



The Power of Reputation

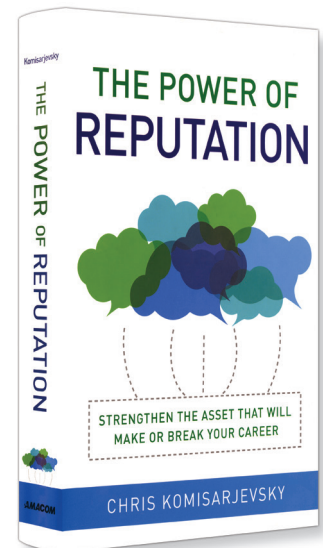
Strengthen the Asset that Will Make or Break Your Career

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

To accomplish your goals — whatever they are — people must believe in you. In any business or field, success is built on a foundation of character, communication and trust — the building blocks of reputation. A positive reputation can often mean the difference between failure and great success. *The Power of Reputation* gives you an action plan for creating the kind of reputation that generates trust and paves the way for lasting success. With instructive real-world examples, this book lays out step by step how to build a platform of respect for and confidence in your decisions — and a commitment from others to your goals. Filled with straightforward, practical techniques for methodically crafting a strong, solid reputation, *The Power of Reputation* shows you how to be authentic, open to ideas, a strong communicator, and, by your actions, demonstrate over and over again that you are a person of character. Reputation isn't something that just happens ... nor is it something you can afford to leave to chance. This invaluable resource reveals powerful methods for building and leveraging a strong reputation — and using it to achieve extraordinary results.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to leverage the communication techniques that engage others and create positive, open dialogues.
- Ways to build strong connections by personalizing your approach.
- How to earn respect by demonstrating your respect for others.



by Chris Komisarjevsky

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: THE POWER OF REPUTATION

by Chris Komisarjevsky

The author: Chris Komisarjevsky retired in 2005 as worldwide chief executive officer of Burson-Marsteller, one of the world's leading global public-relations and public-affairs firms, after a 35-year career in public relations.

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PART I: CHARACTER

This Is the Era of Personal Character

Reputation is earned through the demonstration of a positive personal character. Our era has witnessed the demise of industry giants who thought they were above the law, lied to customers and investors, used creative accounting to hide misconduct, earned profit at the expense of everyone associated with them, and in the process destroyed all traces of trust.

There is a fine line between the reputation of an individual and the reputation of the organization where the individual works. Be conscious of both.

Four Steps for You to Use in Your Career

1. Adopt the perspective that your current work and its environment are part of an important learning experience.
2. Develop strength of character. Vicky Casal, a talented young woman, had to summon the courage and strength simply to learn from a situation in which she did not respect her boss. Does this take self-control? Of course. Does this take focusing on the right values? No doubt.
3. Write down what you are learning about values and behavior. Vicky's attention to character showed when she described herself in her resume, her cover letter and on interviews.

4. Begin looking for companies whose values go hand-in-hand with yours.

With strong character, others will believe in you, emulate your commitment and passion, work as hard as you do and respect your judgment. ●

Experiences that Shape Character

Steve Joenk, now president and CEO of AXA Equitable Funds Management Group, LLC, was asked to sweep the warehouse floor on his first day as a freshly minted MBA. He learned pretty quickly that, if he was to be respected, there couldn't be any job that he wouldn't do if it needed to get done.

A First Exercise in Character

What experiences have shaped the way you act and the decisions you make? Take out a pen and paper and list them, noting what happened, what you felt, what lessons you learned, how you've applied these lessons at other times and how these lessons are applicable to your life now.

Role Models

Learn from others. You can seek out both mentors and champions as role models.

Mentors help us learn the skills you need to do the job well. Their career guidance can often span our entire career. A mentor should be willing to tell you what you are doing well and where you need to improve in a candid and genuine way.

Champions take us under their wing and help create new career opportunities, different assignments and even promotions. They are strong internal advocates for us.



