

Regine le Roux - Why businesses need to prioritise effective communication

 By [Regine le Roux](#)

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The crux of building a successful reputation and business ultimately lies in your communication skills with all your stakeholders.



Image supplied. Regine le Roux of Reputation Matters says poor ineffective communication has external stakeholders feeling disconnected from organisations

Previously, and specifically the past three years, the key trend that we picked up across all our research studies - which included reputation quantification, brand identity and customer satisfaction as well as employee engagement - was the definitive need to focus on internal relationship building and employee wellbeing through internal dialogue.

This is something which is still an important component of reputation management and should continue to be a priority.

But what has started to raise its head from our 2023 research studies, is that external stakeholders are starting to feel a disconnect with organisations.

The main cause? Poor and ineffective communication.

Communication is therefore crucial to building successful internal and external relationships in 2024. Don't get me wrong, I don't think it is necessarily a lack of communication, but rather a lack of effective communication skills.

4 tips to guide communication in 2024

Here are four tips to guide your communication in 2024 to build closer relationships with your stakeholders.

1. Audience matters

More communication doesn't automatically equate to a close relationship. There is a disconnect between the amount of communication being developed and the bonds being forged.

Step one in building successful businesses in 2024 is to understand your stakeholders before you can start communicating with them. Not enough time is being spent on understanding and unpacking the needs of audiences. Or even, who those audiences are.

Your audience matters, understanding their needs is key to building strong relationships through communication. When last did you conduct an in-depth stakeholder mapping session with your clients to understand their needs? Do you know exactly who they are?

If you had to share a crisis communique with your stakeholders right this second, how much fumbling around for the right database lists and latest versions would there be before the message is shared?

Who would you phone, who would receive a WhatsApp and who would receive an email? The communication team would at minimum have a comprehensive media list, but are the lists for all your other stakeholders as easily accessible and up to date?



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2. Communication matters

What is quite interesting is that the reputation studies we conducted right after the pandemic in 2020 delivered the highest reputation scores to date.

Not only were the overall reputation scores high, but the corporate dialogue component of a reputation (internal and external communication) had scored considerably higher than in previous years and has subsequently dwindled as people returned to work in an office environment.

The reason for this is that due to most people working from home, companies had to be very specific about their messaging and who to engage with.

It seems that companies are reverting to generalised communication in the hope that a 'spray and pray' approach will be the magic wand to get their messages out there and foster a closer relationship with their stakeholders at the same time.

3. Relationship matters

Authentic relationship building in an ever-growing artificial world will become even more crucial to your reputation. People want to do business with people, and nothing breaks trust or ruins a reputation as quickly as being inauthentic.

With the greater focus on and use of artificial intelligence (AI), refining your message is much easier these days, but you still need to understand your audience and plug in the right instructions and context to get a customised approach to engage with your stakeholders.

AI certainly will continue to save a lot of time but it should be viewed as a facilitation tool, rather than a replacement for personalised messages. Nothing can replace human interaction and to build relationships that matter, you must connect with your stakeholders in a personalised, authentic manner.



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4. Insight matters

Talking about AI, we are fully aware that there are numerous tools and programmes out there that allow companies to conduct their research, however, investing in expert advice is a necessity in building relationships in 2024.

Research might look easy, but it is not that simple. We are seeing an increase in the value of research and anticipate even more companies wanting to be able to quantify their value; be it reputations, brand identity, employee engagement or customer satisfaction.



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However, if you want to conduct your research, there are great research support tools out there that will help you to conduct your research, just keep these three key things in mind:

- Research is more than just asking questions; you need to ask the right questions. Shorter questionnaires are the way to go, that's why it is even more important to ask the right questions, to gain the most valuable feedback from respondents in a short period.
- Research isn't just about pie charts and data analysis; insights are important to add value to your investment and the time your respondents are investing in providing you with their feedback.
- Research shouldn't just be a once-off exercise; researching on an annual basis is key to continuous growth and improvement. Use the results to make the recommended changes; measure your success and identify areas for improvement. It's a great way to measure year-on-year performance and a powerful tool to present your success in percentages around the boardroom table.

ABOUT REGINE LE ROUX

Regine is a reputation specialist. She founded Reputation Matters in 2005; where they measure and manage companies' reputations using their unique Repudometer® measurement tool.

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