



Reputation Management Course

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Restore Your Reputation!
Create Opportunities, Eliminate Distractions

Michael Santos and Justin Paperny

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How important is it for you to prepare?

Nothing can stop the man
with the right mental attitude
from achieving his goal;
nothing on earth can help the
man with the wrong mental attitude..

—**Thomas Jefferson**

Decades ago, I read a quote from Benjamin Franklin. I won't quote him precisely, but I can paraphrase.

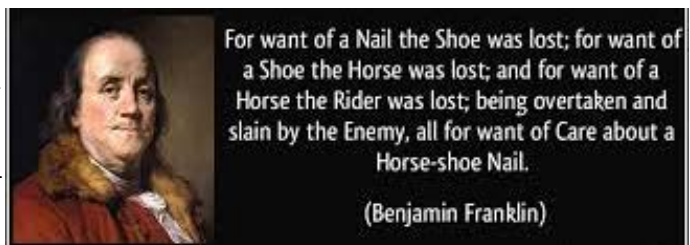
Franklin said:

"For the want of a nail, we lost the war."

I understood the analogy as follows. The person who cared for horses didn't have a nail to maintain the horse's shoe. On the day of an important battle, the general hopped on the horse, then went off to lead his troops. As the horse galloped across the field, it slipped on a log. The log caused the horse's shoe to fall off. Without the shoe, the horse stumbled and fell with a broken leg. With the horse being down, the general could no longer lead his troops. Without leadership, the troops fell into disarray and failed to perform. When they didn't perform, the enemy prevailed.

For the want of a nail, we lost the war.

If the government has targeted you with a crime, and you've seen those horrifying words on a criminal charge:



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“The United States of America—versus—your name”

then you're in a war. It's a war that can have lasting ramifications. Unfortunately, those ramifications do not end with the guilt or innocence phase. Those who prepare begin with an understanding of how a criminal charge and conviction can influence the following:

- Prospects for an alternative sentence to incarceration
- Sentence length
- Ability to build and nurture a support network during imprisonment
- Prison classification levels
- Journey through prison
- Prospect of advancing release date from inside prison
- Eligibility for maximum time in a residential reentry center—home confinement
- Liberty while on supervised release
- Opportunities to resume a meaningful career after release

The statistics are quite clear. Our nation's criminal justice system has lasting ramifications. Don't let the want of a nail prevent you from winning the war.

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I'm Michael Santos and I'm working with Justin Paperny to present this course on Reputation Management. We offer the course for those who work with us on MichaelSantos.com FederalPrisonAdvice.com, or any of our related platforms. Our purpose is to show others that regardless of where you stand now, you can begin sowing seeds that will empower you for a better outcome.

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Our ambition through this Reputation Management course is to position you for the best possible outcome after a challenge from the criminal justice system. Experience convinces us that to the extent you pursue a deliberate path, you can emerge from prison with your dignity intact and with new opportunities for success. Opportunities will open as you take the necessary steps to manage your reputation. Through the easy-to-follow lessons available through this course, you'll learn how you can use your time ahead effectively. To the extent that you adhere to the lessons in this course, we're confident you too will have a successful journey ahead. More importantly, we're confident you'll position yourself for a successful return to society, at the soonest possible time.

Background:

In 1987, when I was 23-years-old, I didn't understand that I could position myself for a better outcome. I was arrested and I faced charges that exposed me to multiple decades in prison. Instead of taking action, I outsourced all decisions to my defense attorney. That approach left me vulnerable, feeling as if I were a puppet. Defense attorneys, prosecutors, probation officers, a judge, and others governed my life. Living in such a way compounded my anxieties about what was to come.



WE NEED TO EMPOWER OURSELVES

Empowerment came through introspection. The more I thought about the choices I made, the friends I selected, the activities I pursued, the better I could connect the dots. I could see that decisions I made throughout my life led me into trouble. Each choice I made

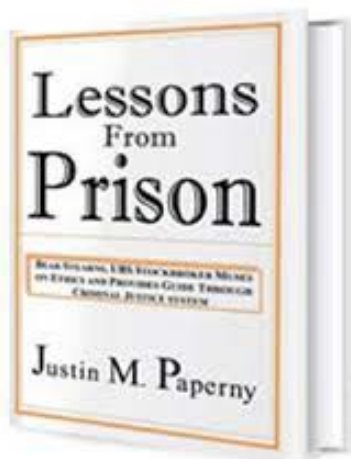
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had ramifications. By projecting forward, I understood that I could make choices that would help me overcome. Although I wish that I had made better decisions as a younger man, I couldn't change the past. Nevertheless, I could begin to make better decisions that would influence future opportunities.

That new perspective inspired me to think about the outcome I wanted to achieve.

If you can accept where you are right now, take some time to define what you would like to achieve in the months, years, and decades to come?

When I met my friend and business partner, Justin Paperny, I had more than 20 years of imprisonment behind me. He surrendered to the minimum-security federal prison camp where I was



concluding my journey. As described in Justin's book *Lessons From Prison*, he had built a career as a stockbroker. Some bad decisions led to Justin's surrendering to prison. His conviction had resulted in the loss of his license to work in financial services or to earning a living as a real estate agent. Further, his felony conviction would influence career opportunities upon release. Those realities were Justin's world.

Email for your free copy of
Lessons From Prison

Like many people who were new to the prison system, Justin was somewhat traumatized over all that he had gone through. Being the target of a criminal prosecution derailed the successful life he had worked so hard to build. His conviction didn't only influence his life, but his family's life as well. During our early conversations, I challenged Justin to think about the best possible outcome—given that he

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could not change the past. By accepting where he was, he agreed that he could begin sowing seeds to influence a better outcome. Success, however, would not materialize by accident.

Success through the prison system and beyond isn't a secret. It begins with the same pattern that drove participants in this course to succeed in other areas of life. Readers may recognize that pattern as follows:

Visualize:

- Define the success that you want to achieve.

