

Reputation management buy in

By [Deon Binneman](#)

14 Apr 2004

Reputation management expert and trainer Deon Binneman shares his insight into encouraging operations to accept full ownership of company reputation.

How do you get management to buy into the fact that Reputation is both an asset and major risk to the organisation?

A starting point is sensitization. You have to get management to attend at least some training/workshop sessions so that they can understand its relative importance. Yet in many organisations it is normally senior management that cannot find the time to attend these workshops. Is it because they know it all? Countless corporate governance debacles illustrate that many reputation problems has its origins in strategy decisions gone wrong.

Waterfalls flow top to bottom... ownership of reputation has to start with top management. They need to make it a priority and set the example through their attention to it and application of corporate responsible practices. Reputation Culture change requires 'executive walk the talk' or culture shaping by role modelling. If the executive team does not live out the values, norms, beliefs, customs, traditions and ethics, etc, that constitute placing a premium on reputation, then any change in culture is a none starter.

An accent on what is important in terms of company reputational values, beliefs, etc, needs to be constantly reinforced through symbolic representation and active reinforcement (a walk, talk and live the brand approach). The communication must ensure the message is simple and consistent. The self-interest of all concerned comes into play and reward systems must support the changes envisaged. The same goes for punishment of behaviour not in line with that required.

Why did Warren Buffett the world's second richest man and most astute investor, (and considered THE Corporate Governance leadership example) say these words to Salomon Brothers after the trading scandal: "If you lose dollars for the firm by making bad decisions, I will be very understanding. If you lose reputation for the firm, I will be ruthless." An interesting example I once noted was a cost freeze in an organization, including salaries of staff - yet a number of top executives went on an overseas research tour. What message did that send out? People believe what they see and experience, not what they are told.

Reputation is a concept that needs to be sold to management, operations and staff. Every person tunes into one radio station, namely WIIFM: What is in it for me? You need to show them the personal, departmental and organisational benefits of reputation. For instance, when I do reputation presentations to management, I start the discussions by asking them what they think their reputation is in the market and workplace?

The rule is deceptively simple: When in doubt, over-communicate, using as many different techniques as possible. Let your

employees know how important the reputation is of the organisation. This should be done from recruitment stage and be reinforced constantly.

Editorial contact

REPUCOMM

Deon Binneman

ABOUT DEON BINNEMAN

Because your reputation matters.... Deon Binneman is a speaker, trainer and consultant in reputation management and strategic communications. As CEO & President of Repucomm, he speaks locally and internationally on issues affecting corporations and CEOs. Reach him at email: deonbin@icon.co.za, Phone/Fax: +27 011 4753515, Cell: 083 425 4318.

- Reputation management buy in - 14 Apr 2004
- How to prevent whistleblowers - 16 Jun 2003
- Strategic communication objectives - 1 Jun 2003
- Reputation is everyone's responsibility - 18 May 2003
- Current industry evaluation problematic - 4 May 2003

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>