

# HUMAN CAPITAL

How can you cash in on your greatest asset? Rachel Griffiths explains

Everyone has one, no one owns their own and it's something that cannot be faked. Like it or not, every day others are assessing you. These perceptions and evaluations are made, sometimes consciously and often subconsciously, and all are influencing the effectiveness of your professional life. You do not own it; you can only ever influence it. Welcome to your personal reputation.

A strong reputation affords success and opportunity. It can help to secure a next career move, predetermine the likelihood of getting the additional budget for the department, establish the tone of a telephone conversation before the number has been dialled, affect the atmosphere of a meeting, determine the quality of applicants for a vacancy in your department, influence how others respond to a request and even provide strangers with preconceived ideas about you before you both meet.

For a company, the intangible asset of corporate reputation is estimated to account for a third of its market value. It is a precious and vulnerable asset that is protected and managed in order to safeguard long-term success.

To an individual, personal reputation is just as valuable an asset and your ability to maximise it is often referred to as your 'reputation capital'. Think of it as your contemporary, real-time curriculum vitae, altered by the day and the minute, each time you interact with others whether through face-to-face contact, via email, in social media or on the telephone. Unlike a curriculum vitae, your reputation capital is anything but a retrospective, one-dimensional look

at achievements accomplished; it is a living, 360-degree picture that indicates the person behind the achievements and provides clues as to your qualities, interests, values and personality.

And in this digital and connected world of online content and social media, never has personal reputation been more

significant. Conversations, emotions, sentiments and values that you project unknowingly in everyday interactions are frequently mirrored online and available for all to view, thanks to our digital lifestyles and working practices.

Think about how commonplace it is now for individuals to 'Google' each other before meeting in person. Each search reveals the reputation capital held by an incoming CEO, a prospective employee, a conference speaker or a potential new supplier at that moment in time and over the previous years. Blogs are an open invitation to others into your thoughts, views and interests; a LinkedIn profile is now virtually part of professional etiquette. All are contributing to your reputation capital.

The opportunity and challenge for an individual is to actively manage their 'reputation capital' so that it can pay huge dividends across professional life.

## WHAT IS YOUR PERSONAL REPUTATION?

'Reputation' is a term increasingly used, yet rarely truly understood. Mistakenly referred to simply as 'trust' or 'personal brand', it is not a single metric, but a combination of assessments about you from those who engage with you. Within those assessments it is the extent to which you are associated with a collection of qualities, strengths and attributes.

Those individuals considered to have a high level of reputation capital have six key qualities:

**1. Seen.** They are visible in their role and both confident and comfortable to show up as 'who they are' in 'what they do'.

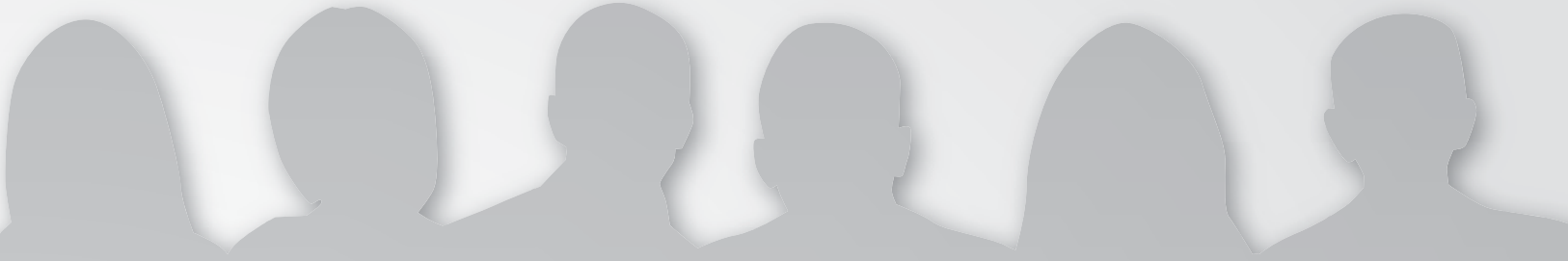
## STEPS TO ENHANCE YOUR REPUTATION

◆ **What is my current reputation?** Begin by discovering the current reputation you hold. Choose five people from your professional life and ask them what you should 'start', 'stop' and 'keep' doing.

