The International Family Offices Journal

Editor: Nicola Saccardo

Editorial

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News section

Selection from STEP News Digests





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Relationship of family business and wealth owners with social media today: online privacy, trust, data and reputation

Iraj Ispahani and Charlie Bain

The Editor is delighted to include in this issue of the Journal an edited transcript of an interesting and enlightening conversation at a recent webinar between Iraj Ispahani of Ispahani Advisory and Charlie Bain of Digitalis on the subject of dealing with social media.

Iraj Ispahani: Before Charlie and I begin our conversation, it gives me great pleasure to introduce Nicola Saccardo, Editor of *The International Family Offices Journal*, who will say a few words of introduction.

Nicola Saccardo: Thank you very much and good afternoon to all the attendees. I'm a partner at the international law firm Charles Russell Speechlys and, as mentioned by Iraj, Editor of The International Family Offices Journal, co-published by Globe Law and Business and STEP. Thank you, Iraj, for involving the Journal in this excellent initiative. Iraj and the team at Ispahani Advisory, as well as Charlie and the team at Digitalis, have contributed outstanding articles to the Journal on the topics of family businesses, family offices and responsible wealth ownership. I'm delighted to have the chance to listen to Iraj and Charlie, and mention that, in due course, a transcript of the conversation will be published in the Journal. So thank you very much again Iraj and Charlie. I look forward to listening to your conversation.

Iraj: Welcome Charlie and thank you for making the time to join me in this conversation. Before we jump into it, I thought I'd just like to frame the discussion a little bit. I came across a quote from Benjamin Franklin who once said, "it takes many good deeds to build a good reputation, and only one bad one to lose it". Personal safety and reputation and that of the family are paramount and one's own reputation is among the hardest and most important assets to establish. But it's also the easiest to lose and the most difficult to restore. This is one reason why at Ispahani Advisory we have encouraged families to take an integrated approach to effective risk management, mindful of all stakeholders, both family and nonfamily, within an overall risk management framework. Proactive reputation management has not been given enough attention among the families we know, and

that's one of the reasons we're particularly keen to have this discussion with you Charlie, to get your perspective on it. It seems that too often it still takes a crisis to bring some focus to reputation management.

For family businesses and family members, living and operating in today's data-rich digital age has brought many advantages. But, of course, there are also lots of risks inherent in it. Our view, and again I'd love to get your perspective on this, is that protecting one's assets and one's reputation requires both discipline and a strategic approach, not just deploying some interventions and certain tactics episodically. What does continuing hygiene protocols or a system of digital health or reputation management look like? I'd like to try to focus on what families and family offices could be doing to embed the right behaviours and processes to protect family privacy and reputation and engender trust. Perhaps you could help us during this conversation to develop a sort of roadmap or some milestones on the journey that we should think about. Good protocols and things that we should perhaps integrate into how we operate. In the first instance, perhaps you could help us to understand how Digitalis itself works and how it combines partners with professional services firms, including lawyers and other companies.

Charlie Bain: Absolutely. Thank you for inviting me and hopefully I can impart some useful guidance during this conversation. In answer to your question, I'm delighted you started with the Benjamin Franklin quote, because that was one of the reasons why our company was launched 12 years ago, and it was all about trying to help clients navigate this new internet revolution. If you look at the internet, Google started in 2000, but the explosion really started with Facebook in 2008, followed by Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat. Suddenly a family reputation perhaps built over many generations could be destroyed in seconds, with one rogue Facebook posting, one tweet, one negative review, and I guess the speed of a collapse in

the internet age can be quite alarming. So I guess we're all really about finding any potentially damaging information online on behalf of our clients. There are millions of bits of digitised information in each digital footprint.

So we look at that and then critically analyse it for reputational risk and then advise clients on how to manage it and put your best side forward to the world. Recently we've become the third seat at the board table alongside some brilliant PR and communications professionals. We also work with wonderful privacy lawyers. I think that as a trio we're a powerful triumvirate. We all bring something different to the table. We all offer different but complementary advice. We're doing some fascinating work at the moment by looking forward to generative AI and how that affects reputation, which is very exciting. But it's not all about the bad. I mean, we're going to talk about the risks and it's important that we do. But I will also stress that the internet can be a good place for business when harnessed correctly, with the right guardrails in place.

