

[REPUTATION VS CHARACTER]

MONDAY MAY 5, 2008

WORK WISE - A fortnightly column by Rahul Kapoor

Reputation is important to many people and they do everything they can to build and/or protect it. People get involved in various public relation and social contact activities to ensure that they are being spoken about and seen in places of importance. They say or do things to look good in public life and not because they really feel for it.

Like, for example, we come across people who always speak very politely while at work but are very rude while talking to people at home or people who fight for social causes but cannot do justice to people at home. Haven't we come across those who act very pious in the society and yet secretly involve themselves in unhealthy activities?

This breed of human being is very conscious about its reputation. They live in a world of drama, they pretend, they lie, they act in order to earn a good name but in reality they never gain inner peace and satisfaction. Their entire life is wasted trying to build and protect a false reputation.

John Wooden says 'be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are; your reputation is merely what others think you are.' This statement establishes a fact, that, your character is built by you but your reputation is created by people. So, spend time and effort on building a strong character and the reputation will get taken care off.

The word character is defined as - a description of a person's attributes, traits or abilities; moral or ethical strength. Character is your nature, who and what you are made up of inside. Character develops over time.

People's behavior can give you some indication of their character. For example, people with strong character will display passion, determination, will power, drive, energy and consistency. However, people with weak character will not be able to display any of these traits, yet, they may pretend that they possess these skills.

If you squeeze a mango, what comes out? Mango juice for sure. You cannot get orange juice from it, can you? What is inside comes out. In life you will be put through tough situations which will test your character and who you are as a person will come out.

Let us consider examples of cricketer Harbhajan Singh's slapping incidence, Bill Clinton's scandal with Monica Lewinsky, boxing champion Mike Tyson's ear biting episode and football legend Maradona's affair with drugs. Each of these acts created a dent in the person's reputation and it happened because of the weakness in their character.

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You may possess the skills and the abilities to succeed but if you are not ethically strong then you will have to pay a price for it.

When the false reputation fizzles and true character is exposed, life normally gives you a second chance to prove yourself and people with the basic substance latch on to it. They learn from their mistake and make genuine efforts to build a strong character like Bill Clinton did. He accepted his mistake openly and got back into his integrity. As life could have it he went on to develop a very strong character and continues to earn respect as a great statesman of our times.

But sometimes, in spite of doing your best people may still talk badly about you. You have to accept that you cannot stop people from creating their own perceptions and nor can you stop anyone from talking negatively about you. But if you are strong in your ethics and have faith in your abilities then you do not have to worry about anything because truth will prevail and you will always lead a happy life.

In conclusion, remember that reputation grows like a mushroom; character grows like an oak. It takes a long time to develop a great character but with commitment and efforts you can achieve anything. So, go on and build a strong character and allow people to create your reputation.