Plan:

- Create a plan that would lead you from where you are to what you want to achieve.

Execute:

- Execute your plan relentlessly until you achieve your goal.

This course encourages participants to follow that same pattern. Define success. Create a plan. Execute your plan. That is the pattern that worked for Justin and me. We're convinced it can work for you!

To the extent that you document your journey, you advance possibilities for success. You forge opportunities that others do not recognize. We teach the course from personal experiences.

From the start of my journey, I knew precisely how I wanted to emerge. I knew that I would want to build a career around all that I learned and experienced. My expectations were to teach and inspire others. Doing so would require that I could create a record, showing how an individual could triumph over a difficult situation through a deliberate course of action.

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When Justin and I met, he was at the start of his journey. As we spoke, he saw the importance of documenting his progress through prison. It would not only restore confidence and a sense of purpose to his life, the clear path he embarked upon would give those in his support network confidence that he was making a best-practice use of his time. Justin and I began working alongside each other with a clear plan of building a service that would empower others.

What is Reputation Management?

Reputation management begins with an understanding that we live in a world of transparency. We know that anyone with a moderate skillset can use Internet search engines. If someone launches a Google search of your name, what will they find today? Those search-engine results influence how others perceive us. Rather than ignoring such challenges, an individual who wants to manage his or her reputation will take proactive measures. We all can begin writing a script today that will influence how others will perceive us in months and years to come.



In the remainder of this course, Justin and I will show how writing allowed us to manage our reputations. Through a combination of blogs, articles, and books, we've influenced the ways that others perceive us. Since emerging from prison, we augmented those efforts with videos, podcasts, and live events. Don't take our

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word for it. Put us to the test. We encourage you to Google either one of our names. You will see that the headlines show something completely different from what would've existed if we did not take action.



Had we not taken action, anyone who researched us would've seen the prosecutor's version of events. Yet because we followed the guidelines presented in this course, we could change per-

ceptions. By changing perceptions, we could open opportunities. Anyone can use these same reputation-management techniques to redefine and recalibrate life. Although you may feel as if you're in challenging circumstances right now, it's never too early and it's never too late to begin sowing your seeds for a better tomorrow.

Do not lose the war for want of a nail. Begin making preparations today so that you will enjoy many victories in your life tomorrow!

Lesson 1: Define Your Audience

Reputation management requires that you start with an understanding of your audience. Think about the people who will be judging you. Don't only think about your life today. Instead, contemplate opportunities you will have in your future.

Who are the people that you must strive to influence?

In my personal case, I had decades to serve. I went to prison when I was 23 because I made the foolish decision to begin sell-

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ing cocaine when I was 20. As a consequence of those decisions, a judge sentenced me to a term that would require my imprisonment for longer than 26 years. Yet while in the earliest stage of my journey—before I transitioned into prison, I made a commitment to begin working in ways to influence the people who would judge me in the future.

That decision began with thoughts about the people in my audience. Who would they be? I thought about the following people:

- My future probation officer
- Prison officials
- University professors
- Future employers
- Future creditors
- Future business partners

Those people became my avatars. I defined those avatars as precisely as I could. For example, I could use specifics as follows:

My avatar is Joe. Joe is 42-years-old and he is doing well. After graduating from Hofstra with a business degree, he became a real estate agent. By the time he was 25, he had purchased two rental properties. Income he received from those properties helped to advance his career. In the years to come, he continued adding more properties to his portfolio. Then he began a phase of development, purchasing raw land. He persuaded investors to finance him and Joe used those resources to hire architects and builders.



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After placing tenants in his buildings, he refinanced the properties. By repeating that strategy, Joe has built a portfolio that now includes more than \$100 million that he has under management. His experiences convince him that anyone who works hard can make it in this country.

I could go on and on writing characteristics of my “avatar.” To the extent that I understood those characteristics of the people I wanted to influence in the future, I could contemplate the steps I could take to influence them. If I wanted Joe to see me as something more than the bad decisions of my early 20s, what would I need to accomplish?

That strategy of contemplating avatars launched me on a plan. I wanted to exceed Joe’s expectations. That thought process influenced my commitment. I would work toward educating myself, contributing to society, and toward building a strong support network during my imprisonment. By documenting the process, others could follow along with my transformation. Further, efforts I could make each day would influence my reputation.



When Justin and I became friends, he was in a different position. Whereas I began my journey in prison while in my early 20s, before I’d done anything with my life, Justin was an accomplished professional. He had earned his undergraduate degree from the University of Southern California and he had earned a high income for decades. State boards had licensed him in two disciplines—as a stockbroker and a real estate agent.

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Since Justin had a different background from me, he would contemplate different avatars, and figure out ways that he could use his time to influence their perceptions.

We faced different problems. I was on the verge of serving multiple decades and I would need to create a complete life for myself from inside prison boundaries. Justin would serve about a year. Then he would return to a job market that was not particularly welcoming. In fact, as Justin was beginning his sentence, the economic conditions around the world were collapsing into the worst recession of our time.

**Don't dwelling on problems
Figure out solutions**

Justin would conclude his sentence when the job market was at its worst. By acknowledging that he would be returning to an unfriendly job market, with a felony conviction, Justin could contemplate a big problem he would need to solve: creating a new career.

We could define an avatar for Justin as follows:

Steve earned his degree from Wharton. He accepted a sales position with a global technology company upon graduation. After 20 years of success, rising to the highest level in the organization, Steve faced a massive problem. Authorities charged Steve with federal crimes. They accused him of collusion. Steve never considered himself a criminal and he was prepared to fight the charges to the end. He felt strongly that he would prevail and that his company would stand behind him. He retained counsel to defend him. After exhausting his financial resources, the attorney recommended that Steve accept a plea deal. Overwhelmed, Steve

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began searching for someone to guide him for the challenges of serving a prison sentence—even though he did not consider himself a criminal.

