



In a transparent world your reputation can be the difference between success and failure.



What you say

- “To thyself be true in all you say and do”. Brand reputation is fragile. Better to under promise and over deliver than vice versa.
- Accept that you can no longer control the message. All you can do is join in the conversation and believe that you have a more persuasive voice.
- Chatham House rules no longer exist and have been replaced by Glass House rules (with thanks to Gerald Ratner). Be prepared for anything you say to be repeated or passed on, especially e-mails.
- Reference has replaced deference. All brand communication must measure up to the closest scrutiny and, ideally fuel brand conversations.



What you do

- Reputation is earned. Customers are increasingly looking for the values behind brands, so ‘what you do’ to create your brand every day is becoming a more and more serious factor of choice. Care for your employees, care for the environment, care for the ingredients of your brand will have a greater and greater influence on your reputation as information is shared across the connected world of your employees, stakeholders, detractors and customers.
- Those closest to you tend to be your fiercest critics. In some instances they become whistleblowers. Treat them complacently at your peril. Over communicate to those closest to you to keep them as connected to your brand as possible.
- Reputation is a social phenomenon. Often ‘less is more’. Charismatic brands rely on a visual narrative more than a verbal narrative. This provides huge scope for advertising, which can leverage the visual, whereas public relations tends to the verbal.
- Brand reputation depends on its weakest link. Brands are only as good as their last customer experience.
- Gear your brand and corporate communications resource to the interconnected world of web 2.0. Marketing Directors working in isolation from Communication Directors is a recipe for disaster and increasingly the functions should be merged or reconfigured. Entrepreneurial and service-orientated companies act like this already.



What others say about you (when you've left the room)

- Brand owners have long known that ‘perception is reality’. In a web 2.0. environment perception is increasingly ‘googled reality’. Successful brands of the future will monitor market conversations and engage with them as second nature.
- ‘User generated uploads’ are a 24/7 reality. Politicians speak of ‘permanent campaigning’ and the need to win hearts and minds through the media on a daily basis. Brands of the future will employ brand newsrooms as a commonplace function, much as successful retail brands like Marks and Spencer do today.
- Everything is getting faster. Kick the habit of using historical panel data that records points of view so long after the conversations have happened that they have little relevance to action. Use research to involve your customers in the development of your brands and track attitudes in real time when you can enter the conversation if you choose to.