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For a champion, seek someone in a position to know what is going on in the organization who is experienced at navigating through an organization's internal management and politics.

A Second Exercise in Character

Think about the people whom you admire. What are the character traits that inspire you? As you think about something they did, hold your own "post-mortem." Critique your own performance. Write things down. Answer these questions honestly: Why did you do what you did? How would you do it if you could do it over again? ●

Define Your Values

Vincent van Gogh loved portraiture but had no money to pay models to sit for him. So, he invested in a mirror. After painting at least 20 self-portraits in Paris, he created *Self-Portrait as an Artist*, one of his most famous paintings. Only after someone looks in the mirror and truly see him- or herself can he or she begin to shape other's perceptions.

The Magic List

What values do you hold dearest? The Foundation for a Better Life lists values at www.values.com. There, you can click on each value and read a short description. Ask yourself, "If I were in danger of losing my job, what values would I not sacrifice even if it meant I were to be let go?" How do the experiences that shaped your character relate to your core values?

The Values Test

The questions that follow reflect true-to-life situations you could find yourself facing. They cut to the core of values and our character.

1. Would I be tempted, even to a minor degree, to shade the facts?
2. What are my relationships like with my co-workers, team members, bosses and clients? Do I respect them?
3. Am I comfortable sharing the power and the credit?
4. If the job doesn't go well, do I look for someone to blame, or do I look at myself first?
5. Am I genuinely interested in hearing opinions and ideas that are different from mine?
6. Am I personally vested in my organization's success, or am I just putting in the time?
7. Do I simply tell my staff what to do, or do I ask questions so they can discover the solutions for themselves?
8. Do my actions mirror my words, and is my behavior consistent?
9. Am I prepared to learn new skills and approaches?
10. Can people trust me to support them? Am I there for them?

Writing a Declaration of Your Values

Now ... write your own. Declare your values in a way that is highly motivating and that you can return to again and again throughout your career. ●

Authenticity Rules

While writers draft speech materials for executives, politicians and presidents, the speaker often jumps in to change material at the last minute. The final notes are filled with their handwritten changes. These changes are often the best part. They are personal additions that reflect the heart of the person giving the speech. The result is that he or she radiates the confidence of personal experience.

Your Confidence Inspires Confidence in You.

Your sense of authentic confidence is contagious. There is an energy and a determination that those around you sense and feel.

Be Personal. There really isn't any distinction between our personal and our professional reputations. That, actually, is a strength and a positive thing. It makes your actions and your reputation even more genuine because you don't cross borderlines between aspects of your life.

Foster a Culture of Openness. Openness brings to the surface new and sometimes revolutionary ideas. If you want to thrive, open up and show your true colors. Others will reciprocate, and the entire organization will benefit.

Authentic Action. Build a systematic thought process or a series of questions that you always ask yourself when faced with making a decision to act in some way. As you form your own questions, you can start with these:

How will my actions affect others?

Is it an authentic statement by me? Am I proud of my decision?

Would I be comfortable if my actions were the subject of an article on the front page of a major newspaper?

More important, what if I had to explain to my son or daughter — mother or father — why I decided what I did?

The Double-Edged Sword of the Digital World

The digital world has dramatically changed the way that reputations are built, questioned or thrown into doubt.

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Comments and opinions travel around the world at mega speeds and are read by people who may have no frame of reference for what they are reading. The Internet can create product successes in record time, launch new initiatives and create excitement about an innovative venture. It can also swing elections, urge boycotts or foster riots. If it can do that, think what it can do for or to your reputation.

How about those pictures posted on Facebook? Those chat or text comments by someone who has never even met you? Today, words and images last forever. It has put a stronger emphasis on what you do every day in this online world to shape that reputation in the way you want.

