

The Power of Communications

An Interview with
Howard J. Rubenstein, President, Rubenstein

EDITORS' NOTE *Howard Rubenstein founded Rubenstein Associates, Inc. in 1954. He serves on the board of The Association for a Better New York (ABNY), 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 *Rubenstein (rubenstein.com) is a strategic, results-oriented publicity and media relations company. They are creators of innovative publicity opportunities and communications solutions that support the full range of client objectives. In addition, they are experts at crisis management and financial relations, and serve as counselors on image management and corporate citizenship. With a roster of over 450 clients served by a staff of more than 180 professionals, they represent a wide spectrum of clients, including global corporations, media and entertainment companies, sports teams, financial services organizations, real estate concerns, educational and cultural institutions, law firms, healthcare providers, not-for-profit organizations, business executives, and public figures.*

What has been the key to Rubenstein's success and what makes the firm a leader?

There are two essential elements that I believe got us here. The first is an inflexible adherence to a high degree of ethics. Any business that makes ethics a bedrock of its organization will create an image that lasts longer than a lifetime. The second is the importance of our interactions with our clients and all the other people we work with, both to keep and build our business. One can't succeed long-term in PR without the basic understanding of personal relationships.

Does Rubenstein specialize in working with specific industries and sectors?

I decided early on that I didn't want to try to be all things to all people but, at the same time, I also didn't want to focus on a single area of expertise. I decided to work in the areas that interested me – like real estate or healthcare – and to satisfy my curiosity in other subjects as well. I had a lot to learn.

How has the role of a public relations and communications firm evolved over time?

When I started more than 60 years ago, public relations was looked down on as a hustle for money. Today, PR assumes a managerial and intellectual role in the individual careers of clients and companies, helping them to reach their individual and organizational goals. We are counsellors more than ever now – trusted advisers.

What advice do you give to young people interested in a career in public relations?

I always tell people starting out that ethics should be their first priority. One won't go wrong if they always seek the honorable way forward. They will almost certainly fall if making money is their primary goal. Imagine what a client would think if they thought someone was only out to make a fast buck?

Rubenstein is committed to pro bono work. How critical is this to the culture of the firm?

Pro bono work is an essential foundation to our firm. Our staff also enjoys being part of something larger than themselves. One of our clients put it best: doing good things for others never stops making one feel good about themselves.

You are actively engaged in the Partnership for New York City. What makes the Partnership so effective and impactful?

The Partnership has succeeded because it brings together all of the different elements that make up New York, and those diverse groups of

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What are clients looking for from their public relations and communications partner in today's challenging environment?

Clients look for several things from us. Sometimes it's turning something small into something big. Sometimes it's the opposite – managing bad news and crisis in a way that doesn't lead to unwarranted attention. But more often these days, clients are looking at communications as a long-term program that will bind them to key audiences over time.

people work together to make our city a great place to live and work.

Do you take time to reflect and appreciate what you have built at Rubenstein?

Yes. Every so often I think back to the days when I entered this field. I had returned to my home in Brooklyn. Luckily, my parents fully understood that to be happy and successful in life, one has to do what one wants to do, what one likes to do, and what one finds challenging. I found all of that in public relations and communications. ●