How to enhance your reputation

The simple framework in the diagram below is based work by Prof. Adrian Furnham (over the years we've adapted this slightly). He maintained that there are 3 key areas that really contribute to whether people make it to the top.

- Your **ability/ personality** – do you have the capabilities, skills and traits required to be successful in a role (often what we recruit for)?
- Your **will** – you have to want it enough to make the choices and compromises that it takes to reach the top.
- Your **reputation**. In my view this can be what is referred to as *'being more visible'* in appraisals. It is about others' perception of who you are, your capabilities and what you do. The stories people tell when you aren't in the room.

Will
(you want it and
are willing to do what it takes)

Reputation
(How you are perceived)

Ability/ Personality
(you have the skills
And traits to be successful)
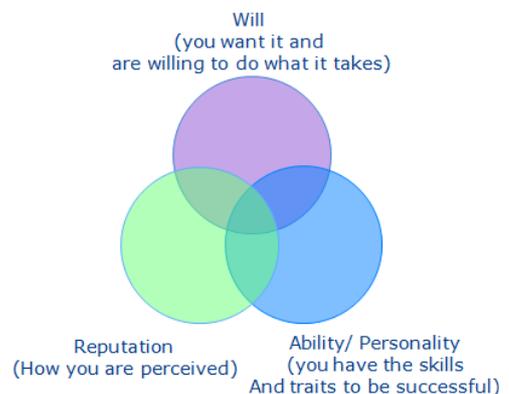
Many people make the mistake of thinking that this means you have to 'brown nose' or take the right people out for lunch. In fact, it is much less manipulative than that. Often people assume it's enough to do a great job and they will be noticed. Assuming that if you keep your head down and do a great job, you will get the rewards, recognition and roles you want is risky. It means your reputation circle is likely to be small and you may be overlooked for opportunities you would be ideal for because you are not visible enough.

In larger organisations, building a reputation is an important part of making your fullest contribution (and this may simply be about confidently articulating your contributions in meetings). Many organisations have highflyer schemes, advocacy programmes or succession plans which are designed to help achieve this and give you the exposure and reputation you need (for example on key projects).

So what could you do?

A good starting point is to map out your current network.

How could you enlarge your reputation circle? (Assuming you want to!)

We suggest you take time out to think strategically about your current network. Time is precious and doing this enables you to focus your efforts. First, it's worth identifying the key people you want to influence and then developing a plan/ strategy to shape this. One option you could use is a relationship map (see below).

This helps you to think about their issues and needs and how they like to operate (if you know a psychometric tool such as MBTI/ SDI/ Insights/ DISC you can use this as well). This means you think actively about what you could offer them/ how you could make their lives easy (as opposed to going in and telling them about you – which could feel naïve and pushy).

Developing your stakeholder/ networking map

- Draw your stakeholder map (illustration below).
- The larger the circle, the more important the relationship is to you.
- The longer the arrow, the less well you know that person.
- Pick up to 7 or 8 key stakeholders, both internal and external, then for each one, consider:
  - What are they like? What are their hot buttons?
  - How would I rate the quality of our relationship at the moment? (on a scale of 1-5)
  - What are their issues/ concerns/ challenges?
  - What do they expect/ need from me?
  - What do I have to offer? How could I help them?
  - Who might they connect me with?

Make a note of these on your map next to the circle that represents that person. If you don't know the answer – who do you know who could help you with this?
N.B. If you work more on discrete projects which have a finite lifespan, you can include current important stakeholders.
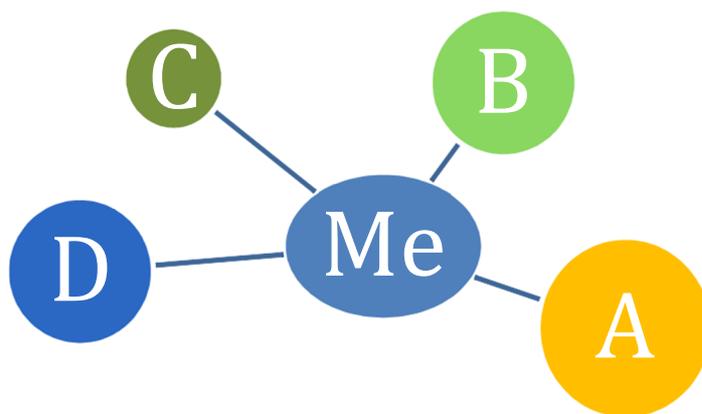
Take time to reflect: Is your network delivering value (for others, you and the organisation)?

- Which relationships would you like to strengthen and why?
- How diverse is your network?
- What role do your contacts play in your network? Do you have the right mix of strategic/ operational/ personal connections? (see 'How leaders create and use networks' by Herminia Ibarra and Mark Hunter)
- Who is missing/ out of your network? Who can connect you with them?

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