

### 3 Keys to Building and Keeping an Impeccable Reputation

Over the years I've developed these 3 keys to building and keeping a solid, impeccable reputation. Whether you are dealing with a customer, a client, a supplier, your neighbor, your wife or your kids these 3 simple, though not always easy, keys will always serve you well.

#### 1. Be open and honest.

Whenever you communicate with anyone, you make the underlying assumption that what you say will be believed. It's fundamental that for real communication to occur, the listener has to believe what the speaker is saying. Otherwise, everyone is just wasting his or her time. Always be open and honest. This doesn't mean to be belligerent or insensitive. You should be polite and tactful. But always be honest. Never plant a seed of doubt in your listener's mind. Never give your listener a reason to doubt what you say.

#### 2. Communicate, communicate, communicate.

Now that we know what it takes for meaningful communication to occur – use it. Never assume anything. You know the old saying “no news is good news”? Not! Wrong! Don't you believe it. I think it's just human nature that most people assume the worst. Don't let it happen. Write status reports. Pick up the phone. Send an email. Use the cc: field on those emails. It's a great way to give the same message to a lot of people at the same time. Most importantly, talk to people. There is still no better way to communicate than face to face. Eliminate assumptions. Too often assumptions lead to misunderstandings, which in turn lead to hard feelings, mistrust and ruined reputations. As I said in the 10 Laws of Design and Development if there is a problem, reveal it. If you have bad news, better that everyone learns it from you. Communicate!

#### 3. Under promise and over deliver.

Personally, this is the hardest key for me to master. I firmly believe that man's reach should exceed his grasp. We will always achieve more if we push ourselves to accomplish the difficult. However, while we want to push ourselves, we must be careful about how we communicate and how we set the expectations of others around us. Here is a great example. There are two suppliers who are almost equal in every way - quality, price, etc. The only difference is schedule and delivery. Supplier A promises to deliver in 3 weeks, but actually delivers in 4 weeks. Supplier B promises to deliver in 6 weeks, but actually delivers in 5 weeks. Which company will enjoy the better reputation as a quality, dependable supplier? Supplier B will. Even though in terms of real performance Supplier A is better. Supplier A will almost always be viewed as not meeting their commitments. Some will even say they lied to get the business. So always take your commitments seriously. Under promise and over deliver!

© Copyright 2005 Robert E. Utter. Bob Utter, Senior Consultant and owner of Innovative Thermal Solutions, LLC has over thirty years experience developing new mechanical and heat transfer technology, and holds 29 patents in the field.

<http://www.innovativethermal.com/index.html>  
[bob@innovativethermal.com](mailto:bob@innovativethermal.com)