

WHEN CORPORATE TRUST IS BROKEN ...

"If you once forfeit the confidence of your fellow citizens, you can never regain their respect and esteem." Abraham Lincoln, 1842.

By Jeffrey Remsik, President/CEO
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Trust certainly is not a new concept. What is new is its growing dominance as the defining issue in corporate reputation and bottom-line success.

A recent Harris Interactive survey provided a sobering insight into how consumers react when they feel that companies have betrayed the public trust. A whopping 82 percent of those surveyed said they have or would stop using a company's products because their trust was betrayed.

'No Comment' = Cover-up

In a different but related survey by Hill & Knowlton Opinion Research Corporation, 82 percent of the respondents identified the media as their primary source of information about corporate malfeasance. The survey also revealed that:

- Nearly 62 percent believed a company was covering up its errors if its spokesperson replied "no comment" to news media inquiries.
- Nearly 45 percent said a company probably has engaged in illegal acts if a governmental agency has launched an investigation.
- More than 50 percent said they would be less likely to buy a company's products if the company is accused of a misdeed in a lawsuit.

Dimensions of Trust

The Harris Interactive survey uncovered five basic dimensions of trust:

- Deference. Most people trust a company until given a reason not to.
- Reference. People are more likely to trust a company that has a well-defined reputation or is recommended by someone whom they believe is credible.
- Quality. People trust companies whose products or services have a quality look and feel to them.
- Personal Experience. Companies typically have only one or two chances at meeting a customer

need before the consumer no longer trusts that brand.

- Organizational Knowledge. Consumers are more likely to trust companies with proven leadership and respected people in management.

The implications are clear. To build consumer trust, corporate leaders should focus on improving those dimensions of trust they can control. Corporations and their leaders must:

- Achieve results
- Act with integrity
- Demonstrate concern

No amount of reputation management will replace doing what is right. At the same time, it is important to communicate clearly and consistently about your company's results, integrity and concern.

PR Adds Third Party Credibility

In today's information age, external forces, such as advocacy groups, the media, regulators, politicians and community leaders, have a much larger impact on how a company sells its products, how it conducts its day-to-day business and how it is perceived in the marketplace. Public relations can influence all of these external forces with its unique ability to add third-party credibility to virtually any company or product message.

Bottom Line Marketing & Public Relations, Inc. helps clients:

- Enhance their corporate identity and reputation;
- Create greater awareness of their products, services and expertise;
- Strengthen relationships with strategic stakeholders, such as the media, community, employee, financial and governmental audiences; and
- Build employee, customer and investor loyalty.

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We are creative problem solvers. We work well under pressure. We meet our deadlines, and we keep our promises. **That's our bottom line.**

"Real success, both for big business and the public, lies in the enterprise conducting itself in the public interest and in such a way that the public will give it sufficient freedom to serve effectively. This is done by telling the truth, proving it with action, listening to the customer, and conducting public relations as if the whole company depends upon it."

- Arthur W. Page, Vice President of AT&T from 1927 to 1944.

Enhance your corporate reputation with strategic public relations directly linked to your business objectives. **Contact Jeffrey Remsik** at: 414-270-3000, ext. 222, or jremsik@blmpr.com

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