Unfortunately, America's commitment to mass incarceration has brought many people like Steve into the system. By thinking about Steve as an avatar, Justin could use his time inside to build a record that could help him earn Steve's trust. This strategy would guide Justin's decisions. Ultimately, if Justin succeeded with his reputation-management strategy, he would influence the perceptions of people like Steve. Instead of perceiving Justin as a convicted felon, Steve would respect Justin as a trusted guide through difficult times.

Rather than shying away from our problems, both Justin and I recognized the value that would come from managing our reputations. Instead of complaining about the challenges that we would face, we began positioning ourselves for success as we defined success. By doing so over a sustained period of time, we not only influenced the ways that others perceived us, but we influenced opportunities that would open. We couldn't change our past, but we could work to influence our future. That strategy worked for me, it worked for Justin, and it can work for you.



Here is your task for lesson one:

- What thoughts have you given to the people in your audience?
- Describe the different groups of people you want to influence?
- What does your avatar look like?

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[Click here to watch video, or read content below](#)

In the accompanying video, I provide answers for Justin and me to those questions. For those who prefer reading to watching videos, I'll give you the short answer. I needed to show that I had learned from the reckless decisions I made as a young man. If I didn't, I anticipated that:

- Prison officials would categorize me in ways that limited opportunities for growth.
- Probation officers would limit my liberty upon release.
- Employers would refuse to hire me.
- Creditors would not open opportunities for me to participate in the economy.
- Business leaders would refuse to trust me.

Those were the people I wanted to influence. To influence them, I would focus on persuading them that I had grown. By documenting the journey, I intended to show my commitment to reconciling with society, achieving that end by educating myself, making meaningful and measureable contributions to the lives of others. I had decades to build a record that would influence perceptions.

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Justin knew that he would need to build a new career. When we made an agreement to begin working together, we identified the audience that he would need to influence. Since his career would center on products and services to those who faced complications with the criminal justice system, he would need to show that he understood and identified with their pain. He would also need to show how he could add value. As such, Justin began writing in ways to demonstrate his integrity and character—despite the criminal charge. He began writing in ways to show how he could add value as a consultant to people who faced time in prison. And he began writing in ways that would help others understand the ethical implications of business decisions made on the job.

So who were the people in Justin's audience? As was the case with me, Justin's avatars would include people he had never met. They would include:

- Lawyers who represented people who faced prison even though they did not identify with a criminal lifestyle.
- Defendants who did not perceive themselves as criminals but were charged with crimes
- Professors who taught business students
- Corporate executives who didn't grasp how decisions they made in the course of business could expose them to problems with the criminal justice system

In addition to those unique audiences, we also wanted to influence the people we loved and the people who loved us. Besides family, we thought how our writing could



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influence readers who could inadvertently come into contact with the words we wrote—like those who oversaw the time we served in prison, others who served time alongside us, and family members of those who served time.

By understanding our audience, we all can take methodical, deliberate steps to move beyond where we are today. Instead, we can advance to a better, brighter future, empowering ourselves along the way.

Lesson 2: What Is Your Platform?

Your reputation-management strategy must also include an understanding of your platform. You could journal your life away. Yet in the end, if you're writing for an audience of one, you're not really advancing possibilities to manage your reputation. This isn't to imply that you cannot derive enormous value through journaling. Indeed, methodical journaling techniques helped me throughout the entire term that I served. But journaling differs from a reputation-management strategy.



To influence the ways that others perceive us, we must take the initiative to publish ideas for our “avatars”—those in our ideal audience. We need to figure out how we're going to reach them. What are the most appropriate mechanisms available to reach a wide audience?

When I started in prison, the Internet did not exist. Yet through this commitment of writing regularly, I could open new channels. I wrote letters to people I didn't know. Those letters opened mentor relationships. Later, I began writing for op-ed columns, then

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chapters for authors who wrote about the prison experience. Then I wrote books of my own.

By the dawn of the Internet age, I had a wide support network. They launched MichaelSantos.com and I began writing content for my own site before the term blogging became a part of our vernacular.

Justin began serving his term when the Internet was already a ubiquitous part of our society, but the prison system did not yet make it easy to blog. At that time, relatively few prisoners had access to the types of quasi-email tools that exist in every federal prison today. Justin only had blank pieces of paper and a ballpoint pen. Yet lack of resources did not stop his commitment to building a platform.

The platform that Justin built while serving 12 months in prison has since grown into an impressive multi-media strategy that generates more than 50,000 visitors each month and millions of dollars in revenues. Others would like to emerge from prison with high levels of success. The good news is that anyone can take proactive measures to build a platform—provided that he or she makes a commitment.

Rather than allowing past events to define you, chart a course of action that will help you influence your future.

As a consequence of access to the quasi-email system that exists in every federal prison, building a platform is within reach of any individual. Unfortunately, few people in prison think about how they can use that system as a tool to sow seeds for a better out-



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come. Although prisoners do not have direct access to the Internet, they can send out electronic communications. If planned out effectively, an individual can use the email system to build an influential, positive platform that can enhance prospects for success. This reputation-management strategy worked extraordinarily well for both Justin and me. It also can work well for you!

Both Justin and I consider blogging to be an invaluable tool. The challenge for people going into prison, however, is figuring out a systematic way to convert the content they generate into an asset that will help them upon release. Think of your avatar. What can you do to influence his or her perceptions? That is the first step in building an effective reputation-management strategy. Justin succeeded because he had a very clear objective. He aspired to build a career that would allow him to add value to three distinct markets:

- Defendants who anticipate that prison awaited them.
- Professors who taught ethics to business students
- Corporate training on relationships between business decisions and prosecution

He created a blog that addressed those issues in specific ways. In addition, he authored two books: *Lessons from Prisons* and *Ethics in Motion*.

That methodical approach made all the difference in the way that the world perceived him. Rather than emerging from prison in a position of weakness, Justin used his time inside to create a body of work that would launch a new career. Despite returning to society in one of the worst possible markets, he managed his reputation in such a way that would turn his experiences into strengths.

