughout history to see how fragile a reputation can be. This is especially so when the 'brand' is a person rather than a company.

As a leader, when you *bomb*, the company or empire often goes with you. A glance at the everyday press will show you how the acts and comments of CEOs can affect share price, public trust and employee engagement.

Sometimes an off-the-cuff remark can bring down an empire. Ask Gerald Ratner, once a leading English jeweller who sank his company overnight with an inopportune comment. When asked how he can sell his jewellery for such a low price, he replied '*Because it's total crap*'. His words were instantly seized upon by the media and an estimated £500m was wiped from the value of the company.

Sometimes PR gaffes are worse than the original crisis. Ask Tony Hayward, former CEO of oil and energy company BP. He emerged as the public face of the oil giant and was crucified in the press for how he handled a huge oil spill in the Gulf in 2010. He was derided for his flippant and insensitive remarks in media interviews such as '*I'd like my life back*' and '*The spill is relatively tiny in comparison with the size of the ocean*'.

Hayward's credibility was shot. By the time he was replaced the following year, the company had lost almost a quarter of its market value and had haemorrhaged over \$40 billion in costs associated with clean-up and recovery.

Even if you're not to blame or had no idea what was happening on your watch, leaders still have to take the fall. How leaders handle PR

WHY BUILD YOUR REPUTATION?

problems that are not even of their making can make or break both their own and their company's reputations. Ask Martin Winterkorn, former CEO of Volkswagen, Audi and Porsche.

Winterkorn resigned in 2015 after an emissions cheating scandal with the company's diesel cars. He won't be short of money. *Forbes* business magazine recently rated him the 58th most powerful person. But his reputation will forever be tarnished by what happened on his watch.

Responsibility travels upwards and, sooner or later, the person at the top will have to answer to someone. The buck gets passed upwards, and if you're not equipped to handle any kind of scrutiny, you'll wither under the kind of grilling that Tony Hayward got. You can quickly become the story and do more damage than the original problem.

Thus, reputation is a double-edged sword. It can be good or evil, beneficial or hindering. When you win, those around you reap the rewards. It will bring you fame or infamy. It will make or break you. And it's not even the truth that matters. People's perceptions often trump the truth.

Face it, what counts as remarkable these days is not expected growth, a reasonably successful brand or your regular season wins. Yesterday's good is tomorrow's great. What wowed people last year is average now. The headlines demand something more dramatic. Your stakeholders want you to come up with something exciting. When you build your reputation in a strategic, focused way, you'll give them that.

Summary – Why you should build your reputation

You are an ambassador for your organization. In a noisy, time-poor, crowded, attention-scarce world, it's the people, not the company, that

BUILD YOUR REPUTATION

make the stories. People bring companies to life. They personify the company. The values and vision become synonymous.

When all is well, your high public profile will be a valuable asset for you personally and your employer corporately. When the boat tips and things get tough, what counted for your good may now go against you.

One woman at a large London investment house began developing a high profile during a series of takeovers. She courted it and created some good PR as a result. But when a deal went wrong, the press knew who she was. Her fame became a liability in those difficult times. She recovered and learned.

As you move up the ladder, your personal and public share price goes up. Engagement in your ideas goes up. Buy-in for your initiatives and projects goes up. Loyalty and advocacy goes up. Forgiveness and tolerance for your wrongs goes up.

Your control of people and situations goes up. Confidence in your abilities and your vision goes up. The speed at which you can get things done goes up. Trust in your words and your opinions goes up. Ultimately, your ability to effect change and make a difference is accelerated.

A stand-out reputation lowers resistance to your arguments and excuses. Delay on decisions affecting you goes down. Suspicion and distrust of your motives goes down. Justifications for your ideas and fighting for your strategic position goes down.

Walls, obstacles and barriers come down. Your detractors, saboteurs and nay-sayers melt into obscurity as they lose ground fighting against the swell of positive public opinion. You can see it's a lot more than just increasing your employability.

WHY BUILD YOUR REPUTATION?

So now you know exactly what a reputation is and what a good one will do for you. We just need to set the scene for what you're going to do with it. That is, how to play and win the Career Game. Then you're ready to start building a formidable 'go-to' reputation for what you do. One that will make you unstoppable AND give you maximum control and choice in securing the work you love on your terms.

