

# Five reputation recovery steps if your name emerges in #GuptaLeaks

By [Vincent Magwenya](#)

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**1. Prepare yourself:** By now you would have observed that some of the individuals whose names appear in the leaked emails by members of the Gupta family and their associates, were not necessarily people involved in their business dealings. They may have simply been candidates for public sector positions, thinking their competence is being assessed through formal channels of state, all the while they were being sanctioned in Saxonwold.

So, take some time to recall if by any chance your name could still appear or if you may have innocently accepted an invitation to the compound. Don't be in denial. Start jotting down your recollection of the events leading up to the invitation and what transpired thereafter.



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**2. Consult a reputation management expert:** A reputation management expert will assist you with the packaging of your response in the event journalists call you. You will also get the benefit of giving the media a concise and consistent response. Furthermore, you will receive the added benefit of a press office function as you will direct all calls to the expert who will manage the media traffic on your behalf and ensure that all media queries are attended to. Remember, in the public's eye, "so and so was unavailable for comment" is seen as an admission of guilt.

No matter how many times you would have engaged the media before, a quick media training session for various media interviews and platforms is vital in presenting a credible and authentic story.

Lastly, monitoring and tracking what is reported after you have made or issued a statement will be vital. The reputation management expert will assist with monitoring and analysing media coverage and subsequent conversations on social media. Proper monitoring may inform the need for more communication where necessary.

**3. Inform your key stakeholders:** Even though the Guptas have not been found guilty of any crime in a court of law, the court of public opinion seems to have delivered a verdict against the family. It is therefore important that you protect your reputation from any form of suspicion, proven or unproven, in order to maintain your career on the right trajectory without any anxiety being suffered by your stakeholders. The response to be shared with the press must also be shared with key stakeholders before the media publishes. They should not hear from the media about you, they should hear from you directly. Your key stakeholders may include your colleagues, employees, business associates and everybody that matters in your professional and personal life. Your stakeholders will be your ambassadors and defend your reputation if they are well informed and feel trusted.

**4. Don't fight the media:** There's no doubt that the [#GuptaLeaks](#) is a story that is in the public's interest. When journalists call you for clarification on your role or interaction with the family, do not be confrontational. They are simply doing their job. Do not slam down the phone on them either. It will look like you have something to hide. Unless you do, in which case you'll need a good lawyer in addition to a good reputation manager.

Also, don't rush to get into a debate with the journalist. Rather note the call and the questions, provide your email address and kindly request that questions are sent to you in writing so you can think through them properly and respond. Ask for a copy of all the emails that contain your name so that you have the necessary background to inform your response.

**5. Demonstrate leadership:** It's very likely that you are a leader in your field, hence the media, and perhaps even the Guptas' interest in you. This is your chance to demonstrate that leadership with how you respond. Good leaders shine even during the most inconvenient of times. Your timely, open, honest and well-crafted response will underscore your leadership qualities.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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