I attribute the extensive documentation of my journey through prison to [successes I enjoyed inside](#), and to the opportunities that

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opened for me upon release. Within three weeks of concluding my obligation to the Bureau of Prisons, [San Francisco State University hired me](#) to serve as an adjunct professor. The books I wrote led to a massive support network that resulted in my probation officer and a US Attorney asking a judge to terminate my Supervised Release early, after only one year. Business opportunities opened as well. The reputation-management strategy launched decades earlier allowed me to return to society strong.

Anyone can do the same

As a consequence of the platforms that Justin and I built, we effectively managed our reputation. Rather than judging us for the decisions that led us into the criminal justice system, others seek guidance from us. They want to incorporate strategies that worked for us into their own adjustments. We always advise on the wisdom of documenting the journey. That includes building a self-directed platform. For some, that platform will include blogging and books. Decide what platform will work best for the avatars and audience that you want to influence.

Here is your task for lesson two.

- What type of platform will restore your reputation?
- What steps have you taken to build your platform?
- How will you manage your platform while you're inside?

The accompanying video offers more insight into how Justin and I responded to those questions. The written answer should be self-evident for those progressing through this course. You likely have seen the abundance of content we produce. We're constantly investing in our platform by writing articles or blogs, recording videos and podcasts, and hosting webinars or live events. We didn't have that platform when we began. Yet by investing in it each day, we built a platform that now contributes to our income.

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How will the platform that you build relate to your prospects for success through the journey and beyond?

3. Manage Your Process

If you're in agreement that you can influence the ways others perceive you—your reputation—by documenting your journey, then you will also agree that a blog can become an incredibly valuable tool for you. By blogging routinely, you can create a record. That record gives you an opportunity to write your own script. Every entry of your blog opens an opportunity for you to persuade others to judge you for the way that you responded to your problem rather than judging you for the problem that led you to prison.

Begin by contemplating your strategy. How are you going to convert the writings you do in prison into record? Although you have access to the quasi-email system, the prison system only authorizes prisoners to correspond with “approved” contacts. The system does not make it easy. The following process exists for people in prison to send emails:

- The prisoner sends a contact request to an email address.
- The recipient then must visit a centralized website. (For most federal prisons, the website is Corrlinks.com, for others the website is Jpay.com)
- Once the recipient acknowledges that he or she wants to communicate with the prisoner, the prisoner may begin to send messages. Each message has a limitation as to length—about 1,000 words as I recall.
- The centralized website becomes a repository for the emails that the prisoner sends.
- Recipients must visit the centralized website to retrieve or send messages.

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This cumbersome process can annoy some recipients. Before you surrender to prison, determine whether those in your support network have the time and inclination to manage this process of building your platform.

Assuming that you have a support network in place to manage receipt of the writings you create from prison, you can create a process. For example, the process that Justin and I adhered to during our imprisonment followed:

- We would contemplate the different types of content we wanted to generate. In our case, we included both blogs and books.
- We each made a commitment to writing a minimum of 5,000 words each week. Some days we would write 300-word blogs, some days we would write significantly more to reach our weekly goal.
- We would send our writings to those in our support network. In my case, I sent my writings to my wife Carole. In Justin's case, he sent his writings to his mother, Tallie.
- Carole or Tallie would transcribe our writings into a digital format.
- They would then send those typewritten writings to us in prison.
- We would edit.
- We would return those typewritten pages so they could make corrections.
- If the writings were for a blog, we would append "keywords" to the documents.
- If the writings were for a manuscript, we would keep a record of how the process progressed so that we could continue writing.

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Obviously, the process required a massive commitment from our support network. Carole and Tallie were angels to help and we're both grateful to them.

People in federal prison no longer need to require those in their support network to convert handwritten manuscript pages into digital formats. A suggested process for them may follow these steps:

- Identify the person in your support network who will manage the content you create.
- Contemplate the type of content that will influence your avatars.
- Create a writing schedule.
- Create a format. Make it easy for those in your support network to keep your blog current or format your manuscript into a book.
- Use the prison computer to create your content and send to the trusted person in your trusted support network.
- Have the person visit the centralized website on a regular basis to retrieve your content.
- Ensure you incorporate a keyword and tagging strategy so that your avatars can find the content you create.
- Your trusted recipient will cut and paste your content from website into a Word document.
- After editing, your trusted recipient will publish in accordance with your plan.

The suggested steps above show that publishing from prison requires a coordinated effort. Individuals who are fortunate to have a support network in place must communicate the importance of understanding the process. Otherwise, frustrations can follow. While you're focusing on executing your plan, you'll need to rely on others to assist you. That's a time consuming process.

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Never underestimate the value of time. If those in your support network have time commitments, then you may want to consider a process that doesn't burden them with your reputation-management strategies. Some partners will welcome the opportunity to play a pivotal role in helping loved ones execute their plans. Others will find the task too time consuming. The onus is on the individual to create a process that will lead to an effective reputation-management strategy.

If the process includes publishing, as we suggest, then there are other issues to consider. For example:

- Where will you publish?
- How will you manage your website?
- Will social media become a part of your strategy?
- Do those in your support network have the skillset to manage media?
- How will you generate traffic?
- If you intend to publish books, how will you format?
- If you intend to publish books, how will you market your work?
- How will prison administrators respond to your work?
- How will your work influence other readers?



The more thought you give to creating your process before you surrender, the better positioned you will be to manage your process while the weeks turn into months. To the extent that you create an effective process, we're convinced that you will empower yourself. Rather than waiting for calendar pages to turn, you'll be able to use each day in a productive manner to generate more content.

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That content will become part of your coherent strategy to influence your reputation. This investment will yield enormous returns, positioning you for a life of meaning and relevance while you serve your sentence. Further, the investment will advance your prospects for success upon release.

Here is your task for lesson three:

- What process have you created to publish your content?
- What level of commitment does your support network make to your process?
- How will you assess whether your process is successful while you're inside?

