

THE 8 GOLDEN RULES OF E-REPUTATION

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The 8 golden rules of an e-Reputation

I've been updating these Golden Rules every other year since 2010. While the main thrust of the rules has not evolved drastically between editions, there's certainly been a huge change since the first one I wrote ten years ago. For starters, the tools have virtually all changed. What hasn't moved so much is the underlying mindset. The *why* you construct your presence and the content that surrounds your identity must remain coherent and congruent with who you are and your ambition. In this 2020 version, you will discover 8 Golden Rules, one that now feels urgent and necessary given the current state of social media.

In managing your e-Reputation, as with any activity that requires an investment of resources, it is essential first to establish the objectives. With the tools becoming increasingly sophisticated, it is possible to benchmark and measure the evolution in your e-Reputation. There are three levels to assess: your **presence** (quantitative), **content** (qualitative) and **trust** (depth). At a minimum, in tackling an e-Reputation, it is essential to consider building your e-Reputation as a long-term endeavour.

In principle, whether you are working on behalf of a company, a brand or your own person, the management of an e-Reputation is, at its core, a personal labour. Given the requirement of transparency on the Internet and the democratization of social media, when we speak of the e-Reputation of a company, the personal presence of executives on the Internet is becoming not just important, it can be a proxy stamp of authenticity.

I am inclined to believe that having a leader's strong personal profile online can be a significant competitive advantage. To the extent that presence helps to attract and/or retain employees *and* customers, what counts is the character and texture of the presence, the authentic personal qualities and human tone. Behind a Twitter account, there is a person. Behind a Blog, there is someone's penmanship. On a LinkedIn account, there are personal convictions and curated content. And at the head of the company, there is a personality, someone who should embody its spirit and have the courage to present a whole picture.

The 8 Golden e-Reputation Rules

1 / **Define who you are.** Even with the best of intentions, you will never have exactly the presence you want. In contrast, the more you have a clear idea of the message you would like to transmit, the better you can define your online editorial line, and thus your e-Reputation.

Good tips: Keep the same user name everywhere. Namechk.com is a good resource to see what names might be available. Also, choose an up-to-date and professional photo that you use consistently across the different social media platforms.

2 / **Be yourself.** To have a strong presence – where your messages will be shared and amplified in social networks - it is important to provide content that is trustworthy and noteworthy with substantive value-added commentary. You must imagine yourself as a **creator of shareable and valuable content**. The key is to let your personality shine through.

Good tips: Don't be afraid to have your say on issues where you have legitimacy. Display your passions and interact with other fans on those same passions. Participate (comment and/or post) in relevant groups on LinkedIn or other platforms such as Facebook Groups, Medium.

3 / **Your online presence will become your resumé.** Beyond a simple online CV or profile on LinkedIn, you must consider your participation in online conversations – especially on relevant topics – as part of your reputation. Depending on your profile, expertise and passions, it is essential to occupy the territory with thoughtful content.

Good tip: For the best information to rise to the surface, create a specific space where you can isolate the publications, links and recommendations that you would like to feature. A great and free tool where you can harbour all your information is about.me.

4 / **Your network defines you.** With the integration of social networks in search engine results, increasingly, people with whom you are connected will play a decisive role in the elements that stand out when people are looking for you or the topics on which you need to be present. Your network should play an important role in helping you and your content to rise to the surface.

Good tips: Think to give before expecting something in return. This is a fundamental karmic principle for creating a long-lasting powerful network. For example, you might first write recommendations on LinkedIn for good allies from your professional past, and *then* ask for a reciprocal recommendation. Make sure that your profile on LinkedIn is well filled out. Put your skills in full evidence. Depending on where you live, you may want to consider local networks such as Xing (Germany) or Viadeo (France).

5 / **Develop your online presence as a smörgåsbord.** Your e-Reputation must have width as well as well as depth. It is worth being present on a relatively broad yet strategic

set of sites. To the extent that each platform on which you are represents a different source (and URL), you will maximize your appearance at the top of the search pages. However, don't stretch yourself too thin where you can't keep each site active and up-to-date.

Good tips: Set up accounts on the social media sites such as Twitter and YouTube as well as "social bookmarking" sites such as [Pocket](#) or [Digg](#). Another site would be the Question & Answer forum [Quora](#). Platforms such as [Medium](#) and [LinkedIn](#) represent interesting ways to spread your own content if you enjoy writing articles.

6 / Think multimedia. An e-Reputation is not just in text. On search engines, there are two other critical tabs to fill: *image* and, especially, *video*. If video is not yet the automatic reflex for the older generations, it certainly is for the younger ones... A good video that is well tagged and visible can be a very powerful asset.

Good tips: On images and videos, it is important to associate the correct tags with your name. Search engines index these images and videos by text (tags). Prepare and record short videos on topics you know well and post these to YouTube, Vimeo and Daily Motion (in particular, for France). While it is important to get your message right, don't try too hard. Imperfections and authenticity will garner more trust.

7 / Don't fall asleep at the wheel (or text, of course). Either through laziness, lack of time or sheer recklessness, it's easy to let time pass by before *googling* yourself. That is a mistake. In the meantime, the algorithms change, other content arrives and your presence evolves. While the best strategy is to be proactive by creating the presence that you want, it is clear that other persons or entities may provide content on you. Thus, you must be careful. Remember, you can never completely control your e-Reputation.

Good tips: Sign up for some easy and free tools, such as [Google Alerts](#) (blogs, news) or [Hootsuite](#) (that has a robust dashboard that can help keep tabs across many social media platforms), to help you stay informed on what's being said about you in near real-time.

8 / Sunsetting past profiles. As the years pass by, social networks and media sites come and go. Whether it's a blog on which you've decided no longer to publish, a social network on which you are no longer active or a podcast you no longer host, you must consider the impact of old or fallow material on your e-Reputation. If the content or social media profile no longer represents you, it is advisable to take the site down rather than let it live on.

Good tip: Keep a repertoire (in a secure location with your username and passwords) of all the sites where you've opened an account. It's probably worth closing down those defunct accounts when their material is out-of-date or unrepresentative.

*"Make sure that your audio is aligned with
your video." – Robin Sharma*

Bottom Line: Your e-Reputation needs to reflect who you are. It is important that your online presence be *in line* with your offline reputation. The good news is that, more often than not, you do not need to pay out money to improve your online presence. It does, however, take thought, time and effort. One key consideration in evaluating the tools/platforms in which you decide to invest, the more popular sites will generally appear higher up in the search results than your own eponymous blog. There are agencies that are specialized in building, improving or repairing e-Reputation, but don't sit back and be a victim of a poor e-Reputation. Furthermore, it may be easier to delegate out your online presence, but beware that you are handing out a portion of your personality.

In any event, I encourage you to proactively start now!

Check out these stellar examples of business leaders:

Here are a few excellent examples of well-mastered personal e-Reputations by CEOs despite (because of) their busy schedule:

- [Nicolas Bordas](#), VP International of TBWA Worldwide, [who blogs in French](#).
- [Michel-Édouard Leclerc](#), President of E.Leclerc (supermarkets) in French
- [Richard Branson](#), CEO of Virgin, who manages to [blog](#), too.
- [George Colony](#), CEO of Forrester. Check out his [blog](#).

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