Iraj: You make a good point, because multigenerational family legacy is very important. Generally, they're proud of it. There are some aspects of legacy they may be less proud of, but it is considering that legacy in the light of how things are viewed today, which is also important. How we present ourselves in today's market is crucial. Legacy can be a burden but generally people are proud of what they have achieved over time, particularly entrepreneurs and founder businesses, they are proud of what they have built. Perhaps they have established a healthy business, employed people and built a good reputation. The brand has goodwill associated with it. And I think it is to your point, having that goodwill buffer is an important part of investing in trust and reputation, which is just as important or even more important than the crisis mitigation. And one could argue that the stronger the buffer, the more resilience you have against the challenges that may come. So that takes me then into the operating landscape for wealth and business owners and entrepreneurs today. What do you see as the biggest challenges in reputation management? We have all heard about

disinformation, the hostile third party, the threats of AI, deep fake representations, and misrepresentations. How does one make sense of these and would you prioritise some over others, or do all need to be considered?

Charlie: That's a very good question and I might answer it fully because there's quite a lot there. First of all, the challenges. I think it's an obvious thing to say but gone are the days of the 80s and 90s when we had a morning and evening newspaper and the 9 o'clock news. The big change is the volume of information out there which we have to keep on top of. There are 500 million tweets a day and if one of those is about you, you need to know about it and you need to know whether or not to respond. I think that's one of the areas which is a big challenge. This is the new town square, the public place for free speech and public discourse. It does turn into an information battleground and keeping on top of it is really a 24/7 job. The second thing is, as you rightly say, accuracy. The one thing that I've seen in the last three years is that the internet has become a playground for disinformation, a worrying rise in disinformation. The way I look at it is that a lot of the world went online during Covid. Interestingly, a lot of people were kept at home and started using social media for the first time.

Much of the disinformation around Covid, of which we did a lot of tracking, was really concerning. We've also seen what we believe to be a fall in the standard content moderation on social media. There has also been a rise of deepfakes, particularly in politics, and maybe we can talk about deepfakes for a second and then bring it back to the family, because I think that's important. But what are deepfakes? Why are people so worried about them? You may recall three years ago I contributed a chapter to a book which you edited, and I wrote in there that I was worried about deepfakes, particularly around politics. What are they? They are videos created by what was Hollywood software which was then very expensive. It's now democratised and available to pretty much anybody. It allows people to create a video of an individual which looks like them, sounds like them, but isn't them. And this can be very dangerous in the

Much of the disinformation around Covid, of which we did a lot of tracking, was really concerning. We've also seen what we believe to be a fall in the standard content moderation on social media. Google is 4% of the internet and we think of it a bit like an iceberg. So the tip of the iceberg is above the sea, and that's 4%. That's what you see and search. The other 96% of the internet is the deep web.

wrong hands. There are video deepfakes, audio deepfakes and what's called shallow fakes. Recently, the head of the UK Security Service said he was particularly worried that the deepfakes were going to affect both the US and UK elections next year.

He's absolutely right. Some 2 billion people are going to vote next year as there's expected to be 50 elections including the UK, US, but also the EU, South Africa and India. Very recently we had what some internet watchers are calling the first ever election, in Slovakia, which was possibly influenced by deepfakes. That was an audio deepfake which went online and alleged that one of the candidates was discussing various ways to rig votes and also to raise alcohol prices. What that did was immediately cast doubt and worry in voters' minds. Some people are saying that potentially would have swayed the outcome of that election, although the jury's still out on the accuracy of that because people are still analysing it. The leader of the UK Labour Party, Sir Keir Starmer, was also the victim of an audio deepfake when he was at the 2023 Labour Party conference, so this is starting to creep in and I think it's going to be a big concern next year. It's not just politics, it also affects the markets. We saw a deepfake go live of the Pentagon on fire last year, and that caused markets to crash briefly. So this is something which can spread very quickly before the trusted media can investigate to find out whether an image is actually real.