◆ **What is the reputation I aspire to have?** Understand what your values and motivations are and what is really important to you, then begin to explore where you do and don't demonstrate these values, and why. Check that your values and motivations are showing up consistently in the way you are seen in person, online and across social media. Where are you inconsistent?

◆ **What do I want to change?** What will stop me? We all have negative voices that prevent us from behaving how we really want to behave. Get to know what triggers those voices, the impact of them and learn how to ignore them. Know what you want to change and begin to introduce everyday practices.

◆ **What qualities and strengths need most work?** Simply becoming aware of, and beginning to employ, some of the reputational qualities and strengths that are outlined above is a good starting point.



**2. Understood.** They know what they value and what motivates them, and craft each interaction based on those principles. They take great care to make sure that their intentions and the motivations behind each of their communications are clearly understood by others.

**3. Different.** They understand what their unique strengths are, how those strengths differ from those of others and they are able to project them for maximum effect.

**4. Open.** They are transparent and authentic in their actions and behaviour, displaying high levels of honesty that serves to constantly build levels of trust. This creates safety for others to suggest, improve, comment or criticise.

**5. Consistent.** Understanding their values, motivation and unique strengths, they effortlessly demonstrate consistency in the language, behaviours and tone that they use. Those who work with them can predict the nature of any interaction with them and often what the response may be.

**6. Responsive.** They are quick and adept to respond to others in a suitable and appropriate manner.

Besides holding the above six qualities, those with strong reputational capital are perceived, by others, to display the following seven attributes:

◆ **Lead.** They are perceived as leading from 'character' and not from 'coping', from a place of purpose and possibility and not from one of fear and ego. Guided by openness and inclusion, they are able to create an ease of presence in which others can flourish.

## MANAGING YOUR PERSONAL REPUTATION

The ultimate aim of personal reputation is transparency, to be seen and understood with integrity, to remain open and responsive with total consistency. In essence, when your personal values are aligned with your professional values, building reputational capital becomes natural and effortless. Being who you really are and turning up the 'volume of you' is the most organic way to begin to manage your personal reputation.

◆ **Create.** They move things forward, suggesting and creating new ideas, proposals and thoughts that will always take things a step further in the collective aim.

◆ **Belong.** They display a strong sense of belonging and loyalty to a task or cause that is bigger than themselves, for example, their team, their organisation or their project.

◆ **Care.** They are perceived to be fair and caring, with an unfailing ability to hold others in unconditional positive regard. Often with a highly developed level of emotional intelligence, they are able to consider the position of others and empathise with them.

◆ **Perform.** Committed to the cause, they are strongly associated with ongoing success. Individuals can rely on the fact that they will gather all the collective strength of others in order to achieve the shared objective.

◆ **Deliver.** In every personal interaction with others and in each task, they consistently not just meet, but exceed expectations that others may have of them.

◆ **Steward.** They unfailingly do the right thing and consider the longer-term effect.

Without owning your personal reputation, an individual can merely ever influence it through their behaviours and interactions with others. Understanding exactly who is having the greatest influence on your reputation is a key step to enhancing it. From the individuals and teams with whom you interact to your social media channels, there are people, channels and content that can influence your reputation. Try connecting with people, through differing channels, modifying or enhancing your behaviour and language or simply prioritising what you want more of and adjusting your energy towards getting it. ♥



**Rachel Griffiths is partner at Reputation Consultancy, an associate certified coach specialising in leadership and reputation, and an organisational and relationship systems coach. [www.reputationconsultancy.co.uk](http://www.reputationconsultancy.co.uk)**