

A new look at PR strategies in the digital age

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The media targeted by PR professionals is in a constant state of flux. This is largely due to the rise of digital and the growing importance of online influencers, along with the constant shift of journalists between publications and channels.



Image source: www.iprm.org.my

Traditionally, marketers and PR professionals were able to plan strategies that ran for 12 months based on a set calendar of events for a client. They could then mass-syndicate media releases to their specific target media list, which remained fairly stagnant over that 12-month period. This methodology is unfortunately - or perhaps fortunately - no longer going to cut it.

It has become increasingly necessary for PR professionals to take the changing publication landscape into consideration while remaining strategic and achieving pre-set goals.

So how do you adapt to the environment and still remain strategic?

1. Understand the purpose of a strategy

A strategy should not be confused with an action plan, but should rather serve as the foundation from which all PR activities stem. The strategy can be set out for 12 months covering market research, key messaging, target markets and other elements that are not variables.

An action plan on the other hand should be created over six months, quarterly or even monthly depending on the objectives and the channels you are using. An event for example may need a longer lead-time for its action plan than a media campaign.

2. Be flexible

As digital and social platforms become increasingly integral to PR, it is time for PR professionals and their clients to become more flexible.

While strategies are set in place for a reason, one has to be open to those opportunities that present themselves at the drop of a hat. Sticking rigidly to action plans will only mean that you miss current trends, topics and PR opportunities. For example, a blogger may start a conversation that relates to your brand, but is not part of your current action plan. Your action plan needs to be flexible enough to accommodate and embrace this new topic. This should be communicated to clients early-on to ensure they are willing to be fully adaptable when it comes to both content and channels.

3. Be aware

Online conversations need to be tracked, but you also need to constantly track your influencers and your traditional

media. Journalists no longer stay with one publication for years and bloggers are continuously starting new blogs. Media lists need to be as flexible and as 'live' as the action plan itself.

Relationships are still key and need to be built continuously. In the changing media environment, the best way to build a relationship is through relevant content and the content can only remain relevant if PR professionals change with the times.

PR professionals need to get out their yoga mats and get into shape to ensure their clients' brands are flexible enough not to be left behind.

ABOUT DESIREE GULLAN

Having worked at the 'Big Three' advertising agencies in SA and proving her creative mettle abroad, Desirée has won multiple local and international awards for her work - including Cannes Lions and Clio. She believes in the importance of craftsmanship - that it's not in the designing, but in the redesigning. Not in the writing, but in the rewriting.

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