To bring it back to the family. I think one area where I've seen a rise is in audio deepfakes. Audio deepfakes are incredibly easy to make. One of my team tells me that there are sites on the internet which will make an audio deepfake for \$1, and an incredibly realistic one as well. And we've seen an instance where one or two families have been tricked into this by fraudsters. So, a fraudster alleging to have kidnapped someone's daughter, calls and using her voice on the telephone to say "Mum, I've been kidnapped, please, wire the money within an hour otherwise I will be a killed". The kidnapper then comes on the line and says this is real, you need to send the money. Of course, it's not the real daughter. It's an audio deepfake of her voice. But the family doesn't realise that because they're panicked and they wire the money. It's things like that which are starting to emerge. One family I know is worried about this so much that they've created a family password, which I think is very important if that does happen to them. And, of course, in the heat of the moment, in this particular case, the daughter was just the other side of America and very much around. But the family didn't know that and believed it was her voice. I think there's a concerning new world out there. And, of course, it all goes back first and foremost to the digital footprint.

Iraj: So essentially it is these things that are affecting politics and business. They are all technology driven, misrepresentation or fraud, etc. And these, of course, could equally start affecting families and their environment. What approaches, in terms of thinking about risk identification and reputation management, are there? Are there frameworks that you're aware of or ways that you advise families to think quite holistically about reputation management, for instance, are there things like a reputation risk register? Is there some kind of audit-led assessment on some health checks, that you could suggest because I'm sure some people who are listening today will be at the early stages of thinking about this, but others may be much more evolved in their thinking.

Charlie: I think you're spot on. And again, just going back to how long the internet has been around. Let's say it's been 15 years. It's a vast digital library about you. And what we find is that clients probably only know about 60% of what's online about them, but the other 40% they have no idea exists. Now, this could be information which has been written or said about them, which they haven't seen. This could be paper archives that have been digitised and actually, if you look at the internet, it's interesting what you see on the likes of search engines. Google is 4% of the internet and we think of it a bit like an iceberg. So the tip of the iceberg is above the sea, and that's 4%. That's what you see and search. The other 96% of the internet is the deep web. That's the publicly available part of the web, which is non-indexed by search engines. It's all there. It's for anybody to click around and find information. A small percentage of the deep web is the dark web which is where, for example, drugs and guns are sold.

If you are talking about privacy breaches, it may involve a hostile third party. It could be an activist in his or her bedroom in south London wanting to cause harm, a disgruntled employee or a hostile journalist. It could be all manner of people. But what they tend to do is find the vulnerabilities in your deep web footprint, which is publicly available, and then use that to recycle it back into a trusted media publication. So knowing your deep web footprint is critical and, a bit like going to the doctor, you should have regular health checks on your digital footprint, at least every six months, and you should be monitoring it a bit like you would monitor a health app. You should also have some monitoring software which is continually telling you what's what and what's going online about you, so you can take a quick decision on its risk.

Iraj: Again, that is very helpful. So to everyone who is wondering what proactive actually means in this context, it is that the first step that one can take which is to find out what information currently exists about you in the wider world, which you may not be aware of and from that you can start forming a view in terms of what mitigation steps need to be taken and then how to monitor them. Am I right that the threats will also change over time?

Charlie: Yes, they will. Absolutely right. And of course, what's in your historical digital footprint will change because there's more content being created about you on a daily basis. Again, we're talking about the volume and speed of a reputational crisis these days. You need to know instantly when something is happening. You need to get professional advice on the direction that conversation is going. And then you need to make a decision as to what you're going to do, preferably with your in-house communications adviser, who will hopefully have the experience to judge on whether you respond or not. But again, it's finding these things on the web when they appear and they often appear on some digital platform. It may be a comment beneath a newspaper article. It may be something that's put onto a Wikipedia page. It may be on Twitter, it may be on Telegram. You need to know that it's there.

Iraj: I think it's important as well for a family to define what the entity actually is. Because if you have a family business, well, it's the family and the family business. Both of those organisations have to operate effectively and the monitoring needs to be across both. Some families don't have a business, but they have other interests. And so one has to think about all the different stakeholders. That again is something which the digital world has created – your stakeholder management has also got to be much more proactive and work in both directions.

