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*Understanding customer needs and trends.
 Honing your message and strategies to meet market demands.
 Building a reputation to create and sustain your leadership.
 Demonstrating value.*

These are all paramount to your success.

Inspiration and ideas come from a wide variety of sources. The ability to integrate new thoughts and make the strategy + communications + leadership link helps companies and executives alike elevate their performance.

Because it's challenging at the top, [The Aerie Company](#) offers you useful and thought provoking ideas to help you soar to new heights. Enjoy these latest insights.



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 How Transparent Are You?

We live in a reputation challenged environment. Pages, airwaves and the Internet are full of stories of business and personal scandals. Just ask BP, AIG, Governor Mark Sanford or Bernie Madoff. As the news breaks and the stories evolve, reputations are damaged or revitalized by those who communicate the truth. Too often, breakdowns are blamed on financial performance expectations but it is about more than just that. No product or service breakthrough can be a savior for those who are viewed as less than open and ethical. In a world that today demands transparency, numbers alone will not set companies free. The world's most reputable companies understand that they must keep all the drivers of reputation in balance

and stay true to their missions so they are consistent in how they handle growth, success and crisis. They embrace their reputation as a competitive advantage that must be managed proactively at all times in all markets. Their lessons are equally as valuable to the business world as they are to individuals.



The Reputation Institute's *2009 Global Reputation Pulse* study found that ethics and transparency rose in importance around the world to their highest levels ever. The most reputable companies ranked in its annual survey on corporate reputation are showing they can go beyond compliance and create value and gain respect from their stakeholders when they are open and transparent. It is their renewed commitment to **communication** – which enables access to information – and **trust** – the ability to trust the information accessed – that enables these companies to develop enduring and sustainable results. Other key insights from the study and recommendations for companies committed to cultivating their reputation encourage:

- **Actively engaging all stakeholders** to understand their expectations of your company
- **Identifying the most critical social and economic issues** to stakeholders and how the company can address those
- **Reporting on actions and consequences** in annual reports as well as an ongoing basis through real-time communication updates
- **Creating a sounding board** of critical activists to consult for critical business decisions
- **Being proactive and open** when discussing tough business decisions with the media and advocacy groups
- **Developing real integration between key company functions** to ensure everyone is aligned around the company's mission and reputation platform

For more information and a summary of the findings on transparency in the Reputation Institute's *Reputation Intelligence Report on Corporate Reputation*, please contact us by [clicking here for email](#) or call us at 847-556-8873.

Unspoken Leadership

As an experienced or aspiring leader, there are many subtle ways to emphasize your message and mission. Throughout her political career, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright used a number of nonverbal communication techniques as diplomatic tactics. In addition to being a skilled negotiator, she became well known for her collection of brooches and pins as an additional expression of moods, opinions and visual reinforcement of her message. There was an arrow pin that looked like a small missile worn during the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty negotiations, a snake pin that Iraqi media noticed when she was trying to deal with Saddam Hussein, and a hear-no-evil/speak-no-evil monkey brooch donned at a summit with Russian President Putin who was not amused. ("Read My Pins: The Madeleine Albright Collection," an exhibition of 200+ jewelry items, is now at the Smithsonian.)



The Secretary's carefully chosen ornaments have rarely outdazzled her message because she recognizes that people communicate on many levels and every audience simultaneously processes both verbal and nonverbal cues. It was management guru Peter Drucker who once reflected "the most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said." Subsequently, a growing body of research is showing that clues in nonverbal channels of communication (**how** something is said) and often more important than words alone (**what** is said).

Nonverbal communication is the single most powerful form of communication. It is necessary to express emotions / interpersonal attitudes and manage interactions between speakers and listeners. It also gives additional dimension to our presentations, personalities and allows us to engage in rituals such as greetings.

The best leaders are sensitive to the power of the emotions and thoughts communicated nonverbally and many clues are obvious. Beyond maintaining eye contact and facial expressions, they notice our voices, hand gestures, body movements, touch and personal space. These leaders are also sensitive to objection communication such as clothing, hairstyles, architecture, symbols, infographics and other wordless images. To gain a competitive advantage, many successful individuals have permanently rewired the way they see the world and they rarely misfire with their own nonverbal signals. Heightening your observation skills in one-on-one and group settings will help you convey your message more effectively and improve how you receive messages from others. If a person's words say one thing and their nonverbal communication says another, "listening" to the nonverbal communication is usually a safe approach.

If you or your colleagues could benefit from refining your communications style and skills, contact [The Aerie Company](#) for support to build your personal market leadership.

New Links

Having the answers or knowing where to find them is what differentiates you and helps demonstrate value. Take a look at some of the new online resources we've identified which you may find helpful in learning more about strategy, communications and leadership.

<http://www.viacharacter.org> -- Gain more insight into your signature character and virtue with the VIA Surveys, the world's most scientifically validated tools to measure strengths of character. More than one million people have used them world-wide to learn more about their personal traits.

<http://www-935.ibm.com/services/us/ceo/ceostudy2010> - Get insights into the agendas and actions of global leaders who are "Capitalizing on Complexity" in the 2010 CEO Study on Leadership, sponsored by IBM.

See our website at www.aeriecompany.com for more links.

About The Aerie Company

At The Aerie Company, we help organizations and executives demonstrate their value and accelerate growth. Because it's challenging at the top, we show our clients how to go beyond where they are today and elevate their business and personal market leadership performance. We build a strategic stronghold with better understanding of your current market, an aligned and articulate vision, mission and strategy, a compelling position that resonates in the marketplace and effective communication so your stakeholders recognize your real benefits and value.



For more information, visit www.aeriecompany.com, email us at suzanne@aeriecompany.com or call 847-556-8873.

Watch for regular updates from [The Aerie Company](#) on best practices, advice on communication and leadership development, and other insights we gain as devoted lifelong learners to help you demonstrate your value and improve your performance.