Selling Authentically

Rose Mann is assistant dean of advancement for the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science at the University of Miami. She offers clear advice: "I might be a fundraiser, but I don't sell. In fact, I don't know how to sell. What I can do is speak from the heart. I can't encourage someone to give if it doesn't mean something to me. I believe in it. I simply tell the truth."

The demand for candor, understanding and clarity of purpose is greater than ever before. Transparency creates confidence and underscores authenticity. If you aren't transparent, then you aren't authentic. You are hiding something. And people are less likely to trust. ●

Caring and Respect

Make no mistake. Caring and sharing are not signs of weakness. Caring and sharing are building blocks for reputation, character, and a feeling among everyone you do business with that what you are doing is special, fueled by respect, sharing power and responsibility and caring for each other.

There are seven steps to successful caring and sharing:

1. Pick the people you work with well. Focus on those whom you trust explicitly.
2. Vest them with the raw facts. Candidly tell them the potential problems, the risks and the challenges.
3. Don't oversell their roles or the opportunities. Make sure they understand how difficult the challenges are.
4. Let them talk. Keep every discussion a dialogue.
5. Ask them if they need help. Then help them get the resources they need.
6. Check in to see how they are doing. Don't check on them, but check in with them.
7. Share the victory and the failures.

The Art of Caring

Start by spending time with people and listening to what they have to say. Ask them what is important and what they would recommend. Don't jump in. Just listen. If they believe you want to know, they will know you care. Encourage them. You will build a reputation as someone to whom others look for motivation. ●

PART II: COMMUNICATION

Seek to Understand

If all you do is remember one concept, remember this: Listen first ... talk second. To truly listen, pay attention and take notes. Here are three tips to remember:

Don't Be a "Know-It-All." If you come across as thinking you have all the answers, you will earn a reputation for not being a team player, and in today's work environment that is the kiss of death to your career.

Give People Face Time. Don't let important issues rest without an in-person discussion. There is no better way to address an important issue and demonstrate a human approach to your business role than getting together in one room to discuss important decisions, strategies and initiatives.

Ask Lots of Questions. As everyone knows, there is nothing quite as powerful as a series of well-thought-through questions. And that requires preparation. A lot of it. Reporters and attorneys recommend the following:

- Think through various scenarios beforehand.
- Do your research.
- Ask the "what ifs."
- Open the discussion so everyone can comment and ask their own questions.

When you ask questions, you need to offer a secure sense that candor and openness will be protected.

Keep It Practical: Ask for Examples

Probing and asking questions are key. But so is asking for examples. You have to push it one step further so that people are pressed to make it practical. In business, having a reputation for being practical is an asset. ●

Effective Communications

In coaching a physician for an interview on 60 Minutes, the team at Burson-Marsteller was very harsh: Don't

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squirm in the chair. Don't cover your mouth. Speak clearly. Look directly at the camera and the interviewer. Think before you talk. Be pleasant. Feel comfortable. Answer with authority. And draw on the facts. The words, the voice, the body language all must come together.

The Call for Serious and Transparent Communications

In a *McKinsey Quarterly* interview, Jeroen van der Veer, retired CEO of Royal Dutch Shell, strongly urged managers to take communication seriously: "Nearly every discussion, you start in the first two minutes with not necessarily the subject you have to discuss but [instead with] "What do you think? How long will it last?" And people, they expect an answer. You better think about that. So you have to think a lot about communication. Externally and internally, what are your key messages?"

Speaking To Be Heard

How do you enhance your communication skills as you build your own reputation? Here are some ideas:

- Paint images when you talk and outline plans.
- Name those who are essential to your success.
- Speak from personal experience.
- Most of all, speak from the heart.

There is no substitute for straight talk. Straight talk means no "spin." The concept of spin is disrespectful. It flies in the face of trust and is devoid of integrity.

Body Language

Together with what you say, how you behave when you say it does matter. In fact, it matters a great deal. You don't need a television studio to rehearse and see yourself. A digital camera that takes short movies will do well. Think about the impact of the following kinds of movements:

The Smirk. You twist your mouth. That little movement with your lips, and everyone knows you are disdainful of what someone else has said.

