

What do they say about you?

This may be an unusual question to be asked from a health and safety professional, but it is one that many are now asking of their senior management team

In the summer 2017 Global Outlook report accountants, KPMG, reported that health, safety, environmental and data security failings all moved into third place in the ranking of reputational risks. These came in behind operational risks and emerging technologies and whilst not top of the list they were not even recognised in the top 10 during 2016.

We all know that your reputation in a business sense is critical for the growth of the company. How often do you hear 'You are only as good as your last job'? Many of those who responded to the survey expected that the reputational and brand risk would have an impact on their business over the next three years.

The impact from social media is often cited as the main concern. Customer dissatisfaction is always one that companies are ready for and often they accept a level as simply the cost of doing business. When it comes to health, safety, environmental or data breaches there is no acceptable level.

We know all too well the physical impact of an injury to an employee or a chemical discharge into a local river or stream but, how extensive is reputational damage? With the barrage of media outlets transmitting 24hr news both good and bad and, many not fact checking, the damage to your brand can be irreversible.

So, what's the risk to your reputation? Well, poor publicity does influence staff retention there is no doubt. Highly qualified professionals will often want to protect their professional integrity and don't want to be connected with a business under the spotlight for the wrong reasons. Likewise non-professional staff become fearful for their futures, where will it end and will the company survive?

When you recruit potential employees they are now more likely to 'Google' your company to get some intelligence prior to applying. Often unfavourable news will be at the top of the search results before your own website so can warp the view of the company.

So, is health and safety on your risk register? Is reputational damage one aspect of the risk assessment? Remember, a good health and safety culture and procedures can mitigate the risk of both injury and brand damage. □

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The GGF's health and safety committee meet quarterly to discuss key issues affecting the industry. If you are interested in finding out more about the GGF and its health and safety function, please email info@ggf.org.uk



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“What’s the
risk
to your
reputation?”