The content above provides insight into the ways that Justin and I would have responded to those questions. Our clearly defined process resulted in us publishing more than 1 million words of content during our imprisonment. That strategy required considerable amounts of commitment from our support network. We could assess our process each day by the number of people who came into our support network while we served our sentence, and also by the opportunities that opened. Without a doubt, the investment we made in managing our reputation yielded lifelong benefits. Those benefits eased our journey through prison and facilitated our success upon release.

4. Return on Investment

Influencing your reputation from inside of a federal prison requires a massive commitment of both time and resources. Those who choose to make the investment, however, restore a level of confidence. They have an opportunity to move beyond the sordid accusation of government press releases. Instead, they can define their future. By articulating how they're going to emerge from prison, they can chart a course. Then, by publishing that course of action,

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individuals can invite others to hold them accountable. Those published statements will make the individual more aware of opportunities. They simultaneously will make others aware of the commitment to success that those who embark upon this strategy make. Such an adjustment pattern brings enormous benefits, both while in prison and beyond.

Writing a blog has the potential to bring many advantages if an individual uses the blog as part of a cohesive reputation-management strategy. After all, the blog is a public forum. Anyone who has



access to the Internet can review what the individual is writing. Further, the writing can become part of a sustained campaign. Over time, the blog will generate followers. Those followers can develop a vested interest in helping the individual, bringing opportunities that otherwise wouldn't

be available. If coordinated effectively, those opportunities can yield intended benefits at various stages of the journey.

Consider Justin's example. When he surrendered to prison, government press releases identified him as a swindler. Rather than avoiding those accusations, or minimizing them, Justin accepted full responsibility for the bad decisions he'd made during his career. He expressed remorse. He revealed to his audience the steps that he would take to reconcile. Then, through his constant writings, he opened himself up for others to hold him accountable.

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As a consequence of the blogs and books, Justin received an enormous return on investment from his reputation-management strategy:

- Staff members became aware of his writings and encouraged him.
- Through his words, he received informal support from staff members who could ease his journey inside through job placements or preferred housing.
- Upon his release, the record he created resulted in his probation officer having a more favorable opinion of him.
- That sustained record of writing resulted in his probation officer granting Justin higher levels of liberty—for example, access to travel and to self-employment.
- The sustained number of blog entries led to Justin’s influencing Google rankings.
- Justin’s books established his authority on his chosen subject matter.
- The credibility Justin created through his blogs and books resulted in a sustainable income stream.

Justin concluded his obligation to the Bureau of Prisons after a year of confinement. Yet as a consequence of the investment he made in reputation management, he empowered himself while inside. More importantly, he returned to society successfully. His probation officer extended him more liberty because Justin had lived transparently—inviting others to hold him accountable. That strategy influenced his reputation, enabling him to earn an income that placed him in the top 5% of earners each year since his release—despite his felony conviction.

Success doesn’t materialize by accident in any environment, but especially not for those challenged with the complications of a criminal conviction. Either an individual can make the investment

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to influence a better outcome, or the individual can take a wait-and-see approach to find out what transpires in the months and years ahead. As I advised Justin when I met him, and I advise others, reputation management is essential. To get the best return on investment, the individual should invest the time, energy, and resources to influence the way that others will perceive him or her on the other side of the journey.

There is an abundance of evidence that shows how this investment can yield returns, in numerous ways, including:

- Quality of life in prison
- Building stronger support networks while in prison
- Nurturing support networks while in prison
- Creating income opportunities while in prison
- Opening higher levels of liberty while on Supervised Release
- Creating more income opportunities upon release
- Providing a resource to influence others

As a consequence of the massive investment that I made to influence my reputation, my journey through 26 years in prison differed from what anyone would expect. For example, my commitment to documenting the journey influenced the following:

- University administrators opened opportunities for me to earn undergraduate and graduate degrees from inside federal prisons.
- Publishers allowed me to bring books to market.
- Published writings led to my building a massive support network.
- Because of my blog, Carole began a relationship with me and married me 10 years before my scheduled release.
- Other prisoners hired me to ghost write books for them.
- Earnings from publishing and ghost writing allowed me to

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support my wife while I served my sentence.

- Within three weeks of being released from prison, San Francisco State University hired me to serve as an adjunct professor.
- Lenders extended me credit, despite my having a 0-0-0 credit score.

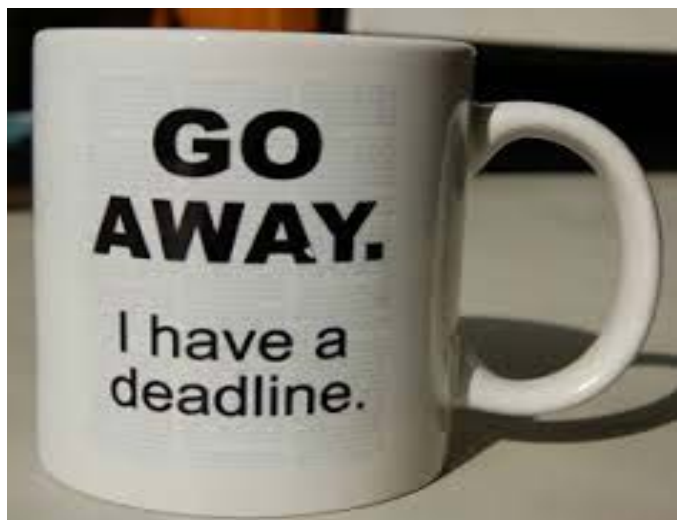
By managing my reputation from inside of a prison, I could live a life of meaning and relevance. Those personal experiences, together with observations I've observed of others who've emerged successfully, convince me that investing time, energy, and resources to restore a reputation can bring lifelong dividends for those who choose to act.

Here is your task for lesson four:

- In what ways can you benefit by documenting your journey?
- How will your avatars, or audience respond if you were to provide a book that describes your story?
- What level of return would you receive if you had a book that defined your life before you emerged from prison?

