

Expert advice and guidance from the
Communications Sector

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

MEET OUR EXPERT

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Conscious Communications is a public relations and marketing agency, with a conscience.

Founded on the principles of a conscious business, the company's open and transparent approach ensures it makes clear and conscious decisions for its clients that are proven to achieve positive results and help drive business.

The team provides strategic development, external communication and reputation management, internal communication, crisis and issues management support. They work with clients in many sectors including education, professional services, leisure and tourism, property and construction, sustainability, not for profit, food and nutrition and retail.

Get in touch at www.consciouscomms.com

Would you like to get involved with our Communications Sector? Do you have ideas for future events or expertise to share in a guide like this?

Please get in touch with Helen Bosett, Sector Co-ordinator at Cambridgeshire Chambers of Commerce on 01733 370809 or email h.bosett@cambscci.co.uk

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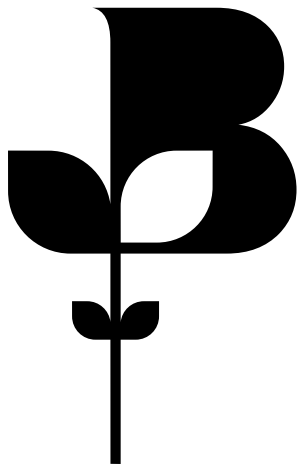
Your reputation - why it's important

There is no doubt that companies with strong reputations are seen to provide more value, can charge more for their products, promote customer loyalty and attract better people to work for them.

Your company's reputation is very precious and your failure to protect it could be your downfall.

Reputations rely on the perceptions of stakeholders – customers, suppliers, business partners and employees. In protecting your reputation it is important to ensure that the reality of your business matches and continues to match these perceptions as it grows. It is also important to understand that as the world around us changes, the views and demands of stakeholders will also evolve, so what your company offers needs to change too. A gap between perceptions and reality will lead to disgruntled stakeholders and a damaged reputation.

The best approach to reputation management is to ensure there's nothing negative to say and that no one is saying it – this can be easier said than done. A good reputation must be earned and once established needs constant attention.



Top tips for building and managing your reputation

- 1 Company mission and values**

A strong reputation starts with a clear mission and set of values which the whole company buys into and lives by. If you can demonstrate a set of clearly articulated values and know that your company's behaviour mirrors these, then you're well on the way. The things that will impact your company's reputation span right across the organisation, from the way that you answer your phones, to your credit control systems.
- 2 Products and services**

Your company's reputation depends on the quality and consistency of what you offer your customers. If this isn't right, no amount of marketing spend will make your business grow.
- 3 People**

Every single person within your business needs to understand and feel part of the mission and values, and of the company's growth and success. Put a thorough induction plan in place for new staff and implement a training and internal communications programme to keep everyone on-side.
- 4 Manage and learn from mistakes**

Things can and do go wrong – we are only human. So it's important to monitor and predict where weaknesses may be and have plans in place to deal with problems quickly and effectively.
- 5 Communicate**

Building strong relationships with your customers is very important - when your reputation is in question, loyal customers can provide an important 'balance' to any negative noise around your company. Also, customers who are engaged with you and your company are more likely to let you know in a 'helpful' way when things are not as they would hope.

- 6 Divide personal from professional**

Keep personal matters private and well away from social media to help protect the reputation of your business. A social media policy will help to guide your employees and ensure they understand what is and isn't acceptable behaviour.
- 7 Get Social**

Develop an effective social media strategy that will help you to monitor the views and opinions of your customers. Learn a lesson from the big brands which are now using social media channels for their front line customer service.
- 8 Take responsibility**

Now more than ever, stakeholders expect your business to deliver more than just profit. They are looking for evidence of how your business is maximising its positive impact on the communities in which it operates and minimising its negative impact on the environment. So, develop a corporate social responsibility plan and make sure your stakeholders are aware of it.
- 9 Media training**

Make sure key spokespeople have had relevant media training and are able to manage media interviews if the company's reputation is questioned.