The Slouch. As parents teach their children, sit up straight, sit in the front row and pay attention.

The Squirm. Did you sit still, or did you bounce around, looking left and right, almost as if you were avoiding the discussion or trying to sneak away?

The Swipe. After answering a tough question, your hand wiped across your mouth. A classic movement that tells everyone you had to "wipe off" what you just said. Likely, your answer wasn't genuine.

The Eyeballs. Look closely at others with whom you work and those you want to work with you and follow your direction. Don't let those eyes stray.

The Hands. Your hands are emotive. They add conviction and enthusiasm. They emphasize. Use them wisely, and use them well.

Preparing for Important Meetings and Discussions

To make others feel appreciated and empowered, here are some tips to follow:

- Frame the discussion. Not everyone thinks like you. So, think like them. If you can anticipate and address their concerns head on, you will gain credibility.
- Consider the opinions of others. Think about the impact your messages will have on everyone.
- Be credible. Verify all your facts. Explain in detail. Be open to questions.
- Lay out your reasoning very clearly. Take pains to fully explain your thinking.
- Talk straight. Explain situations in clear terms.
- Ask for feedback.

My goal is intense preparation. Take notes. Imagine all the questions. Working through the issues when the pressure is the least gives you the chance to excel when the tension and the pressures are the greatest. ●

Engaging Others

Successful businesspeople believe in proactive and straightforward communication. They know they must master the traditional and leading-edge digital communication tools and understand the pivotal role that communication plays in engaging others and building reputation. They genuinely want to know what others think and how committed they are. Simply put, there must be a sharing of views through substantive engagement involving team members. Dialogue wins the day every time.

Successful people also know that engagement demonstrates respect between themselves and their team or clients and generates an enthusiasm for shared strategies, tactics and goals. They believe in trying to reach a group understanding, if not consensus and agreement, on how to move forward in reaching certain goals. If that is possible, it goes a very long way toward team responsibility for the outcome.

Eight Steps to Engaged Action

Following Eight Steps to Engagement can ensure that your decisions and communications help you engage effectively and successfully.

1. Research facts and opinions.
2. Engage with those who matter, and listen to their views.

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3. Decide what to do.
4. Communicate your decision.
5. Act/Behave/Implement your decision.
6. Communicate again — what you did and why.
7. Engage again, and listen to reactions.
8. Evaluate and plan for next steps. ●

Be Personal

Reputations are both personal and professional. Your personal and professional reputations are linked inextricably. Experienced and successful people relate to the people they work with in ways that are very personal. They make a point of knowing each other well. They speak in personal terms, not in “organizational speak.”

I recall a colleague whose client company had announced a product recall late one afternoon, and it was clear the next morning the media would be running with a series of critical stories. So what did he do that demonstrated his personal commitment so dramatically? Without missing a beat, he was up almost all night on the Internet to read the stories and send them to his client. And then he was at the local newsstand to get the first copies of the paper right off the truck. By 7:00 in the morning, he had prepared both a report and an analysis of the media coverage so that his client could brief his superiors, decide on next steps and address the concerns that had been raised.

Some Appropriate Ways to Demonstrate a Personal Approach

- Remember the importance of a smile.
- Shake hands (firmly).
- Look them in the eye when you shake hands.
- Know those you are meeting. Learn something about them in advance.
- Ask if there’s something you can do when someone working for you is faced with a family or personal challenge.
- Talk about your family and your interests.
- Put whatever you say in a context that relates to those around you.
- Do something unexpected ... a small gift for a special success or just a thank-you note.

Most important, go out of your way. Do more than you are asked to do. It will be noticed. Your reputation will climb, and your career will, too.

