

Juggling those business reputation matters

 By Leigh Andrews

18 Nov 2015

The focus of a spinning, bouncing juggler in tartan has much in common with managing reputation: Have your eye on the ball and control all the balls in the air, know what to drop - and when to do so.



© Ximagination – 123RF.com

On Friday, 6 November 2015 I attended the Reputation Matters conference. Regine le Roux, MD of Reputation Matters began proceedings by stating that your people don't leave an organisation because of money or the responsibilities but because of poor management. Managing a corporate reputation then involves the whole organisation, with building blocks like leadership, employees and dialogue... there are so many balls to juggle when it comes to reputation. Fitting then that we had a demonstration from a Zip Zap Circus juggler, who showed just how tricky it can be.

Le Roux handed over to Braam Malherbe, Master of Ceremonies for the day. He introduced Andrew Borraine, CEO of the Western Cape Economic Development Partnership, who spoke on the topic 'reputation is everything, the experiences of a partnering organisation'.

Borraine explained the role of a partnering organisation - it's not just about holding hands and singing 'Khumbaya'. He explained how it can be used to enhance the reputation of a specific region, like the Western Cape. No matter the business focus, we all need to focus on how to maximise our impact using a 'whole of society' approach - working together in practice. Borraine admits this is often easier said than done, and doesn't work in practice as we slip into bad habits like promoting our own institution without also promoting the location. But if you want government, business and civil society to work together, all you have to do is look at the power of [#feesmustfall](#). The trick is to ask what government is mandated to deliver and what business needs to work effectively. A common agenda isn't just about the dialogue but also the intention to actually do something. You need to bring something to the table and offer solutions to build a robust partnership. To do so effectively, we need to change the "Thou shalt compete" ideology taught from business school, as that's not the way to build society as a whole.

Businesses need to look to where they are now and where they want to be in the future, as it's an aspirational thing. Don't separate present from future as they work together as business goals, says Borraine. This means businesses need to stop wishing themselves into the future by saying: "We are going to be the best." It's fine to be aspirational but your business also needs to be authentic and realistic, so get the basics right before attempting the complicated. Cape Town, for example, has strong reputation to a place of enjoyments but not as a strong business sector. We need to work to change this as it's

actually the second largest business hub in sub-Saharan Africa. There's an 'anti-business, anti-development' sentiment amongst many, which dilutes the brand as it's non-collaborative. Therein lies importance of a partnering approach, concluded Boraine.

How to respond to a corporate reputation crisis

Next up was Huma Gruaz, the founder, president and CEO of Alpaytac USA. She spoke of the reputation management of brands through external communication via traditional media relations and digital programmes, including social media and crisis management.

Gruaz said many brands simply don't deserve a good reputation, but through good marketing still get business. To prove her point, Gruaz spoke of the heartbreaking Blackfish documentary about a whale trainer who was killed during an interaction with a whale at SeaWorld. Seaworld suffered terrible reputation issues after CNN picked up the documentary.

Gruaz spoke of the most effective ways to respond if your business faces this type of crisis: you take responsibility and issue an apology. The most important thing you can do to protect your brand is to own it and not hide the truth. But, she acknowledged that this is sometimes easier said than done and doesn't always come about the right way. Further pointers include not reacting too fast, emotionally and without strategy. Seaworld did so by starting the #AskSeaWorld social media campaign soon after the incident with the intention of transparency, but only opened themselves up to further criticism.

Gruaz demonstrated a host of other big brands issuing unfortunate responses in the social media space, such as the [Vanity Fair Tinder article](#) debacle.

It's about thinking ahead to your fifth next move. A classic mistake is no reaction, especially if you have very active fans on social media.

Reputation, as with any other organisational issue, ties back to the Japanese proverb that vision without action is a daydream, action without vision is a nightmare.

[Click here](#) for insights from Prof Ronél Rensburg, Head of the Communication Division at the University of Pretoria, who spoke of the intricacies of corporate deception, and [click here](#) for more on Reputation Matters or [follow them on Twitter](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

- #Loeries2020: Behavioural economics as creativity, but not as we know it... - 24 Nov 2020
- #Dl2020: Ignite your inner activist - representation through illustration - 27 Feb 2020
- #Dl2020: How Sho Madjozi brought traditional Tsonga *xibelani* into 2020 - 27 Feb 2020
- #Dl2020: Silver jubilee shines with Department of Audacious Projects launch - 26 Feb 2020
- #BehindtheSelfie with... Qingqile 'WingWing' Mdlulwa, COO at The Whole Idea - 26 Feb 2020

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>