Charlie: Absolutely right. On the subject of stakeholder engagement, which is a concern, the question is when and when not to comment. I know that you and I have spoken before about how to control a narrative in this very noisy world where everybody's got a view, where there is a natural inclination to comment, to get involved in the argument or to try and steer the narrative. And it's almost become sort of *de rigueur* to do it. There's a saying in football, you put your foot on the ball and look up. And I think that before you get involved in a conversation online, you have to think very clearly about why you are doing this. If you're going to share a comment, you have to make it relevant to your business. You have to understand that if you're qualified to talk about it, don't just enter the argument because you feel that you have to or you feel passionately or emotionally about it. The second thing is always check how you score on the matter. If we're going to talk about something, what do we look like in this particular area. It may be a particular area of ESG, for example. People ask me what's the biggest pitfalls for families when it comes to getting involved in things which perhaps they're not qualified to talk about or don't understand. And I think probably it's politics. There are a number of families who have given political donations without properly understanding the reputational impacts and how journalists and others translate what a political donation does, because it becomes a matter of public interest at that point. Who are you? Why have you done it? You potentially could face scrutiny so that's one area I would caution about.

People ask me what's the biggest pitfalls for families when it comes to getting involved in things which perhaps they're not qualified to talk about or don't understand. And I think probably it's politics.

One thing the media abhor is hypocrisy. So if you are going out there with a communications strategy and any of the great PR experts we work with will tell you this, it has to be honest, it has to be a true representation of the business.

Iraj: You mentioned that it's a noisy world with increased activism and we've talked about multiple stakeholders. With this in mind, is it equally important to communicate what you stand for as it is for what you stand against? The other part of this question is are there a lot of families who still wish this would all go away and think it's fine to stay quiet and hope that they can continue to operate under the radar? Is that an advisable approach, or do they need to come out into the open?

Charlie: That's a really interesting question and one that I have so many conversations with private families about. Ten years ago you could have no digital footprint and it would be absolutely fine. And I think the natural reaction from a lot of families is I don't want an internet presence. I don't need one. I'm not a public company. I'm not a listed company, why do I need one of these now? I'm afraid, in 2023, that's very ill-advised. You have to have something and the reason for that is if you don't have some sort of online presence, it's suspicious. That doesn't mean you have to open the door on your life to the entire world. You don't have to tell the world everything about the family and the intricacies of it, you can control the narrative. You can put out your own digital assets, what you want the world to see and we wouldn't advise clients to talk too much about the family and the family wealth and holidays etc. But definitely having something is very important.

Iraj: Let's think about the reputation and stakeholder perception, understanding the gap between what families claim to be, what they claim to stand for, and actual perception outside the family. But that sometimes sets families up for workplace vulnerability. So how does one try to avoid that mismatch? And what are the salutary lessons that you've seen where families have gone wrong and what they might learn from it?

Charlie: Again, another good question. There's a great saying, which is that reputation is what people say about you when you leave the room. You don't own your reputation, it's given to you. And I think that's a very good saying. You can control your reputation online or you can certainly try to control it and you

can certainly put the narrative and the family story out there. But you have to be very careful about anything which would mean that hypocrisy is going to be levelled at you. One thing the media abhor is hypocrisy. So if you are going out there with a communications strategy and any of the great PR experts we work with will tell you this, it has to be honest, it has to be a true representation of the business. If you say you're an ethical company with great governance, you need to make sure you are. And one of the reasons for that is, again, what we said at the beginning, there is a digital library out there. If you haven't done this properly, someone will go back into your footprint from 10 years ago and they will find something where you've been hypocritical or you've contradicted what you're trying to do, and they will find it and they will pull you up on it. It is something that people have to be incredibly careful about. The internet, as we say, has a memory. We had a client recently who tweeted something in 2013, which in 2013 was absolutely fine, but in a 2023 context was inappropriate. And that's the speed of the way that the world has changed and also the growth of the internet library.