“How” Is More Important than “What”

A personal approach can prove to be the key factor in making a sale and earning the trust of a customer or a client. If you ask why one qualified applicant is hired over another, some will describe it as “chemistry.” The key is personal commitment. It comes across and resonates with each of us. ●

PART III: TRUST

Build a Circle of Trust

You need to believe in and trust yourself. That is the first step. Trust yourself, and you will trust others. Trusting others is so important. When you do, those you trust most often live up to expectations. With time, they too trust themselves and, in turn, also have the self-confidence to trust others.

Sharing power is an essential skill. How to ensure that even the most driven businesspeople put ego aside to focus on the organization and the team? Leaders need to remember that what counts is not that they are right but that the team does the right thing.

Steps to Earn Trust

Here are some tips for earning trust:

- Learn from those around you. Recognize others as professionals whose input is critical to your task.
- Ask the people you work with to be your closest ally and your fiercest critic.
- Be open to comments, in-depth questions and criticism.
- Work from the macro to the micro. Lay out the strategy and long-term goals before you attend to the details.
- Take the time to fully explain your thinking.
- Share the leadership role.

The trust people have in how the organization and its people will behave affects how they describe the brand. Richard Edelman, president and chief executive officer of Edelman Worldwide, explains: “Trust ... is what I call a ‘protective agent’ and leads to tangible benefits. Trust creates the environment where there can be success. At the same time, the corollary is true: Lack of trust is a barrier. This calls for what I describe as a ‘new trust architecture.’ You cannot only focus on ‘what we do,’ but we also have to focus on ‘how we do it.’” ●

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Overcoming Threats to Trust

Office politics can quickly undermine a culture of trust. There can be jealousy over the symbols of power, like furniture or concern over titles, salaries, work assignments, promotions and new assignments. When it strikes, you become reluctant to trust others. In short, you question intent.

Rising Above the Politics

Here are some principles to keep in mind in a highly political environment:

- Be clear and straightforward.
- Understand your own motives.
- Don't play the game. Stay above the fray and above politics. In the long run, your credibility will benefit.
- Keep your dignity. Don't gossip.
- Focus on the job. Keep doing what you do best.
- Be smart. You shouldn't play the game, but then again, you shouldn't ignore it either.

If those principles don't work for you, look for another position. It is time to leave.

Take a Stand

Sometimes, somewhere, someone will do something wrong. That is a given. The important question is, How do you respond? One view is to be direct and straightforward. You have to talk about it, both what to do to ensure trust and what would be done if it were breached.

Anticipating Threats

With time, you want to have anticipated situations that could threaten your business enterprise. If you don't, you might lose control, possibly jeopardizing your ability to make the tough decisions needed when it comes to values and reputation. So what are the warning signals of a possible threat?

From individuals you need to watch for the following:

- Behavior changes.
- Work performance drops off.
- Conflicts with colleagues emerge.
- Rumors circulate.
- Individuals are asked off teams or not selected for assignments.
- An increased number of employee resumes are "on the street."

From the company itself, watch for these signs:

- Sales drop off.

- Rumors circulate about financial or other problems.
- Management behavior changes.
- Information is withheld.
- You start hearing disturbing stories about the organization from outside.

If you think there might be a problem, there probably is.

The Need for Consequences

Consequences and punishment for unacceptable behavior are powerful statements. There can be no strength, conviction or genuine reputation without accepting consequences and without being able to call for their delivery or to develop them yourself. Mistakes can damage reputations ... both yours and the organization's. ●

When You Make a Mistake

Few things strike fear in the hearts of anyone as quickly and as dramatically as realizing they have made a big mistake. When you do, you take responsibility, pick up the pieces, correct any problems that may have resulted and move forward.

A Two-Part Analysis for Recovery

Most of the time, you have the opportunity to address a mistake, find another solution, make a correction and give it another try. You need to take a candid look back at how the mistake happened and perform a two-part analysis: factual and personal.

