

It's true what they say; prevention is better than cure

By [Thandukwazi Gcabashe](#)

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In light of the recent H&M debacle, I think many in the industry will agree that it's time a chair is permanently reserved for a public relations or reputation management specialist at the table where marketing and ad execs conceptualise, build and sign off campaigns.



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This, I believe, is a critical move, especially as multi-national companies are fighting for relevance and market share in different markets – markets with varying sensitivities and histories.

Being aware of and sensitive to market nuances where a campaign will be launched, and having PR approve – and sanitise, if need be – the campaign could mean the difference between its success and having your PR team later writing holding statements, answering a barrage of media queries and putting out social media fires lit by incensed consumers inspired by what was once thought of as a genius idea.



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Take time to reflect

Taking a moment to reflect on a potential campaign by applying the PR and reputation management lens will save a lot of people a lot of trouble, including that poor junior staff member who is always thrown under the bus in place of incompetent senior executives too drunk on their own brilliance to have someone look through their work with said lens.

(I should, at this point, express that judging the credibility of campaigns is not necessarily an exclusive function of PR; in the absence of a PR or reputation management specialist, bouncing the idea off any qualified third-party person or group should suffice.)

However, it's not enough to let your PR and reputation management team know of a campaign when all has been finalised or at roll-out stage. A good brand campaign is one that has been tested on all marketing elements to whom reputation is critical.

Adding value in more ways than one

PR teams generally have access to case studies from different industries and markets which they can consult and from which they formulate probabilities that may impact specific campaigns.



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Prevention is always better than any of the strategies PR can employ to stop the brand haemorrhaging any equity should a campaign cause widespread offence. Consequences are just too high, and the road to recovery that much harder. A temporary inconvenience could potentially save a brand's reputation and millions in revenue.

Reserving a chair for a PR and reputational expert will add value in more ways than one: having campaigns that are likely to surpass expectations, take consumers on a journey through on-point messaging, and build brand affinity are only a few.

ABOUT THANDUKWAZI GCABASHE

Thandukwazi Gcabashe is an Account Director at Magna Carta Reputation Management Consultants, an award-winning reputation management agency with offices in Johannesburg and Cape Town and an Africa network that spans 18 markets.

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