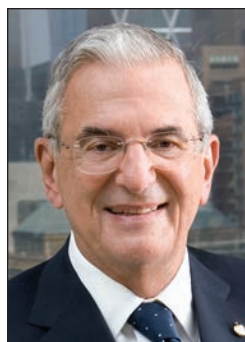


## Truth and Reputation

An Interview with  
Howard J. Rubenstein, President, Rubenstein Associates, Inc.

**EDITORS' NOTE** Howard Rubenstein founded Rubenstein Associates, Inc. in 1954. He serves on the executive committee of the Association for a Better New York, which he helped to found, and is a trustee of the Police Athletic League, the Foundation for the National Archives, and the Inner-City Scholarship Fund of the Archdiocese of New York. In addition, he is a Co-Founder and Vice Chairman of the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust. Rubenstein holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Pennsylvania and a doctorate of law from St. John's University School of Law. Early in his career, he served as Assistant Counsel to the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee.



Howard J. Rubenstein

**COMPANY BRIEF** New York-based Rubenstein Associates, Inc. along with Rubenstein Communications, Inc., and Rubenstein Public Relations, Inc., ([www.rubenstein.com](http://www.rubenstein.com)) represent a roster of more than 450 clients, including global corporations, media and entertainment companies, sports teams, financial services organizations, real estate concerns, educational and cultural institutions, law firms, health care providers, and not-for-profit organizations, as well as business executives and other public figures. Current clients include the New York Yankees, the Metropolitan Opera, New York-Presbyterian Hospital, and Tishman Speyer.

### Is this volatile time one of opportunity for your clients?

Many of my clients are putting their money into safe investments, waiting to see what they expect to be a significant turnaround.

Many others see New York and our entire country as a land of opportunity. When things are down, they look to make appropriate investments that can be of enormous value to them long-term.

I have a positive mindset. I think if we get through the next few years without any significant losses we'll be on our way to maintaining our position as the economic capital of the world.

### Are you surprised by how closely business leaders in New York City work together to better the city?

I see them as fierce competitors in a business sense; they will exert all of their energy and intellect in order to achieve their business goals.

But a healthy New York – and not just in terms of business but also the charitable activity and media flourishing here – is just as important.

So they look at New York as a partner for the future. As a result, they work together without a desire for individual glory.

### Why doesn't the positive message get out about all the good the private sector does?

New York doesn't always project itself as it really is. I attribute that to a desire to not appear self-serving.

When the players here are working towards a common goal, they think that because all of the media is here, the projection will happen on its own – it doesn't.

The competition for attention is fierce.

New York should and can do a much better job projecting its positive image nationally and internationally because that is where our future rests.

### How have client expectations changed and how has the agency evolved as a result?

At the beginning, when they were looking for a projection, they were satisfied with local attention.

My clients now look to project their ideas, their business, and their attention to charity on a broad international basis using modern day media – the media that with the click of a button will be delivered all over the world and will end up in places that still surprise me; places that you would not think would be interested and yet they are because they soak up news.

If you know how to make your projection and comments interesting when they hit the circuit, you will get thousands of pick-ups and your material will be read in every country in the world.

We're getting feedback from items we have put out here from every corner of the globe.

### With so much information available today, how tough is it to get the right message across?

When a client comes to me and we talk about their goals, I press them. Is it truthful? If your good name is worth everything to you, then you must draw an ethical line in the sand and refuse to cross it. If you cross it and do something devious, it will come back to haunt you.

So I have had little difficulty in convincing my clients, stick to the truth and be very

accurate and your reputation will grow, and you will tell your story more effectively.

Nevertheless, with so many people writing columns today, that doesn't mean they won't interpret what you say in their own manner, which can cause a problem.

### In such a competitive industry, how do you retain top talent?

They appreciate the ethical standard I set, because that's a value. Even if they leave, they carry that ethical banner with them. But they stay here because they know I'm not going to do something that is inappropriate.

We also have very interesting clients. Somebody in my field wants to be interested in what they do so I provide a high level of interest.

In addition, if I see someone has a talent that is different than what I hired him for, I try to accommodate that desire and ability.

With our different companies, we have well over 200 people and my door is virtually always open. I try to be responsive to the needs, goals, and aspirations of my staff.

### Are you happy with how people view communications and the value it brings?

When I started, the PR person was not at the executive table. I fought that to the point where now, I and many PR practitioners are in the board room helping them make the executive decisions.

The executive always wants to know how an idea will be received when it is projected. The communications people can interpret that.

### What makes someone successful in the communications field today?

I want to retain someone that wants to come into the field – not just get a job.

I'm also looking for a person who doesn't think of PR as tooting his own horn. I'm looking for people that are modest in their demeanor but intelligent so they can analyze a problem and figure out the communication solution to that problem.

I look for people that are good verbally or in their writing skills. But it doesn't have to be a skill aimed at public relations. I've hired people from all walks of life, as long as they have shown integrity and some skill that can be sharpened in our office.

### What do you hope people will say about you?

That he was a good guy and he knew what he was doing. ●