

Is Your Reputation Making or Breaking You?

Your reputation precedes you in client, co-worker and one-on-one meetings.

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Have you ever dreaded an upcoming meeting when you learned that someone known for long-winded presentations was hosting it? You know the meeting will run overtime because the host will struggle to keep the conversation on track and without question, it will require yet another meeting to finish the discussion that should have been wrapped up the first time.

Imagine your mindset walking into that meeting. You are probably thinking about how once the conversation goes off-topic, you will surreptitiously catch up on emails and respond to text messages. You already anticipate giving only a fraction of your attention throughout the time scheduled.

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Now consider the alternative. You look at your calendar to see an upcoming meeting scheduled with someone known for facilitating quick, pointed meetings. The host engages listeners, interacts with everyone and is intentional about keeping the conversation on track. You know the meeting will require your undivided focus and attention and that at its conclusion, you will have clear action items.

Which meeting are you more likely to enjoy being a part of and

believe is the best use of your time?

What do others think when they commit to a meeting hosted by you? Your reputation precedes you, whether it's good or bad. That reputation enters client, co-worker and one-on-one meetings before you do.

What does your reputation say about you?

A positive reputation has the power to create momentum in every encounter, setting the stage for listeners to trust you from the beginning. It creates a certain level of respect and credibility. It has the power to influence listeners to take your advice, listen to your recommendations and even act on your suggestions. They have an open mind about who you are and how you operate.

A questionable reputation, or one less than positive, predisposes listeners to question you and your ideas. They are more likely to consider alternatives and doubt your credibility or knowledge. Having this type of reputation requires much more work on your part, not only to overcome but to change.

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If you want the ability to influence others to act on your words, suggestions and ideas, you must first understand the current state of your reputation.

Seek the truth

We think we know how we are perceived, but we're rarely right. How we see ourselves is not always how others perceive us. It's easy to believe we are informative speakers even though our listeners consider us long-winded. We consider ourselves

knowledgeable while our audience perceives us as know-it-alls. Seeking the truth about our reputation is vital to understanding whether it's working for us or against us. It starts by getting feedback from someone we trust. Find someone you work with – a co-worker, peer, mentor or colleague who is willing to tell you the truth. Keep an open mind about their feedback.

Evaluate yourself

Once you know how others perceive you in the workplace, it's time to see for yourself. Set up a video recorder in your next several meetings. Use a phone app to record yourself during upcoming calls. Once you've recorded yourself interacting with others or presenting information, review the playback. Listen to what others hear from their perspective and through the lens of feedback you've received. Write down everything you observe that needs improvement.

Create a plan

Once you've got a list of what needs improving, find an accountability partner to help you create a plan to address each area. Schedule a time each week to go over a new area of improvement. Make a commitment to them for how you plan to correct the behavior. Then, report back to your accountability partner the previous week's progress. We are much more likely to stick to the plan we create for ourselves when we enlist the help of others. An accountability partner will help you remain committed to improving your reputation.

Consistency is key

The key to building a reputation is being consistent in how you follow through on positive behaviors. Think about a popular brand – Starbucks, perhaps. You know you will get a

consistent experience each time you enter their establishment. Every product branded with its logo has a reputation for being consistently high in quality, taste and delivery. They have built their brand on consistency. The same holds true for your brand – your reputation. Every interaction with others requires consistency – from high-stakes presentations to hallway conversations.

Be consistent in your efforts

A positive, influential reputation takes commitment to ongoing improvement. It requires knowing your weaknesses and committing to change. If you want your positive reputation to precede you, gain a better understanding of how others perceive you. Commit to doing the work necessary to improve. How you show up for every interaction will build a positive, influential reputation moving forward.

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