

# *The Reputation Gap*

How to grow a reputation that delivers more  
profitable business

*Peter Roper*  
&  
*Lesley Morrissey*

Printed edition:  
Also available in multiple e-book formats.

Published by:  
The Endless Bookcase Ltd,  
Suite 14 STANTA Business Centre, 3 Soothouse Spring,  
St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL3 6PF, UK.

More information can be found at:  
[www.theendlessbookcase.com](http://www.theendlessbookcase.com)

Copyright © 2023 Peter Roper & Lesley Morrissey  
All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-1-914151-74-3

# Contents

---

Introduction	1
<b>Section 1 – How reputation management works</b>	
Chapter 1: What is reputation?	7
Chapter 2: Why is reputation important?	27
Chapter 3: What are people saying?	43
Chapter 4: How life has changed	57
Chapter 5: Establishing your reputation	71
Chapter 6: Taking control of your reputation	83
<b>Section 2 – How to manage <i>your</i> reputation</b>	
Chapter 7: Reputation management – the basics	99
Chapter 8: Reputation Management for the independent consultant or sole trader	115
Case study – Kevin Wright, Invisible Investors	124
Chapter 9: Reputation management for the SME	129
Case study – FBC Manby Bowdler	134
Chapter 10: Reputation management for the family business	137
Case study – Juke’s Insurance	146
Chapter 11: Reputation management for the corporate organisation	151
Case study – Dubai Duty Free	164

Chapter 12: Reputation management for social enterprises 169

Case study – Essex and Herts Air Ambulance Trust 178

### **Section 3 – How to create a great reputation**

Chapter 13: Opportunities to enhance your reputation 185

Chapter 14: Your reputation action plan 195

### **The authors**

Peter Roper 205

Lesley Morrissey 206

# Introduction

---

## **You never get a second chance to make a first impression**

How much attention do you pay to your reputation on a daily or even hourly basis? Do you walk the talk?

Although both of us talk about reputation as a critical factor in business, we have to put our hands up – we don't do everything right. However, there's a big case for awareness. If you don't know what you're doing – right or wrong – you can't improve things.

A century ago information travelled slowly, but since Tim Berners Lee invented the internet in the 1980s, information goes round the world in seconds.

In a generation life shifted dramatically. Our access to each other is just one aspect of the internet's impact. It also gives us access to information, not all of it accurate – but mostly, easy to check out. Old thinking doesn't do it anymore; you have to play the reputation game, whether you like it or not.

Your reputation can be permanently damaged by something as careless as a mis-posted tweet or a knee-jerk comment on LinkedIn.

## **Take a 360° view**

Your reputation is what people say about you – and you can influence that.

It isn't just about your social media posts.

It's how you present yourself at networking meetings and client meetings – your clothing, your attitude, your business card, your approach – they all have an impact on that all important first impression.

It's how helpful you are to other people. Whether that's a helpful comment on their post or an email offer of support when you know they need it.

It's what your clients tell others about you as a result of the service and treatment they've received.

It's about the quality of the material you publish on your blog, in your newsletters and on your website.

It's about your suppliers' experience of dealing with you.

It can even be about how clean your car is!

If you're serious about polishing your reputation to a fine shine, you need to look at yourself and your business from every angle.

## **Why did we write this book?**

Quite simply, because it's a subject we are both passionate about. We've seen people get it right and do really well; we've seen people get it spectacularly wrong and been wiped out, or had to struggle for a long time to be taken seriously again in their industry.

We have a question for you first:

### ***How serious are you – REALLY?***

If you are just dabbling, then this book is probably not for you. If you don't want to play, don't read any further. If you go to a seminar and then don't take action on what you've learned, we're probably not your kind of people!

However, if you want to really get it right, you must be prepared to take it seriously. If you think it's important to manage your reputation, then we hope you'll find plenty of useful ammunition in the pages that follow.

Where are you at in creating and managing your reputation? Are you just thinking about it, or have you arrived at the planning or taking action stage?

## **What this book IS**

This book will give you plenty to get your teeth into – and a few things to think about. By the time you’ve got to the end you will have everything you need to develop and create a first class reputation (and, perhaps, plug the odd gap).

If you are one of those people who want to get down to it super-fast, there is a plan in Chapter 14. However, we recommend that you do the job properly and start with Section One, which gives you an overview and a host of tools and techniques you can apply to yourself and your organisation.

Section Two provides you with a guide on how to start managing your reputation. We have advice for sole traders, independent consultants, small businesses, corporate organisations and social enterprises. You’ll pick up some useful tips if you read all the chapters – but if you’re in a hurry by all means just read the one that is most appropriate to your business.