5. How and what to write:

Many people struggle with the concept of writing. Others fear the challenge of having to string words into a series of coherent sentences and paragraphs. Despite an abundance of confidence in writing business proposals, some writers are self-conscious about personal narratives or writing for the purpose of reputation management. While in prison,



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it's crucial to stay on point. As Stephen Covey, the esteemed writer of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* would say, begin with the end in mind.

If you follow the steps articulated in lesson one, you will begin by contemplating your avatars—or the different audiences that you want to influence. Begin by thinking about the ways that you would



like your audience to perceive you. The more clarity you can bring to that concept, the more successful you will become in knowing what to write—and what not to write. The more focus you can bring to the purpose of your writing, the more effective you will be at architecting your future.

Think of writing as your job. Once you define the purpose, then you may create a strategy that will help you answer the following questions:

How frequently should I write?

- What length of article should I write?
- Should I write a series of articles around a specific theme?
- Will the articles include references as a source of validation?
- How much humor is appropriate for my writing?
- How would staff members respond if they read my writing?
- How would the family members of other prisoners respond if they read my writing?
- How much should I reveal about daily activities inside the prison?
- Will my writing portray me in the manner that I want?

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Questions like those above can prove useful in guiding a writing strategy. They also can assist individuals who struggle with writer's block. By considering writing as “work” a “task” or as an “investment,” an individual may become more disciplined—understanding the relationship that writing has to the desired outcome.

Creativity will be the only limitation to the number of topics available. Every federal prison holds more than 100 people, and some federal prisons hold several thousand people. Considering that

every individual has a story, there shouldn't be any shortage of content to write about while in prison. The challenge is figuring out an angle that will relate the many stories that are available to the objective of reputation management. Consider the following examples of writing as a source of strength through struggle:

The text 'Writers Write' is written in a large, black, cursive font. The letters are thick and have a slightly irregular, hand-drawn quality. The 'W' at the beginning is particularly large and stylized, with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the left. The 'i' at the end is also stylized, with a small dot and a short tail.

- In his well-known book *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl wrote about his journey through Hitler's concentration camps. He wrote that individuals could create meaning in his or her life by helping others find strength through struggle.
- Nelson Mandela documented his journey in his biographies, including *Long Walk to Freedom*. Through that work, the world came to revere Mandela as a global leader of humanity and the embodiment of compassion.
- Martin Luther King's "Letter From the Birmingham Jail" inspires people, even decades after Dr. King was assassinated.

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Each of the above authors influenced his reputation because of the ways that he responded to struggle. The authors wrote not only about their own journey, but through their words, we could identify the greater human story. Rather than complaining about their own circumstances, they wrote of empowerment. Readers could identify with their work, feel inspired by their work, and see them as a source of great strength.

Few of us have the talent to become influential world leaders like Frankl, Mandela, or King, but we all can learn from their example. If you strive to influence your reputation from prison, write blogs, articles, or manuscripts that emulate such leaders. Instead of making excuses, people of influence write objectively. They focus on empowering principals, showing a path to strength, or optimal personal performance that anyone can admire. Then they set personal examples, showing how they live in accordance with those higher principles. Such an approach has been time-tested for centuries. If we use such strategies in our approach to reputation-management, we truly advance our prospects for success.



When writing from prison, it's also important to contemplate what not to write. Prison administrators are a cynical lot. If you're writing for publication, think about how administrators may perceive your words as being a "threat to the security or orderly running of the institution."

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The First Amendment provides every American with the right to communicate. But if prison officials deem that a prisoner's writing presents a threat to security, consequences follow. Those consequences generally mean time in the Special Housing Unit (SHU) for an investigation, or possibly for a disciplinary proceeding.

One prisoner provides an example of consequences that can follow for those who write about "the wrong thing" from inside a federal prison. Leigh Sprague, a former lawyer, writes frequently for several publications. His conversational style is both entertaining and informational. On August 28, 2014, however, [an article he wrote](#) for *Politico Magazine* resulted in his being placed in the SHU. From Mr. Sprague's perspective, he was simply sharing experiences of living in prison. Staff members, however, perceived his article as a "threat to security." Consequently, they locked him in segregation.

As with any decision, an individual should consider risks versus reward. Although it's true that authorities locked Mr. Sprague in the SHU for an investigation as a consequence of the article he published in *Politico*, it's also true that the wide forum for *Politico* has some benefits. For example, his cover story received considerable engagement from readers. The article resulted in:

- Facebook: 337 shares
- Twitter: 155 Tweets
- LinkedIn: 4 shares

That type of engagement may or may not have been worth the risk. The important take-away from this lesson is to understand that when writing for publication from prison, always contemplate the pros and the cons.

During the decades that I served, my writings led to some complications with prison authorities. On a few occasions, my writings

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resulted in time the SHU or transfers to other federal prisons across state lines. Despite those complications, the writings were part of my strategic plan for reputation management. By writing about the prison system, the people it holds, and strategies for growing



through confinement, I established myself as a credible authority. Rather than striving to live as a model inmate, I defined success as emerging successfully. Those writings resulted in media exposure, a revenue stream, a massive support network, and opportunities that allowed me to return to society strong.

It's crucial to contemplate the relationship between every word that you write while in prison, and the successful outcome you are engineering. You may avoid the ire of prison administrators if you refrain from writing about anything that administrators may consider inflammatory. Also, make sure those in your support network understand your strategy. That way, if complications arise, they will know precisely how you're defining success and understand that every decision you make has a purpose—directly relatable to your reputation-management strategy.

Here is your task for lesson five:

- What topics do you intend to cover you your reputation-management strategy?
- How will prison administrators react to your writing style?
- What strategies do you have in place to build your audience, to establish credibility, and to influence your reputation?

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6. Business from Inside

When embarking upon a writing career from inside of a federal prison, make sure that you give some consideration to money. Members from the FederalPrisonAdvice.com website have access to lessons that reveal the different disciplinary codes. Anyone who anticipates time in federal prison should learn about those codes long before they surrender to serve the sentence. Our “Blueprint,” along with other courses available for members is a valuable resource.



