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PRESENTATION: "The Face of the Firm: The Influence of CEOs on Corporate Reputation"

ABSTRACT: It is widely assumed that CEOs shape how people view firms, but the question of how these leaders influence corporate reputations has received little theoretical or empirical attention. This study addresses two core questions in this vein: how much do leaders really matter for firm reputation, and which leaders affect their firm's reputation? We develop theory explaining how and why leaders should enter into evaluations of the firms that they lead. More specifically, we propose that CEOs will affect corporate reputations depending on leader prominence and on perceptions of leader quality. We test these propositions by examining how CEOs' media coverage, industry awards, and outsider standing affect the reputations of their firms. Findings consistently indicate that highly-regarded CEOs enhance their firm's reputations, and that CEOs whose quality is questioned damage them. However, CEO prominence alone was not associated with higher firm reputation. We discuss implications for research on leaders and corporate reputations.