Iraj: As I was reflecting on this I was thinking of a couple of examples where I've seen this can go badly wrong. One example would be where you have a family business which prides itself on looking after its employees, but actually the employee satisfaction scores are pretty lousy. The employees are going on strike because they're not being paid enough, there are disputes, unions getting involved. That's a problem. That's a disconnect. You're not an employer of choice. You're not looking out for your staff's welfare. You're not perceived to be looking after people. So, again, one has to be really careful, particularly today, of those sorts of things because in the past people might have made those claims, but they wouldn't have been scrutinised or questioned and they could have continued to claim them. The other example is families who might fund children's primary and secondary education, but in their business supply chain there may be child labour detected. There are situations arising like this today, which is why I said at the outset we encourage people to take an integrated

view of their own world. It's very important because this is all about being thorough and avoiding surprises, which may allow someone, who is not motivated to be helpful, to actually exploit this.

If we move on now into drilling down again into stakeholders. We've talked about employees, regulators, tax authorities, NGOs, communities in which a family operates.

There is also, of course, a lot of information today driven by the Common Reporting Standard particularly with governments and tax authorities. There's also a lot of information available through the media with rich lists and top tax payers' lists. There's pressure from the media also for disclosure of beneficial owner information. So with all of these things, in a world which is full of inequality, inevitably wealth and business owners are going to come under greater scrutiny. I wonder, do you see that with the families that you work with and advise? Do you see their definition of stakeholders as broadly as I've outlined here or not?

Charlie: I'm not a tax expert, but we have had conversations around that area. And I think one of the reasons is because what we're really doing is looking at a digital footprint and analysing it for reputational risk. But let's remember that a digital footprint is not just being looked at by people who want to cause problems or ruin or modify a reputation. It's also being looked at by tax authorities, the people who are trying to understand the true extent of someone's wealth. Someone reminded me the other day that HMRC in the UK invested, I think it was in 2017, £100 million in a software called Connect, which actually accesses open source information in order to try and find irregularities and anomalies in someone's tax footprint. And that's all publicly available information. So, again, it goes back to knowing what's there and understanding what's there about you, despite how careful you might have been with your footprint. The other interesting new area is ownership of property. The media, for many years now, have agitated around the land registry and how properties, particularly in London, can be owned in offshore trusts, which would disguise the identity of

the owner. To a certain extent that has changed with the beneficial ownership registry, which came in a while ago now, but a number of families who potentially did do that, mainly for privacy reasons, have found that their names are now being revealed. And, of course, that leads to privacy concerns around their home address.

Iraj: So let's move now from the external environment to the internal. As we know, families have a great ability to survive anything the external world can throw at them. But the ability to disrupt themselves internally goes on and on. So in the context of today's conversation, let's turn to the next generation. And two questions really, because I know this is an area of particular expertise for you. So how digitally private are the socially media active next generation, and how can the next generation avoid inadvertently compromising a family's reputation?

Charlie: They are great questions. I'm going to take the second one first, if I may, because I think we, and me in particular, and all of us are digital artists who often talk unfairly about the next gens. That's millennials or Gen Z if we have to put labels on. But how they can potentially cause problems for a family reputation by what they put on social media. The classic scenario is the family office is run by a matriarch and patriarch since the 60s or 70s. They're not active on social media. They don't understand it and don't want to understand it and are a little bit scared of it. Then along come the next gen and they're putting pictures online and comments, and suddenly the family find themselves catapulted into the public domain and on the front page of a newspaper. Now, you know, it's funny, when we were younger, all of us, when we were growing up, were told that when you go outside, you don't talk to strangers. You know, when you go outside, you look left and right before you cross the road. And I think these conversations around social media and what you put online have to really start at the heart of the family around the dinner table at a very early age because it is so much part of life now for children and teenagers growing up. One thing that I would never advise is saying to a teenager, stop

The classic scenario is the family office is run by a matriarch and patriarch since the 60s or 70s. They're not active on social media. They don't understand it and don't want to understand it and are a little bit scared of it.

The media don't like secrecy, but they'll understand privacy in most cases, so that's important.

using social media. Those of us who have had teenage children know that the minute you tell a teenager as a father or mother what to do, they'll do exactly the opposite. So it's never going to help anybody to say, stop using it, get off social media.

