



Volume 2, Issue 7

August 2011

Inspiration and ideas come from all around us. 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.



In This Issue

[No Vacation from Protecting Reputation](#)

[New Links](#)

[About The Aerie Company](#)

Quick Links



No Vacation from Protecting Reputation

*It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it.
If you think about that, you'll do things differently.*

Warren Buffett

Your brand is what you create, but your reputation is what you earn. That reservoir of goodwill to draw on when you need it is the most value asset for both companies and individuals. Yet a lifetime of good deeds solving customer problems, improving industries and helping our families and communities can wash away with a bad decision, lack of preparation, or assuming we can rest on our laurels.

Given the recent scandals, self-inflicted economic crises, recalls and poor judgment of people who don't think they should be accountable for their actions, you never get a vacation from reputation management. Riots in British cities create more than physical damage – there is a big job ahead to restore a reputation as a safe place to visit and do business, particularly with the upcoming Olympics. Rupert Murdoch's News Corp has tainted not only senior leaders and shareholders, but hard earned reputations of good employees, journalists and law enforcement. Toyota, a company that built its reputation on quality, is still recovering from a significant setback with a drop in approval rating from 80% a few years ago to less than 20% today. Questionable judgment has taken a toll on personal/business reputations as well – just ask Arnold, Anthony and Tiger.

It's Not All Bad Weather on the Reputation Front

Many companies do recognize the power of their reputation in purchasing decisions. In this year's [Harris Interactive](#) survey on [corporate reputation](#), the most reputable companies are those driven by innovation and corporate culture. In this annual poll Americans rated companies on 20 different attributes, including financial performance, emotional appearance, social responsibility and leadership. Technology companies garnered top spots ([Google](#), [Apple](#), [Amazon](#)). The lowest ranking companies were insurance conglomerates, banks and oil companies (AIG, BP, Bank of America).

With the growth of information outlets, there is no place to hide or take a vacation from managing reputation. With every encounter, your customers and colleagues make judgments and form opinions. So to avoid the shark attack to your reputation, here's how to make sure the water is safe:



- **Make a plan before you get in the water** – Managing your reputation must be a core mandate of your business. It requires a plan as well as a long term commitment to maintain it. If something happens that makes you start to sink, you don't want to be struggling to get back to the surface or desperately looking for the life preserver. Like the visibility and promise of value your brand demonstrates, reputation management requires a consistent approach to achieve results. Make sure your plan assesses all potential risks, detects early warning signs and lays out action steps to defend against shark attack-like events. Before Toyota's troubles, the company admits it lacked a formal employee communication program – many of their affiliates went about their business without connecting with other business units.
- **Check your moral compass** – Your reputation should be considered in each and every business decision you make, not just a reaction after you've fallen overboard. As a leader, you must be completely clear and consistently communicate your mission, vision and the ethics that drive your business. You have to be prepared to both talk the talk and walk the walk. Your employees, customers, regulators, investors and other stakeholders trust that you aren't leading them off an unconnected gangplank.
- **Stay aware of your surroundings** – Whether you find yourself swimming in familiar or new areas, always keep your eyes open above and below the waterline. Today it is easier than ever to get customer and industry feedback and monitor developing news stories, competitors and trends with tools like [Google Alerts](#), social media platforms and discussion groups. Your reputation plan should include ways to maximize what you learn and proactively push out positive and useful information that bolsters your image.
- **Everyone needs to learn how to swim** – Reputation is the job of everyone in the organization. Successful companies have recognized that they must have employees on board before they can expect customers and other external stakeholders to advance a reputation. Leaders need to lead by example and cultivate a culture that naturally engages employees to be company champions and customer advocates.
- **Don't panic** - For some, reputation isn't considered crucial until someone starts drowning. Activate your plan and be sure to apologize for the situation or inconvenience. Above all act transparently and be vigilant about communication externally as well as internally. If you lost course as some point, remember that reputation is based on your character. Get back to focusing on your core values and the heritage that helped you create your positive image. Recommit to being a better corporate citizen. Let your happy customers and alliance partners tell your story using their reviews and words as you communicate with your stakeholders.

In our connected world, there are no holidays for individuals and companies regardless of the industries or activities where you are engaged. Click [here](#) to let us know how you manage your reputation when you need to be away

need to be away.

If you need help identifying, articulating and communicating your value so you can manage your reputation, [contact](#) us at [The Aerie Company](#).

New Links

[Social Media Monitoring Tools to Enhance Business](#) – nice blog overview on 10+ tools and many are free.

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

About The Aerie Company

Because it's challenging at the top, The Aerie Company collaborates with organizations and executives to identify, articulate and communicate their value.

For more information on how we can help you build market leadership that demonstrates your distinctive benefits and communications impact, visit our website or contact us at info@aeriecompany.com.



Click here to check out previous insights from The Aerie Company on best practices, advice on communication and building market leadership.