

PROTECTING INTEGRITY

Reputations and information under threat



Media enquiries, pressure groups, aggrieved customers, disaffected employees, sensitive litigation, and operational and supply issues can all put at risk the reputation of your business, your brands and your directors. The ease with which confidential and commercially sensitive information can be unlawfully obtained is also a growing challenge for many businesses, which now face data loss, theft and breaches, misuse of confidential information, cyber-attacks, leaks to the media and data protection disputes.

Fashion and beauty brands tend to be high profile, which makes them newsworthy and therefore potential targets.

- ▶ Pay and conditions in the supply chain are an increasing area of focus for the media, NGOs and others.
- ▶ The #MeToo movement is focussing on allegations of misconduct in the fashion and beauty sector. Behaviour which historically may have been tolerated is no longer seen as acceptable and is under the microscope as never before from employees, trades unions, politicians and pressure groups
- ▶ Companies are increasingly being held to higher ethical and governance standards, generally, including on sustainability, treatment of workers and suppliers, and environmental impact. For example, **H&M**, **Zara**, **Gap** and **Benetton** have all been in the firing line, accused of using toxic chemicals during the manufacturing process.
- ▶ Unpaid internships are regarded as controversial – **Paul Smith**, **Urban Outfitters** and **Alexander McQueen** have all faced criticism.
- ▶ Despite changes in UK and EU law, a number of beauty companies continue to face reputational issues in relation to animal testing and use of certain natural fabrics.
- ▶ The use, and risk of misuse, of customer data is increasingly an issue for fashion retailers, requiring not only compliance with data protection law but ensuring that the wider privacy rights of its customers are not inadvertently infringed.
- ▶ Social media gives all customers and employees a platform to complain and criticise, which can quickly go viral and/or be picked up in the mainstream media. Businesses need to engage with social media, while being aware that a social media response can risk making a bad situation worse.
- ▶ A business which understands the importance of protecting its reputation, and its information, will generally be better prepared to deal with any threats to either, whether low level or a full-blown crisis. An organisation which already has a crisis response strategy in place is likely to be able to respond more rapidly and effectively than one which does not.
- ▶ Our aim is always to provide quick, practical and commercial advice, and to complement our clients' protection of their valuable reputations.

The practicality of the advice is what I find most valuable; I felt that their advice was business-focused and useful in a business context. I felt confident that they knew the law and were applying it to our situation in a way that made sense for us

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How can we help

REPUTATION PROTECTION	INFORMATION PROTECTION	SOCIAL MEDIA	TRAINING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Advice (often in conjunction with communications professionals) on how to deal with potentially damaging exposure before the story breaks, including your legal options and pressure points ▶ Advice during and following publication in the media or online, when damage needs to be prevented or mitigated, material removed from websites, and the record set straight ▶ Strategic board level advice on reputation risk management, including internal investigations and reviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Advice on data loss and breach, cyber-attacks, leaks to the media and misuse of confidential information ▶ 'Big Data' risk mitigation ▶ Defending data subject access requests (DSARs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Advising on one-off as well as recurring social media problems, including having offending posts taken down ▶ Advising in relation to social media policies and strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Crisis response planning and simulation ▶ Customised training workshops

Who we have helped

We have advised and acted for numerous High Street brands and other retailers in relation to reputation issues, including supply chain problems, criticism of tax arrangements, employee issues, conduct and governance challenges, and data breaches. That has included strategic advice, crisis management, preventing and mitigating media coverage, internal investigations and providing training for legal and comms teams.

Who to contact

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Makes use of its international network to advise global businesses on reputation management issues, including social media and data protection matters.

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