



How to Build a Professional Reputation That Opens Doors by Dr Jo Winchester

You already have a reputation - the only question is whether you're shaping it or letting it shape itself. Your professional reputation is the invisible handshake that introduces you before you walk into the room. It's what people think of when they hear your name, see your email, or check your socials.

This guide will help you build a reputation that works for you. A reputation that says you're capable, curious, and someone worth knowing.

1. Why Reputation Matters

You can be brilliant, but if no one knows it, it won't open doors. Reputation is what turns opportunity into momentum. It's the quiet trust that makes people recommend you, include you, and remember you.

A strong reputation doesn't come from showing off; it comes from consistency, credibility, and character. It's not about being perfect; it's about being reliable, respectful, and real.

2. Know Your Brand (Without Being Cringe)

You don't need a personal logo or a five-year plan. But you do need clarity about what you want to be known for.

Ask yourself:

- *What do I want people to say about me when I'm not in the room?*
- *What am I genuinely good at (and what am I learning to get better at)?*
- *What kind of problems do I like solving?*

👉 Tip: Write your three "brand words" e.g. Creative. Dependable. Curious. Keep them in mind when you post, speak, or apply for roles. Let them guide you on the best ways to show up.

3. Build Your Credibility Toolkit

Action	Why it Works	Quick Example
Show up on time	Builds reliability	<i>Turn up to work on time every day. If you are late let your manager know asap. Join meetings 5 minutes early.</i>
Follow through	Shows integrity, and that you are someone to rely on	<i>Do what you said you'd do. If you are struggling to get a task done, ask for advice.</i>
Ask questions	Signals curiosity and a commitment to growth	<i>Get to know your team's work history. 'How did you get started in this field?' 'What direction do you want to go in?'</i>
Share credit	Builds trust	<i>Acknowledge teamwork publicly. The best leaders grow with their team.</i>
Keep learning	Future-proofs your skills	<i>Take short online courses and stay on top of movements in your field</i>
Help others	Creates goodwill	<i>Share opportunities, not just wins.</i>

👉 It's not one big moment that builds your reputation. It's the pattern of little ones.

4. Clean Up Your Digital Footprint

Like it or not, your name gets Googled. Before you apply for jobs, internships, or scholarships, check what appears.

Do this now:

- Google yourself. What comes up? You might want to use a company like DeleteMe to clean up anything you don't want a future employer to see!
- Make your LinkedIn reflect the version of you that's growing, not just graduating.
- Delete or hide anything on social media that doesn't fit who you are now.
- Use a professional photo (or at least one without a beer bottle).
- Authenticity is valuable but be realistic about how the world is. Ask a mentor, or someone you trust to give you honest but empathetic feedback. Have them look at your social media profiles to give you advice on whether you need to delete any posts or pictures. Even with private profiles, friends of friends can often see more than you expect.

👉 Tip: Don't erase your personality. Just make sure it's the kind that says, "hire me," not "hold my drink."

5. Grow Your Network (The Right Way)

Your reputation lives in other people's stories about you. To build one that opens doors:

- Say yes to opportunities that connect you with new people.
- Follow up after you meet someone: "It was great chatting today, hope we can stay in touch."
- Join professional groups, alumni networks, or local events.
- Add people on LinkedIn with a note ("I enjoyed your talk about...").
- If you meet a new person who you know will be perfect for your colleague or your best friend, tell the new person about them. Be known for connecting people. It's the kind of karma that genuinely comes back to you.

You don't need hundreds of contacts. You need a few genuine relationships built on respect and shared curiosity.

6. Launch Your Reputation Rocket

Reputation takes time, but you can start today. Try these mini missions:

1. Post something thoughtful on LinkedIn. An insight, a question linked to an interesting article, or a win. Pictures gain the most traction on LinkedIn, so pairing anything with a professional and authentic photo can work wonders!
2. Send a thank-you message to someone who helped you.
3. Volunteer for one small project where you can be seen doing great work.
4. Keep your promises. Especially the small ones.
5. Ask a mentor or teacher for honest feedback on how you show up.

👉 The goal isn't just to be "known". It's to be known as someone who has a purpose.

Final Thoughts

Reputation is your currency in the future of work. AI might change jobs, but trust and human connection never go out of style. Be kind, be curious, and be consistent - that's the fuel for your reputation rocket.

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