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Work As If You're Staying: Four Impeccable Reputation Builders

By [Dawn Wagenaar](#) on March 6, 2009 @ 5:00 am in [Law Associates](#) | [Comments Disabled](#)

*What goes around comes around.
Never burn bridges.
It's a small world.*

There is a reason these adages have lasted for generations. Your reputation is vitally important to your career and personal success. How you interact with people now may come back to delight or haunt you someday.

It's a fact: Your first position often leads to the next great job—on the word of a connected superior, a client or colleague. Even if you plan to leave a firm in two years, you should show up and work as if you're staying forever. Here are four reputation builders.

Practice Impeccable Speech

I'm not talking about your accent or pronunciation. What I mean is avoiding the urge to gossip, speak badly about a colleague or superior, or vent about a project.

If you must, do it after work with friends who don't work with you. Designate five minutes of work venting time with your significant other and then drop it. Getting emotional or dishing dirt can give people the impression that either you aren't ready for additional responsibility or you lack integrity.

Dress Impeccably

Even if some law firms have relaxed the dress code in recent years, you should dress for the position you want. That old advice still holds true: how you look and carry yourself all make a statement before you say a word. To convey a sense of neatness and style, women will want to think about their hair, clothing, jewelry and makeup. If you need to wear a skirt and hosiery, it's a small price to pay for moving on and up in your career. Men, rethink your hairstyle and facial hair. If your firm still pays homage to the bow tie, get on the wagon. When you dress professionally, you will also feel and act the part.

Demonstrate Impeccable Self-Control

Social situations are a great opportunity to show your softer or humorous side. People have a chance to get to know you better and see that there is more to you than the worker bee.

Just remember that the company party or a client function is not the place to demonstrate your capacity for alcohol or your interest in food over people. Even if the party takes place after business hours, think about the impression you want to make that day and the day after.

Be An Impeccable Representative

You are an ambassador of your firm whether you are on the clock or not. Talk about your firm in a way that makes people excited about it . . . or envious that they don't work there, too.


One negative comment carries more weight than 10 positive ones. You never know when a few good words about your firm or your job can lead to new business. One of my colleagues recently struck up a conversation with a man at a high school football game who turned out to be an attorney. Her impeccable representation of our firm has led to a business card exchange and a prospect lunch.

Support your future career with the job you have now. You never know when you'll meet the next client or your next boss.

How important do you think reputation is?

- Very Important (72.0%, 26 Votes)
- The only thing (25.0%, 9 Votes)
- Not Important (3.0%, 1 Votes)
- Sometimes Important (0.0%, 0 Votes)

Total Voters: **36**

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