The answer is really to continue using it, but use it safely and securely. Be aware of what can happen if you put a bit of information online and the way it can travel and affect the family. So a lot of it is awareness training. Secondly, it's around privacy settings and knowing their followers and friends, it's not going to harm their enjoyment of social media if it's limited to friends and family and not to the wider public. Again, we spend a lot of time sometimes coming in as an impartial third party and sitting down on behalf of mum and dad. And I have to say that I have brilliant young staff who do this and are much better at this than me because they can talk the language of a teenager closer than I can. But they talk about this awareness and the privacy settings. In answer to your second question, I'm seeing a huge change in the next generation and internet privacy in the last five years in particular. Five to 10 years ago, it was all Facebook, Instagram, now a lot more of the next gen have moved to closed social media, that's WhatsApp, Snapchat. They're much more aware that people can see what they put online. They are acutely aware that it could affect university and job applications and so they are starting to become brilliant at disguising themselves online. But, of course, the threat is still there because what you send down a WhatsApp channel can still be screenshot and put online and made public. So, moving to a closed social channel is not necessarily the solution.

Iraj: So that's a step in in the right direction. One of the situations which I see with some family businesses is where the family name and the family brand and business are the same and that requires very careful risk management. In a family, the next generation have to be treated and should be treated as individuals. They are very keen on the 'I' but there also has to be an understanding of where the cohesive 'We' of the family fits in, because otherwise, again, there can be unintended consequences. So there is this space for family education and awareness creation, which I think again is something which you do quite a lot of at Digitalis.

Charlie: Yes, it should be really at the heart of it. And to avoid what we call going off the central reservation and we have all of us seen it. And it's something which can be deeply troubling when it does happen. So work on it early, thinking about it is critical.

Iraj: Okay. So now we're going to move into the practical guidance because there are some questions which came in earlier. And there are questions coming in thick and fast on the chat as well. So, first let me put a few questions I have here and then we'll take the ones from the chat. If you are a low-profile family and putting your head above the parapet is necessary in the new digital world, but fills the family with dread and is against their ethos and culture, what would your advice be?

Charlie: Well, I think two things. First of all, we go back to having to have a digital footprint, which again, is important. And I think that's something which the family will have to just learn to understand. It's a journey and can be a painful journey becoming a little bit more public. But again, we have a mantra here which is 'transparent but private'. You have to be transparent to the world, but you can be private. You shouldn't be secret because there's a big difference between secrecy and privacy. The media don't like secrecy, but they'll understand privacy in most cases, so that's important. And the second thing is, and I often say this, I'm not a traditional communications adviser, but I'm sure they'll back me up here when I say that if a member of the family, a figurehead of the family, hates doing media or doesn't want to do an interview, or it fills him or her with dread, then don't do it. Because if you do it and you hate it, you'll be no good at it. So get someone else to do it – there's no reason why you need to do it. Get someone from outside or inside the family who does enjoy it and is good at it, but don't feel you have to go out and do interviews and face the media.

Iraj: It's a good segue into next question. If a communications crisis suddenly hits a private family, what are your tips for how to handle it? As a first responder what do you do?

Charlie: Okay, I'd say three things. First, and this is so important in a crisis, how a brand or a family or a business responds in a crisis becomes a litmus test for its integrity. I think one of the key areas where

businesses and families trip up is sometimes they think the crisis is all about them. So rule number one in my book is to remember the victims. Remember who is affected. Is it your staff? Is it stakeholders? And you remember them first and you think about yourself second. That's really important. The second thing is never lie. Again, I'm sounding like a father at the dinner table here but if you lie in response to a journalist or a media organisation, the cover up is always worse than the crime. You will get found out. Don't feel tempted to do it, because it'll always come back to bite you. And the third thing I would say is not something you would expect me to say, but be polite. Journalists are often shouted at. They're frequently treated badly. You have to remember, they have a job to do.

And of course when you're polite to them, it disarms them. They're not used to being treated well. One of my clients was doorstepped by the media after he was catapulted into a crisis. His response was that they were conducting an investigation, and once that investigation was complete, they would release a statement. But the media doorstepped him for two weeks and every single day he came out and he gave the assembled media cups of tea. At the end of the day, he went and got the empty mugs. He did this for two weeks. After two weeks they went away - they rang their offices and said that he's not going to speak, so we may as well leave. And by the way, just to let you know, he's actually a very good guy. But that kindness, that politeness filtered back to the news editor. I think it had a great effect on the treatment that he got when the media ultimately covered the story. It's a small thing, but my mother says a cup of tea always makes things right.

