

# An Honorable Profession

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.*

**How has the public relations business evolved over the years and what has been the key to Rubenstein's consistent strength and leadership in the industry?**

There was no PR business when I started. PR was a sideshow – really, a dishonorable occupation – and today it's an honorable profession, and one of the key elements to any successful enterprise, whether it's a business, a university, or a cultural institution. We've stayed strong over the years because we've always looked to adapt our work to innovations in communications, but also due to our adherence to ethical practices.

**Rubenstein works with many of the leading brands and global corporations. Is this the main focus for the firm and how important is it to build relationships with growth companies and entrepreneurs?**

We've been fortunate to have long-standing relationships with terrific global brands like BMW and News Corporation, but we're not focused on any single sector or size client. Some of our most interesting engagements these days are with small, start-up companies with big ambitions.

**How has technology impacted the industry and is technology taking away from the personal relationship and human touch?**

Technology has always been the revolutionary force in PR. Television changed everything in the news business 50 years ago, but the internet and the social web are probably an even more fundamental transformation. It has made everyone and every organization much more powerful, potentially, as a news distributor. To some degree, that explosion of media outlets and media distribution has diminished individual relationships, but there's still a very high value on knowing the person at the other end of a call, a text, an e-mail or a tweet.

**How important is it for Rubenstein to have a diverse and inclusive workforce in order to offer a broad range of thoughts and experiences to your clients?**

It's very important and an area where we would like to improve. Even in my 80s, I have a lot to learn from the people at our firm who come with diverse backgrounds and experiences.

**Rubenstein places a major emphasis on pro bono work. Would you discuss how deeply engrained this focus is for the firm?**

I decided very early on that, both for my own personal satisfaction and for our long-term benefit, we needed to become an integral part of the fabric of New York City. Doing things that have a pure common good – without regard to fees – has made us a better company, but has also made us a happier and more connected company.

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

There are a million ways to enter the PR business, and a million more ways to do well. Being a student of news and the way information travels is important. However, I find that the single most important skill that helps feed a good career in PR is developing as a writer. Good writing suggests clear thinking and can often win the day. ●

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