Those aspiring to publish as a mechanism to restore the reputation will want to know about one policy and one disciplinary code.

Program Statement Number 5350.27 governs “Inmate Manuscripts.” The “purpose and scope” of that program statement is:

- To encourage inmates to use their leisure time for creative writing and to permit the direct mailing of all manuscripts as ordinary correspondence.

That Program Statement authorizes inmates to write for publication.

But writers should also be aware of the Inmate Discipline Program (Program Statement Number 5270.09), especially code number 334. Disciplinary code 334 authorizes staff to punish individuals for:

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- Conducting a business, conducting or directing an investment transaction without staff authorization.

Although one program authorizes people in prison to write manuscripts for publication, another program statement is available to punish inmates for “conducting a business.” By understanding how administrators interpret these programs, the individual can work toward his reputation-management strategy without worries about having the adjustment process disrupted with unnecessary disciplinary proceedings.

During my imprisonment, I wrote [several books](#) under my name. They were available in bookstores across the country and administrators easily could see that the books generated revenues. In addition to those books that I wrote under my own name, other people in prison paid me to write books for them. The strategy for clients who retained me was to create a book that would reveal their version of events. They could use the book as a resource upon release whenever others asked about what happened. All of those revenue-generating writing projects harmonized with my reputation-management strategy. Since I understood policies and procedures of the prison system, I was able to prevail without much in the way of complications.



Others who understand the policies and program statements in prison can blog or write in ways to advance their business in-

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7. Blogging Tips from Justin:

When I was in prison, Michael convinced me to write blogs regularly. That strategy was consistent with the reputation that I wanted to build as an authority. Regardless of how frequently you write, develop content that will engage your specific reader. Additionally, since you're writing from prison, and you may be new to blogging, you may find some value in these resources I've compiled. I certainly benefited from such guidance and I'm convinced that you will also.

Simplify:

- Begin with thoughts about what you're striving to achieve. There are many reasons to make a commitment to blogging. To the extent that you simplify and keep your message on point, you will advance your cause. I challenged myself constantly to align my writing with the readers I was striving to attract. With each article, I focused on one of three goals:

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- Through writing, I wanted others to see me as a man of integrity—despite my conviction and imprisonment.
- Prison Consulting: Through writing, I wanted others to see value I could provide as a resource to help them through prison.
- Ethics lecturer: Through writing, I wanted prospective clients to see value I could provide as a speaker on ethical dilemmas that could lead to altercations with the criminal justice system.

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The three following blog examples show my approach for advancing those objectives:

[Eighty-two days until my release from Taft Federal Prison Camp](#)

[Avoid Television](#)

[USA Today Article on Fraud by Jim Ratley](#)

Think:

- Remember that your readers are busy. Think about the ways that your writing contributes to their interests. I didn't try to write for everyone. My audience was quite specific. They wanted to learn about the prison experience, or they wanted

KEYWORDS



lessons that could help them with dilemmas in the business environment. Each time I wrote a blog, I thought about my readers. Then, I tagged my articles with appropriate keywords that would ensure the right readers found the

right articles. The first three clients who retained me told me that they'd been reading the blogs I wrote from prison. One of them said, "I was excited about your release date! I wanted to hire you so that you could help me adjust as productively as you did." Without a doubt, the time and energy I devoted to blogging and publishing my books provided a worthwhile investment.

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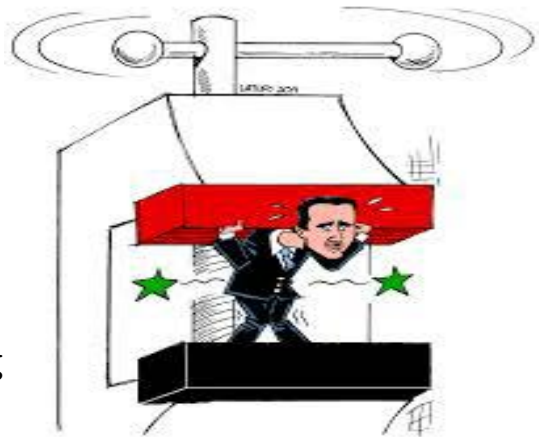
Data:

- Include data whenever possible to validate your position. If I wrote about a controversial subject, like the aggressive culture at the brokerage houses that employed me, I referenced articles from major publications. They authenticated my position by publicizing massive financial settlements banks paid to resolve their legal complications associated with a culture predicated on deceit. As an example, review the following blog:

[Eighty-Five Days Until My Release From Taft Federal Prison Camp](#)

No Pressure:

- The craft of writing did not come easily to me. I was more of a verbal communicator and I had to train myself how to write. Sometimes I felt pressured. The secret to success, I found, was to let go of the pressure. I didn't have to pretend that I was Mark Twain. In fact, there was value in writing about my writer's block. People could see that it was discipline and drive that kept me going. I think it gave them confidence that they, too, could overcome their challenges with effort. See the following blog as an example:



[Writer's Block From Federal Prison](#)

No negativity:

- Anticipate that administrators or other people in prison may see your work. One evening in prison a longer-term prisoner

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told me that his wife sent him my blogs. He read them all. He appreciated that instead of diatribes, my blogs always were positive. When I wrote about other prisoners, they were encouraging, like the following example I wrote about a fellow prisoner.

[Ninety-Five Days until my release from Taft Federal Prison Camp](#)

- I always tried to set a positive tone, with honesty, humility and transparency, as with the following example.

[Eight-Eight Days Until My Release From Taft Federal Prison Camp](#)

Finish:

- My good friend, Andrew Altchuk, who passed away in prison, used to complain about the amount of time he spent rewriting. I remember him saying, “Santos knocks out three books while I continue to examine each word I write over and over and over.” Andrew wrote beautifully, but he never mastered the following concept: The perfect is the enemy of the finished. Grow your network, document your journey, and establish your record of overcoming struggle. That strategy will inspire your network and prepare you for a better life after prison. Using the best possible verb isn’t nearly as crucial as finishing your work. Always strive to advance to the next article or chapter that will show you as being authentic.