The factual analysis requires us to understand the facts and examine the circumstances that led up to the mistakes. Straightforward answers to some tough operational and management questions are the start. You might call on your finance, operations, audit or legal divisions. Sometimes, however, you need to bring in outside experts, such as independent legal counsel or investigative and security firms. While costly, this kind of factual analysis is only the beginning, and in most cases it is the easiest part of the review.

Far more difficult is the personal analysis. Ask yourself, "What role did I play? What could I have done differently? How am I going to rectify the situation? Am I going to take full responsibility and address the problem head on?"

The Road Back

When you make a mistake, you need to deal with the problem directly. The best way to do that is not to shy away or shirk responsibility. Rather, step back and take a deep breath. Before you act, give yourself some breathing room and think.

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With the Internet and social media, the speed with which reputations are damaged — if not destroyed — is incredible. The rule of thumb is this:

First, you need seriously to consider a response if social media have voiced criticism of your values, your decisions, your integrity and your reputation.

Second, if you do respond, you must respond within 12 hours. So remember ... you have 12 hours or less within which to take responsibility and say, “I am sorry.” ●

An Enduring Reputation

One of the most challenging lessons for each of us is that managing our own career is up to each of us alone. No one will build our career for us. Just like anything else of importance, you have to take charge and commit to the long term.

It doesn't happen overnight. And we must work on it every day, day after day.

As you build your career, you begin to look for opportunities to shape the way you are seen. You work harder, show greater resolve, adhere to strong values, focus on your character, become engaged communicators, never violate trust, and demonstrate at every turn that you are thoughtful and caring.

Self-Assessment for Success

To make the most of your career and earn the success you deserve, it is important to know yourself. The key is to be more proactive than most and very confident in your resolve.

Along the way, you need to be absolutely candid in asking and answering three critical groups of questions about yourself and your career.

First: Am I introspective? Can I look back and objectively analyze what I did and, more important, why I chose that particular course of action?

This first group of questions is tough to address, and realistic answers take maturity and determination.

Second: Did my decisions work? Did they get me where I wanted to go? If I look clearly at the decisions I made and the motives behind them, did they actually produce the results I wanted?

This second group of questions requires objectivity and reflection, both of which are sometimes difficult for managers, especially if they don't want to be seen as having made a mistake.

Third: Am I up to the test? Did I have the courage to take on new and different challenges, especially those that might put my values to the test? In short, am I capable, as the saying goes, of “walking into the lion's den”?

This last group of questions puts you under pressure to explore how determined you really are.

Be certain of your resolve and ability to handle the toughest kinds of assignments, even those that might, on the surface, appear to threaten our careers if they don't work out the way you want.

Master the Basics

Be smart. Think long term. Tell your customer or client what you are going to do, and then just do it. There are no excuses.

The following six steps form a foundation for success:

1. Manage your career.
2. Seek new skills.
3. Build a network.
4. Foster work relationships with your supervisor and human-resources professionals.
5. Work smart.
6. Exceed expectations. ●

Reputation Paves the Way

A strong reputation — built on character, communication and trust — is the foundation for lasting success. Your reputation is yours to forge. Communicate often and more often. Capture every chance to engage others, hear what they say, listen to what will add value and give credit where credit is due. People will listen to you and look to you ... if you trust them and they trust you.

Trust is at the heart of reputation. Trust in others is giving them the opportunity to do what is right. Trust that others have in you is what gives you the opportunity to lead and be successful.

In short, always remember — building a strong reputation is one of your most important jobs. Do it well. Time and time again. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *The Power of Reputation*, you'll also like:

1. **Credibility** by James Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner. This best-seller builds on more than 30 years of research to show you how to make credibility the foundation of your leadership.

2. **The Character Triangle** by Lorne Rubis. Rubis examines and defines three distinct but interdependent values that are a “playbook” for attaining rewards in any type of situation.

3. **Trust Agents** by Chris Brogan and Julien Smith. Find out how to build profitable relationships with trust agents and become an influencer based in transparency.