We’ve written the book in a conversational style. It can be picked up and put down, referred to when necessary and, if you like, scribbled in, highlighted and underlined. If you’re reading on an electronic device of some kind, make sure you have a notepad handy to jot down your thoughts as you go.

## **What this book ISN’T**

It’s *not* a guide to deal with the media. Most people don’t have to think about being interviewed on TV, radio or for the press, although in today’s

world you are making your own news, so a knowledge of how the media works isn't a bad thing to have.

It isn't technical – it's straightforward and all advice that anyone can follow – if they choose to.

It's not going to tell you what your reputation should be. There are different perceptions of each of us; some people are great in some people's eyes, but not so great in the opinions of others (consider any politician). The aim is that you should aim to be consistently the best you can be.

In the end, nobody can do this for you – it's down to you. How important is your reputation to you? That's the million-dollar question.





# Section

How reputation management works

# Chapter 1: What is reputation?

---

Almost everybody is concerned about their reputation.

Most of us are keen to have a good one for a wide variety of reasons – from wanting to impress our peers to influencing potential employers or clients.

Some people cultivate a bad reputation to intimidate the people they want to control.

Everyone is anxious to ensure their reputation is maintained and remains undamaged as far as possible – although they may not admit it. How many times have you heard someone say ‘I don’t care what people say about me’? You may have said it yourself – but most of us do care, especially about how those people see us who we are close to or want on our side.

So, what is reputation? Is it what we do? What we say? How we behave? *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines ‘reputation’ as *the beliefs or opinions that are generally held about someone or something*. Also as *a widespread belief that someone or something has a particular characteristic*.

Wikipedia says: **Reputation** *of a social entity (a person, a group of people (an organisation) is an opinion about that entity, typically a result of social evaluation on a set of criteria. It is important in education, business, and online communities.*

*Reputation may be considered as a component of the identity as defined by others.*

Quite simply, reputation is really **what people say about us.**

## What have you heard?

Reputation is based on what people say about you, but also what you say about others – and, more to the point, what you hear about other people. You may never have met someone, but you already have an impression of them based on what you've heard – in the media and from other people. You will have opinions of organisations and individuals that are famous even if you've never experienced or met them yourself.

Let's look at our own lists:

### Worldwide organisations

	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Reason for rating</b>
Virgin	9	Inspirational, modern, exciting
Apple	9	Leading edge, state-of-the-art, new, funky
BBC	7	Respectable, reliable, good quality
Amazon	8	They're transactional, but incredibly efficient
Cadburys	7	Family oriented, community based (would have been higher before they 'sold out' to Kraft)
Tiffanys	8	High quality, fabulous jewellery, premium, luxury items
Microsoft	5	Good products, but known for glitches and using the public to iron them out, feeling that they're taking over
Comic Relief	9	Involvement, good cause, enthusiasm, fun, can see the difference made with donations
YouTube	8	Search engine, learning, music, entertainment
Aldi	9	Family business, and the Aldi story is fascinating. Good quality, good pricing, clever

marketing, know what they are and are proud of it.

Remember that this was our list and there's no right or wrong – the lists are very subjective. These numbers change depending on circumstances, incoming information and even what's happened to you on any particular day; for instance, whilst you may love Cadbury's chocolate, if you're embarking on a diet, your view of it is likely to be less rosy!

We noticed that our list was predominantly positive; organisations we felt good about.

Our next list for high profile people:

## Famous people

	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Reason for rating</b>
Richard Branson	9	He is everything Virgin stands for – an adventurer, someone who bucks the establishment and succeeds
HM Queen Elizabeth II	9	As the matriarch of the ultimate family business, we had to include the late Queen, who built a worldwide reputation for diplomacy and stability during her 7+ decade reign
Bill Gates	8	Whilst Microsoft is taking over the world, Bill Gates has invested a huge amount of his fortune in a charitable trust and is trying to do his bit to help the disadvantaged. His personal reputation has improved as a result.
Barack Obama	7	Seems to be pragmatic, demonstrates he has a sense of humour, appears to be dedicated

		to a difficult job. Having a wife the media loves and who knows exactly how to please them contributes to his reputation too; perhaps we are a sum of our parts!
Michelle Obama	9	Her influence worldwide has remained high even since leaving the White House. She campaigns for women and diversity and has been at the top of the Gallup poll for the most admired woman in America for several years.
Simon Cowell	7	Whether you love or hate him, he is undeniably successful and has charisma.
Terry Wogan	9	Warm and cuddly image, but much respected by his broadcasting colleagues who still talk about him years after his death. The BBC even renamed their BBC Centre – Wogan House.
Ant & Dec (Anthony McPartlin OBE and Declan Donnelly OBE)	9	Although Ant, in particular, has had some challenges, their reputation is Teflon-coated and they are still the most popular entertainers and multiple award winners (43 National TV awards – 21 times in a row, 19 BAFTAs and 32 TV Choice Awards as of October 2022) in the UK. They come over as likeable, fun and certainly don't take themselves too seriously.
Claudia Winkleman	8	Despite her ditsy image of being a bit scatter-brained, she is smart and sharp, but

doesn't mind taking the mickey out of herself.