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Headlines:

- Online marketers rave about the importance of a powerful headline. Headlines capture the attention of the readers you want to reach. For example, if you're writing for incoming prisoners think back to your Google searches before you surrendered. What headlines caught your attention? Two years ago I secured two new clients through a blog I wrote. They Googled best prisons in California and found the following blog I wrote:



[Top 5 Federal Prisons](#)

By following the strategies above, I was able to serve my time in prison productively. Some questioned my logic, or called me nuts for investing so much in the way of time, resources, and energy in documenting my journey. They didn't understand my commitment to writing so openly, thinking it would embarrass my family.

I dismissed the herd mentality. Instead, I focused on reputation management. The investment paid off.

Restoring my reputation required discipline and commitment. In the beginning, I had some trepidation about writing so openly. Concerns about how my family would react left me unsettled. Once I laid out my strategy, however, I learned that my family members appreciated my candor. They too suffered because of my tarnished reputation as a convicted felon. As I wrote, they came to understand

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me better. They looked forward to the regular posts I wrote on my blog.

In truth there was healing. In the end, I'm grateful that I made the commitment. Some of the people with whom I served time who once ridiculed me now call me looking for employment opportunities. In the end, the investment I made in reputation management was the best investment I ever made.

I encourage you to do the same!

Here is your task for lesson seven:

- In what way does your status influence your family members?
- How will writing openly influence the way your family members perceive you?
- What lessons can others learn from your experiences?

Summary:

Justin and I are glad to offer our insight for you as you embark upon your journey through prison. Always remember that it's never too late, and it's never too early to begin preparing for a successful outcome. More than anything else, we encourage you to take the necessary steps to manage your reputation.

As we've emphasized and reiterated through this course, we're absolutely convinced that you should document your journey. We suggest a blog, and for those who are particularly ambitious, we suggest that you publish books—or a series of books. If thought through properly, the investment you make in time and energy will result in credentials to assist you through prison and beyond. Justin and I both found that the extensive body of literary work we created resulted in:

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- Positioning us for the best experience in prison
- Advancing us for the earliest possible release from prison
- Enhancing our level of liberty in the halfway house
- Fewer restrictions from the probation officer who supervised our release
- More credibility when opening new business relationships
- Powerful tools in managing our reputations

As stated throughout this document, we're convinced that anyone who chooses to make the investment in reputation management can influence a better outcome.

What does it take?

For those who want to document success from struggle through a blog, consider the total investment prior to surrendering to prison. We recommend you anticipate all costs associated with the following necessary tasks:



- Register a domain name
- Build a website
- Create a template to follow
- Create a keyword strategy to attract your avatars
- Create search-engine optimization strategies
- Identify a dependable and trusted “key man”
- Teach your key man the nuisances of working with the Bureau of Prisons

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- Train your key man on how to use your Internet platform
- Create a process your key man can follow with regard to visiting the prison's centralized website to retrieve your reputation-management entries
- Create an electronic filing system so that all of your entries are kept in an easily categorized format
- Create a system for your key man to publish your writings
- Create a system for your key man to format your writings into an ebook or softcover book in the event that you choose to publish your book from prison



Financial investment to implement the strategy will vary. Some people will have the skillset to build their own website. They can then cut-out the expense of hiring a web developer. Their investment, then, will be limited to web hosting and any charges associated with expenses for the key man.

Those who want an alternative may choose to enroll in our introductory service. We're charging an introductory rate of a one-time setup fee of \$297 to create your own page within the EtikaLLC.com website. In addition to the low, one-time charge to offset our setup costs, we will create a recurring, automated, \$30-per-month charge to your credit card to host your blog. Those recurring monthly charges will offset our costs associated with the tasks identified above. By hosting your blog on EtikaLLC.com you will receive many benefits, including the following:

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- Receive the benefit that comes from massive traffic to our website
- Receive the benefit of our search-engine optimization techniques
- Receive the benefit of our key-word rich strategy
- Receive the benefit of our oversight to protect your blogs that can lead to problems with prison administrators
- Receive the benefit of our commitment to building a best-in-class platform showing others how that they can restore their reputations and live a life of dignity—even after serving a prison term.

If you'd like to participate in our turnkey and on-going reputation management course, sign up by sending an email to us now!

[I want to begin building my reputation management strategy.](#)



[Click to view Justin's video welcoming you to our Reputation Management program](#)



[Some of the books I wrote as part of my reputation management strategy from prison](#)

MichaelSantos.com / EtikaLLC.com
JP@FederalPrisonAdvice.com

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Call Justin: 818-424-2220

Reputation Management

Should you make the wise decision of joining our Reputation Management program by blogging on our platform, you must accustom yourself to our process, as follows:

1. Send your your photo in a jpeg image, preferably 300x300 pixels to Reputation@Etikallc.com
2. Send your short bio, preferably less than 100 words, for the side of your blog. [For a sample, visit this link.](#)
3. Type a “Thank You” message that we will autosend to those who opt in to your blog.
4. Provide us with a mailing address to comply with anti-spam laws (you may use our P.O. Box if you prefer.
5. Add Reputation@Etikallc.com to your list of approved emails once you surrender to prison.
6. Send any written correspondence to following address: Etika, LLC / Reputation Program / P.O. Box 261908 / Encino, CA 91426 **(all blogs must come in digital format!)**
7. When you email your blogs from prison, follow this format with each email:

- Subject line: Insert the title of your blog
- First line of text: Insert subheading
- Second line: Insert appropriate keywords
- Insert a space and then begin writing your blog entry

If you have aspirations of converting your blog into a softcover book or an ebook, then let us know. We will convert all of your writings into an editable Word document and we also can assist you with formatting to publish your own book that will help you manage your reputation. Get started today! Inquire about ghost writing!

