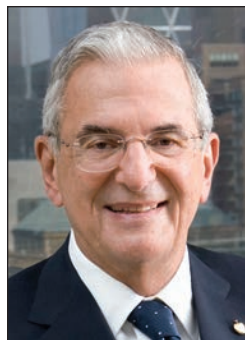


## Trusted Counselors

An Interview with Howard J. Rubenstein, President, Rubenstein

**EDITORS' NOTE** Howard Rubenstein founded Rubenstein Associates, Inc. in 1954. He serves on the board of The Association for a Better New York (ABNY), which he helped to found, and is a trustee of the Police Athletic League, the Foundation for the National Archives, and the Inner-City Scholarship Fund of the Archdiocese of New York. In addition, he is a co-founder and Vice Chairman of the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust. Rubenstein holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Pennsylvania and a doctorate of law from St. John's University School of Law. Early in his career, he served as Assistant Counsel to the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee.



Howard J. Rubenstein

**COMPANY BRIEF** Rubenstein ([Rubenstein.com](http://Rubenstein.com)) is a strategic, results-oriented publicity and media relations company. They are creators of innovative publicity opportunities and communications solutions that support the full range of client objectives. In addition, they are expert at crisis management and financial relations, and serve as counselors on image management and corporate citizenship. With a roster of over 450 clients served by a staff of more than 180 professionals, they represent a wide spectrum of clients, including global corporations, media and entertainment companies, sports teams, financial services organizations, real estate concerns, educational and cultural institutions, law firms, healthcare providers, not-for-profit organizations, business executives and public figures.

**Rubenstein works with many of the leading companies in New York. Does the firm specialize in working with specific industries or do you cover a broad range of sectors?**

Over the years, we have developed expertise across most sectors, including real estate, entertainment, sports, culture, crisis, legal, technology, and civic/philanthropic. We have talented senior staff with deep roots in each sector.

**How do you define the true value and impact of a public relations and communications firm?**

We've always defined success as the impact we make to advance our clients' core goals. Sometimes that means a financial impact – communications tactics that result in sales of a product

or an influx of investment. But more often than not, the results relate to the clients' reputations – how they are seen by the audiences about which they care deeply.

**Is innovation taking place in the industry and how critical is building an innovative culture for Rubenstein?**

Innovation exists everywhere – it's what sets people and organizations apart in all walks of life. In communications, without question, there is wonderfully creative and innovative work being

done – at our firm and elsewhere. The environment demands it. There are now so many ways to tell a client's story that a big part of the art is in figuring out the right mix, the right tempo, and the right platforms – not to mention the right message. It's a little like conducting an orchestra.

**What are clients looking for from their public relations and communications partner?**

More than ever, clients are facing an increasingly complicated world, and navigating that through communications has become equally confusing. Therefore, more and more, the work we do is about serving as trusted counsellors and guides for not just what to say but what to do. We're not simply megaphones for publicity.

**What do you tell young people about the type of career that the public relations industry offers and is top talent coming into the industry?**

This is something I address with our staff all of the time. I've been doing this a long time, and part of what I love to do is to inspire young people to have the kind of gratifying career that I've been able to enjoy. Public relations is an honorable profession, or at least it can be. This was not the case when I started. Press agents, as they were called in those days, were more hustlers than professionals. It didn't seem like an honorable way to make a living, but my father encouraged me to try to make PR honorable. He said something to me that I repeat at every staff meeting we have: "Draw an ethical line and do not cross it." That sounds so simple, but you'd be surprised at how many people do not follow that advice. For the young people at our firm, I always tell them that no client and no result is worth our good name or their good name. I will always back people up for staying on the ethical side of the street.

**How critical is pro bono work to the culture of the firm?**

Ever since I started in this business, I've done a great deal of work for people and causes that make our world a better place. Those engagements are their own reward. I find that people who do pro bono work at our firm, whether it's the High Line or Code.org, say that it is among the most satisfying work they do.

**Are you surprised to see how New York has become a hub for entrepreneurial companies and start-ups, and what advantages does the city offer these emerging companies?**

New York has always been at the forefront of innovation and entrepreneurialism. I think it stems from a number of factors: the terrific education base here with some of the best universities in the world; a steady stream of immigrants determined to work harder than anyone to be successful; and the concentration of the population here creates a certain energy and serendipitous interaction that leads to great things. There's nothing like this city.

**You are engaged in the Partnership for New York City, which is made up of the leading executives and companies in New York. What makes the Partnership so effective and how do you define its importance for New York City?**

The Partnership's effectiveness stems from the complete commitment these amazing leaders make to our city – and their willingness to set aside their parochial interests for the betterment of this city. This dynamic, which has been fostered so effectively by its CEO Kathryn Wyldé for 14 years, is what makes it such a powerful civic body.

**What keeps the public relations business so exciting and dynamic for you after all these years?**

I've been in PR for more than 60 years, and it has never stopped being exciting. At first, it was the excitement of helping to create a profession that didn't really exist. As I started to become successful and build relationships in politics, business, and philanthropy, I realized I could make a real impact and solve bigger societal problems by bringing together people from these different worlds. I was not only a PR guy; I became a connector, and that was very satisfying. The excitement now is in hopefully inspiring the people in our company to take up this mantle and take us to new heights. I continue to be extremely dedicated to this business and to communications as a profession. ●