Iraj: Your mother's right! And I fully subscribe to the importance and benefits of a good cup of tea! I have a final question before we go to the questions from the audience. Most high-profile or prominent families have a Wikipedia page which often lists family history achievements, but quite often, as we know, it is riddled with inaccuracies. But it's often taken as gospel. How does Wikipedia actually work? What would your advice be, particularly if there are things that are misrepresenting the family?

Charlie: Wikipedia is a minefield, and the reason why

I can understand that question coming through is because Wikipedia is the eighth most visited website in the world. If you are a high-profile individual or a business, you've probably got a Wikipedia page, and that page probably ranks quite high on your Google profile, maybe even at the top. So what's on it is critical. And not only that, but all of us are going to have to face something called a 'generative reputation' very soon. We've probably got one already. That's what you look like in ChatGPT, what you look like in Bard, what you look like in Anthropic, which are these new chat bots, and they take Wikipedia as part of their data to give you your reputation. So the accuracy of a Wikipedia page is so important and we could do a whole seminar on it. But my advice is that you have to follow the Wikipedia guidelines. There are all sorts of temptations to try and change information. But it is best to follow the Wikipedia guidelines, be transparent about what you think is inaccurate, and the community will respond and respect that.

Iraj: So let's move into the questions on the chat. Going back to the early part of our conversation, could you elaborate a little bit more about how the family password works? Are there any top three do's or don'ts?

Charlie: I think it's always good to have a family password. One would hope you would never need to use it, but a time this would have worked very well was in that particular AI generated alleged kidnap case I referred to, because if the AI generated voice had come on pretending to be the daughter, and the family had said to the alleged kidnapper, or in this case, the fraudster, will you please ask my daughter to give the family password so we can prove her identity? Of course, they wouldn't have been able to have done that because it was AI generated and they were preparing these voice clones before the call. So I think it's very useful in all sorts of real-life circumstances. Again, it depends on the threat to the family. Some families will be at a higher risk of cancer and others won't. But I think it's something which is just worth doing and having, even if you never need to use it. And don't use the family pet name, especially if it's on Wikipedia!

Iraj: Clearly, you've hit the target for a number of

I'm sounding like a father at the dinner table here but if you lie in response to a journalist or a media organisation, the cover up is always worse than the crime.

There are platforms which are deemed safe and unsafe or allegedly unsafe. There's the metaverse at the moment, which a lot of parents are worried about, but I think one of the areas that one should always check with children of a certain age is what privacy settings have you got on?

parents here because the next question is how about the rising next generation and their use of platforms? Are there some that are safer than others, and how do you encourage the rising next generation to control their own and the family's narrative?

Charlie: Again, I think this really goes back to privacy settings because one of the things all of these platforms do is offer all sorts of privacy controls, and understanding those privacy controls and exploring them is really important. There are platforms which are deemed safe and unsafe or allegedly unsafe. There's the metaverse at the moment, which a lot of parents are worried about, but I think one of the areas that one should always check with children of a certain age is what privacy settings have you got on? And then to move the conversation towards the followers. Do you know your followers? Do you know your followers well? Are your followers on there? It's surprising what you can potentially weed out. Secondly, if you put the privacy settings on, a lot of that can't be seen by a hostile third party who then can't pick it up and potentially use it against you or the family.

Iraj: That is sage and practical advice. We have a different dimension next, an international question. Do you see any differences in threats or challenges faced by family businesses in different parts of the world, for example, Asia versus the Middle East? How about in China, where the characteristics of its internet can be quite different from the rest of the world?

Charlie: That's a very good question. I will just talk about my experiences in the Middle East as that was mentioned. We've recently opened an office there and one of the things that I'm interested in about the Middle East is the lack of an internet presence from some of the families there. Again, that's really because we're helping a family there. This family has an impeccable reputation, has done business for 40 years but doesn't have an online presence. So it's trying to support the family in understanding that

when they open up internationally, it would be wise to have digital assets abroad. It is an interesting journey and one which we're really enjoying. I hope the family are also finding it interesting and helpful. But Saudi Arabia, for example, is a huge user of Twitter and social media in the Middle East generally is absolutely booming. And it's just growing day by day. Again, understanding that region and its use of social media apps is another fascinating study for me.

