

working smart

# Change Your Workplace REPUTATION

Creating a new image at the office can be your ticket to a promotion

BY KELLIE TABRON



**Y**our supervisor may appreciate your diligence, but your boss or colleagues may have labeled you a loner who's not part of the team or a workhorse without the ability to think strategically. According to San Diego-based executive coach Stephanie Chick, both can be undesirable characteristics in a corporate environment. "Your reputation on the job is just as, if not more, important than the actual work you do," says Chick. "You might be working so hard that you're missing the fact that your reputation isn't what you think." Here are sketches and strategies to restore your name:

## IF YOU HAVE A REPUTATION AS A...

### ...WORKER BEE

"If you find yourself 100 percent focused on results, or someone else routinely gets credit for your efforts, you may be working too hard," says Chick, CEO of Deliver the Package (deliverthepackage.com), a coaching firm. Missing chances to publicize your

new ideas and achievements will keep you from the next level.

**TO REVERSE IT:** "Spend as much time promoting as you do on producing," Chick advises. "Attending networking seminars and getting involved in strategic planning or company volunteer groups can help you build your reputation in important but less quantifiable ways. Stop burying your head, and work smarter not harder."

### ...SLACKER

"If you're not trusted to deliver on what you promise, you'll lose out on opportunities, and in today's competitive job market you'll find yourself out of a job," Chick says. Pleasers who say yes to so many projects that they drop the ball are perceived the same way. "Those who can't say no are afraid to set clear boundaries."

**TO REVERSE IT:** "Decide to be responsible, and act that way consistently," Chick suggests. "And before starting a project, establish clear expectations regarding timelines and success measures. Be honest about what you can or can't do, and then honor your commitments. Eventually people will see you in a different light."

### ...BROWNNOSER

Giving excessive compliments or being extremely agreeable will portray you as someone without substance, Chick says. "Even if it's not said to your face, no one respects a suck-up," she adds. "And this behavior can alienate you from your colleagues."

**TO REVERSE IT:** When you're forthright and know your value, kissing up is unnecessary. "Get the truth about your reputation from people you trust," says Chick. This will help you zero in on the changes you need to make. When you get their opinions, you should "just listen." Don't try to prove that you're misunderstood. Consider how you can incorporate suggestions, then follow up. □

## THE OFFICE 411

Readers' advice for sticky situations on the job

**STICKY SITUATION:** "I received great reviews and spearheaded key projects, but wasn't promoted. Colleagues with whom I had spirited debates complained that I was difficult. I was never unprofessional, yet I was perceived differently."

**The lesson:** "I need to solicit and be open to feedback regularly from my supervisor and others who have input on my development."

—A. Rucker, Santa Clarita CA

**STICKY SITUATION:** "I was about seven months pregnant. An associate and I got into a heated argument; I ended up being dragged away by other employees. I was told to relax before I lost my job and my child."

**The lesson:** "My coworkers got the impression that I was irresponsible and immature. I realized that the bigger person always walks away."

—Danielle B., New York

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