

The barrel is spoiled - Who's the rotten apple?

How to fulfill your role in managing the reputation of your organisation

Professor Eddie Obeng

It's been a month and a half. The CEO quit, well he had to. The stock price is down by 40%. The organisation is being investigated. And given the way that sales have fallen as customers boycott the organisation, mass redundancies can't be that far behind. Anyway, many of the key staff are already resigning because they don't want to be associated with the organisation's name - doesn't look good on the CV. All this and you know it's all your fault. Well not entirely your fault. I mean if the Director of External relations hadn't cut out all communications with the journalists maybe they wouldn't have had to make things up - maybe they wouldn't have dug so deep. But wasn't it amazing the speed at which it all went out of control? Within hours the story was all over the news, there were reporters camped out on the steps of head office. And if your sponsor hadn't encouraged you to stretch the truth about the level of overspend on the project...

When things go wrong with an organisation's reputation they go wrong in a big way. The recent drop in the value of Google's share price was put down to technical issues with its tax position by analysts but we all know that the once-proud shining reputation of the business which said it would 'Do No Evil' was wrecked by their commercial decision to assist the Chinese government in keeping its

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people in the dark. The possibility of the stadium at Wembley not being ready for the FA Cup has already ruined the reputation of the construction companies involved. The inability of NASA to recognise that it was using the wrong O-rings has reduced public interest and their own self confidence to the point where the number of missions flown has been decimated. Shell may provide cast iron pensions but who wants any friend or colleague to know that they are living on one - from a business which simply 'makes up' its reserves? The list goes on.

I may lose customers and market share but if I lose the good name of Coca Cola, I lose everything

CEO

Our fast changing global world is almost back to the old wild west. In that turbulence the only way you really knew if what you were getting was what you expected was by checking the marks on the bottles of potions and snake oil and the brands on the beef you were about to buy.

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