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## Lessons Learned From Michael Vick and How You Can Repair Your Brand Image

Liz Goodgold

### When Celebrity Reality Doesn't Meet Expectations

We know that celebrities can become brands and in fact, I advocate that you become a celebrity of your own industry as well. Similar to products, however, when actions don't meet expectations, conflicts arise.

Cases in point:

#### Tom Cruise

- Expected Image: Mild-mannered Celebrity
- Major Outburst - Jumping On Oprah's Couch Proclaiming Love For Katie; Diatribe Against Anti-Depressants And Brooke Shields
- Brand Explosion - Paramount And Actor Sever Ties
- Aftermath - Tom Reconnects With Oprah And Explains His Behavior; Even Returns To *The Today Show* With Matt Lauer
- Status - Back in Public's Good Graces; own production company and films return solid profits

#### Michael Phelps

- Expected Image: Clean Cut American Gold Medal Champion
- Major Outburst - Caught On Film Smoking Questionable Tobacco
- Brand Explosion - Kellogg's Drops Him As Spokesperson
- Aftermath - Hits Every Major Morning TV Show Apologizing
- Status - Forgiven And Act Dismissed As A Young, Foolish Mistake

#### Chris Brown

- Expected Image: Hip, R&B Singer
- Major Outburst - Beat Up Girlfriend Rihanna the night of the Grammy's
- Brand Explosion: Dropped From California Milk Processing Board Ad Campaign
- Aftermath - After 5 Months, Finally Takes To The Web With A Video Apology
- Status - Huge Skepticism Remains

...and now we come to Michael Vick.

- Expected Image: Fast, Upstanding Football Player for the Falcons
- Major Outburst - Caught running an inhumane dog fighting ring
- Brand Explosion: Sentenced to jail; forfeited salary, obligated to pay for the care of surviving dogs for life

- Aftermath - Million Dollar 2-year Deal by the Philadelphia Eagles
- Status - Major uproar; protestors outside practice field; largely held belief that his acts were unforgiveable and should not be able to resume playing football

### **So, Why do We Forgive Some Celebrities and Not Others?**

The bottom line is why did we forgive some of the above celebrities, but not Michael Vick? I think the answer is complicated: He had an illegal action vs. merely momentary lapse of judgment, both of his apologies seemed insincere, and probably most importantly, the images of his cruelty to animals is burned into the public's memory.

Perhaps if his proactive behavior were more pronounced, we would be more willing to forgive him. If, for example, a portion of his salary were going to the Humane Society, he would be more believable. Or, if he offered to pay to house the thousands of strays caused by families unable to afford proper care for their pets, it might work. Or, maybe if he forged a partnership with PETCO as an active, we just might believe him. BUT, as of now, his apology just rings hollow.

### **How to Overcome a Negative Image**

And, what about you and me? What happens if the top results on our Google name return unflattering images or stories years old? Then, it's time for On-line Brand Management. You must counterpunch with a positive news campaign:

- Brand and Identity Management—Saturate blogs, forums, journals, or news feeds with positive content to reverse any current damage.
- Search Engine Optimization—Post new content on your Web site in order to boost your rankings in the engines. The objective is to replace offensive listings with positive ones.
- Social Media Optimization—Leveraging such online magnets as MySpace, YouTube, or even eBay pages.
- New Domains—Buy, build, and create new sites offering positive content about your business.

As always, I welcome your comments.

Until next week.....Liz

## Meet Liz Goodgold



Speaker and author Liz Goodgold is a considered a fireball of energy with over 25 years of experience in marketing and branding. She is the author of *RED FIRE BRANDING: Create a Hot Personal Brand and Have Customers for Life* and *DUH! Marketing*.

Liz has worked for such major clients as Quaker Oats, Times Mirror, and Arco Oil as well as with small business owners and start-ups. Her specialized, one-on-one branding and coaching programs spark new ideas that deliver sure-fire results.

An often quoted expert, Liz has appeared in over 500 media outlets including ABC, NBC, CBS, PBS, CNBC, CNN, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The New York Times*. She also was the branding columnist for *Entrepreneur* magazine reaching over 1 million readers per month.

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