David Beckham	9	Football fans love him for his undeniable sports skill, others like his self-effacing personality and dedication to doing things that are good for the community. He is an ambassador for UNICEF and Malaria No More and is still highly visible.
---------------	---	---

People are often harder to rate – there's more emotion invested in a person than an organisation. This makes the opinions far more subjective. We know several people who have avid fans and equally strong adversaries: the Marmite factor!

### Activity

Let's play a game – you'll need a notepad or some paper and a pen for this. In fact, plenty of paper to scribble on and a pen or pencil is definitely going to be useful as you read this book.

Write the numbers 1-10 down the left-hand side then think of 10 world-famous organisations – and give each one a score out of 10 – one being poor reputation and 10 being universally top notch.

We'll be asking you to think further about your answers.

Now do the same exercise for famous people. Famous business people, film stars, pop personalities, TV presenters, actors – anyone you like. Mark them out of 10 for their reputation, too.

Do the same exercise with companies that you know – ones that you have experience of locally or with whom you have done business.: list 10 and rate their reputations based on what you have heard or know.

Did you struggle to think of 10 companies? Did you find companies with good or bad reputations were easier to think of? Hold that thought!

The last group to list are people you know. Think about individuals that you actually know, whether they are business owners, people you have seen presenting training or seminars, people you know through networking, friends and family.

We all know lots of people; they're around us every day, at home, at work, where we socialise, at meetings, training sessions, in shops and offices. In fact, you probably found it hard to know who to put on your list and who to leave out. You may even have found your list has sneaked past that number 10 we mentioned earlier! Don't worry. If it has, nobody's checking.

Now you should have four lists, with a rating next to every entry. The next bit in the game is harder, but give it some thought. Let's make it a bit easier – take the organisations or individuals with the highest and lowest rating on each list and jot down what made you rate them high or low.

- What have you heard about them?
- What have they done that makes you feel they deserve the rating you've given them?
- Is this a personal view or is it fairly universal – as in, do you think most people would agree with your opinion?

This is probably going to take you some time – and some of your answers will be harder to pin down than others. Well-known organisations and celebrities are probably easier as there is plenty of press coverage and factual data to support your choices. The people

and companies around you are usually harder to describe as your opinion will be much more subjective.

How are you doing?

## What makes you an avid fan?

On your lists of companies and people you know there will almost certainly be those of whom you are an avid fan. The reasons for them being there are usually more to do with their attitude than their competence.

### **Peter's story**

*Why did I drive 35 miles out of my way to go to a tyre bay when these services were available much nearer to home?*

*I've been going to A44 Tyres for 15 years, originally recommended by someone else and they were closer to where I used to live. The first time I took the car in I said 'I think it probably needs four new tyres'.*

*'No,' they said. 'You only need two.'*

*I was staggered because I had worked with the motor industry for many years and I know that lots of stories are true – but there are some very good companies.*

*A44 Tyres in Worcester have never let me down – and they have been exactly the same with umpteen people that I've sent to them over the years. They never rip you off, they just do the job right.*

*Their reputation is renowned throughout Worcestershire. I still go to them for my tyres – more than a decade from my first visit and I've lost count of the number of people I've recommended them to.*



## **What about you?**

It's time to turn this around and look at you.

Now we're getting to the point where it's really difficult for you to be objective. Most of us only know what people tell us and it can be hard to differentiate between flattery and objective feedback!

It's time for some tough questions! Get your notebook out and let's do some more assessments.

## **Tough question one – what about your business?**

You've worked hard to establish a business and most of us want it to be a respected company that people are happy to recommend. How do you currently rate your business – this is your personal opinion?

You'll have had some feedback if you've been in business for a year or two so:

## **How do you think others rate your business?**

What do your clients, competitors, business associates and suppliers think about your business?

If you've got lots of testimonials from your clients about how great they think you are that's a good start, but if all your clients were asked to carry out the rating exercise you've just done do you think that:

- You'd be on their list as one of the first companies/people they thought of?
- Your rating would be 8 or above?

Assuming you're on their list what would their comments be about you and your company? Do you think that their comments and ratings would be what you'd like them to be?