

The Deal

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The Bold and the Beautiful



Howard Rubenstein has acted as Mr. Fixit for legions of boldfaced names, but don't say he runs a celebrity crisis management PR firm. **Rubenstein Associates, Inc.**, he reminds us, also represents corporations, investment banks, law firms, hospitals, the New York Yankees, universities. "The things that get attention—**Leona Helmsley**—are the page 1 crisis issues," Rubenstein says. "But that doesn't represent what we have."

The firm got its start 50 years ago after Howard's father, **Sam Rubenstein**, a police reporter for the New York Herald Tribune, suggested that his son try PR. Rubenstein, who had just graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Pennsylvania but dropped out from the Harvard University School of Law, typed his first press releases in the kitchen of his parents' Brooklyn apartment. (He eventually earned his law degree at night from St. John's University.)

Early clients included real estate mogul **Fred Trump**, father of **Donald Trump**. The younger Trump, who Rubenstein says is a "genius," has also availed himself of the PR agent's services over the years. During New York City's fiscal crisis of the '70s, Rubenstein volunteered his PR expertise to Mayor **Abe Beame** and the architect of the city's financial recovery, **Felix Rohatyn**. He has represented **Larry Silverstein** for 35 years and is working with the real estate developer on the reconstruction of the World Trade Center. Another key client is **Rupert Murdoch**, whom he met after the media tycoon bought the New York Post. "It was an interesting meeting," Rubenstein, 72, recalls. "He said, 'I don't think I really need PR, but all the people around me say I need it.'"

An array of law firms use Rubenstein and often refer their own clients to the firm. **Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP** has been a client for 30 years, and Rubenstein is friendly with senior partner **Ira Millstein**. Investment banking clients include **Bear, Stearns & Co.**

And then there are all those celebrities. Rubenstein has advised **Marv Albert**, **Kathie Lee Gifford**, **Lizzie Grubman**, **Michael Jackson** and many others. The PR ace is proud of how Gifford ultimately deflected negative publicity about how her line of clothing was made in overseas sweatshops by becoming a vocal proponent for improved working conditions in the garment industry. Corporate titans embroiled in scandal such as **Dennis Kozlowski** and **Martha Stewart** (neither of whom are clients) might be interested in this basic advice from Rubenstein: "I always ask the clients when they are faced with a problem, What is the right thing to do? If you made a mistake, let's correct it."

Rubenstein Associates has about 170 employees but remains a family affair. Operating firms within the PR empire are Rubenstein's sons, **Richard Rubenstein** and **Steven Rubenstein**. This evening Rubenstein Associates is celebrating its 50th anniversary at Manhattan's Tavern on the Green, where its 45th, 40th and 30th anniversary celebrations were held. Expected to attend are luminaries ranging from New York Mayor **Michael Bloomberg** to **Sarah Ferguson, Duchess of York**, to comedian **Jerry Seinfeld**. What's a party without some boldfaced names?

-Dennis Fitzgerald