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**Creating a Reputation**

**By Marcia Yudkin**

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Want to shorten the sales cycle for your professional services? Want pre-sold prospects who need fewer or no face-to-face meetings before hiring you? Create a reputation.

Recently a room full of consultants agreed that you had to meet with potential clients at least twice -- better, three times -- before winning the business. "Then how do you get business outside the area?" someone asked. The consensus: Forget it.

Yet I've been hired by companies in Australia and elsewhere without even phone calls, much less a face-to-face. Like nearly all my most congenial clients, they weren't choosing candidates to compare with one another. They weren't shopping, weren't engaged in a systematic search. If hunting, they stopped when they found me. Or they hadn't thought of spending money on their problem until my reputation gave them the idea.

Publishing books, as I've done, is just one way to establish a reputation that pre-sells prospects on what you can do for them. For image consultant Mary Lou Andre of Needham, Massachusetts, a reputation-building tool has been her Web site. In addition to descriptions of her services, her site at <http://www.dressingwell.com> chronicles the media publicity she's received and highlights her approach to fashion through profiles of prominent individuals and corporations that she's helped.

"Last fall I closed a national retail chain that found us on the Web and e-mailed us in June," says Andre. "When I told them I was about to give birth, they said they'd wait. In September, they signed the contract. We never met face to face! They modeled the entire project after the work I did for Bose Corporation, which is featured on our Web site. I firmly believe our reputation (and Web site) closed the deal."

For translation industry consultant Sarah Pilgrim of Wilsall, Montana, a reputation-building tool has been a

half-page ad she's run for years in a trade journal for translators. A signed testimonial in it from someone in the business and a credential of having been in the business herself for 20+ years gives her high credibility with her target market.

"When translation agency owners read my bio, they recognize the name of the translation company I founded and sold, which has a good reputation," Pilgrim adds. "When they call to find out more, they can tell I know the business. And therefore when I've gone to visit clients it's always been as a paid consultant, with the client footing the bill."

Whether you use publishing, the Internet, advertising, promotional newsletters or media coverage to build a reputation, it takes time. Each piece of visibility reinforces previous effects. With a reputation, you get more inquiries like "Do you do...?" and fewer along the lines of "We're looking for a \_\_\_\_\_ who does..." With a reputation, pre-sale meetings drop to one or zero. E-mail or phone exchanges can suffice. Powerful stuff!

### **Character or Reputation**

**By Norman Lawrence**

Character or Reputation. When we see these two words together, we often mistakenly believe that you cannot have one without the other.

Reputation in a nutshell is what others around us think of us. It is really the opinion that is held by others concerning who we are, and the motives they believe we have in doing what we do. We can have a "good" reputation, or a "bad" reputation. However, we must realize that either of those are

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relative, and a "good" or "bad" reputation is only in the eye of the beholder.

Much more valuable is our Character. Character in a nutshell, is who we are when no one is looking. It is not just the face in the mirror, but the "face behind the face". A person with Godly character is one who can stand fast in the face of false accusations, insinuations, slander, and ridicule. They remain rock solid in the midst of these things, even though the hurt may be real, the despair and depression cannot take hold of them, and bring them to defeat.

When Joseph was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife in the Old Testament, and was thrown from a high place of honor in the palace, into prison, one might say that his "reputation" was destroyed. "He said, she said..." He spent 12 long years in prison, the "victim" of unfounded allegations. However, his character remained strong! Even in prison, he did not languish in bitterness, and look for ways to seek revenge on those who had hurt him. He knew his day would come. Character knows no time restraints.

As you know, his day did come, and he became second in command in Egypt, and was in charge of food distribution during a great famine that he had prophesied would take place.

Reputations come and go. Character will hold you through the storms. Develop character, and you will never have regrets.

Norman Lawrence  
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