Iraj: That question could frame a whole separate discussion to this. The next question is picking up on your mentioning how one monitors one's online presence. And the question is, given the speed of developments, how often should one do this and would family offices be able to do this monitoring on behalf of the families they work with?

Charlie: I think the question is really around AI, specifically generative AI. It's fascinating and another reason to look at your digital footprint. I'm convinced – and I'm putting myself on the line here - but I don't think any of us will be using Google in five years' time. I think we're going to be asking ChatGPT, Who is Charlie Bain? Who is Iraj Ispahani? And we're going to get a very quick readout on our reputations from ChatGPT. At the moment, ChatGPT and others are not yet trusted enough, they've got a lot of problems to iron out, especially with the sorts of conclusions that they're coming up with. It's a bit like the mobile phone back in 1985. You remember the brick-size phones - they were big, but the battery was bad and the signal was not very good. You ended up putting it down and going back to the landline. That's what we're doing today. We're using ChatGPT to find information, but we're finding that a lot of it is inaccurate so we are going back to Google. But I think that will change soon. Again, it goes back to the digital footprint, where's ChatGPT getting its information from to make a decision on your reputation? It's the internet. It's your digital footprint. Making sure the information is accurate will help your ChatGPT reputation.

Iraj: Should families therefore be developing a generative AI policy now or is it premature?

Charlie: It's something which a lot of companies are already doing. There was a famous case, I don't want to get it wrong, but it was a big multinational company and some of their coders were going on and asking questions of ChatGPT but at the same time imparting confidential code. So you have to be very careful what you do in this area, because if you do inadvertently put confidential or proprietary information into ChatGPT, then obviously it's going to use that as a training method, and it's going to start making decisions around the keywords that you're talking about. So a lot of companies have banned it as it's triggered all sorts of scandals. There's one today around music and using music to train AI. There was a scandal with Zoom recently where Zoom was accused of using data on Zoom to train its AI, and it had to clarify that it wasn't and its terms and conditions were changed. So it's a big new area and we're going to hear much more about it going forward.

Iraj: Finally, some related questions before we bring this fascinating discussion to a close. And these are along the lines of the fact that the news cycle moves on and bad news gets buried along the way. But is there any analysis about the difference of half-lives of different news? How long do negative or harmful effects last? As we get more and more information every day, do we forget the bad news more quickly?

Charlie: I think I might frame this in Google actually, because that's a place we always go to find information about someone. Interestingly, the answer to that is on the Google News tab. If there's negative news in the non-digital world, it tends to quickly get drowned out by its positive counterpart. But on the

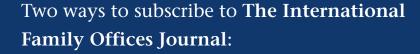
Google All page, that isn't necessarily the case, because Google has 150 different factors when it decides to place a URL on the first page of Google. One of those is clicks, and sadly, because of human nature, negative news is always going to get more clicks than its positive counterpart. So if you don't somehow manage that, the negative news will always end up at the top of your Google profile. And the positive, wonderful work that you're doing can sometimes get drowned out without proper advice.

Iraj: On that note, I'd like to say on behalf of Ispahani Advisory and all our guests today, a huge thank you to you for your guidance, for your playing with a straight bat, providing a roadmap, which was what I was hoping that you would do at the outset and also for highlighting both the opportunities for good reputations to remain good and for challenging situations to be dealt with openness and engagement. As you said, transparent but private, not secret. And I would use that to sum up what we've discussed today. There are coping mechanisms, there are proactive mechanisms and there is the importance of working with all stakeholders in society. Because of where we come from at Ispahani Advisory we've always felt that wealth ownership is a force for good and that wealth owners around the world have been primarily beneficial for the societies in which they've operated. But often it's the bad actors who dominate the news and the headlines. And just as you said, it's negative coverage that attracts most attention. Before we draw things to close, I'd also like to thank Nicola Saccardo and The International Family Offices Journal and also Globe Law and Business, who are our publishers, and of course, Nicky Fourie, without whom none of this would have taken place. So a big thank you to everyone for joining us and have a very good rest of the afternoon. Goodbye.

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