

Planning: The key ingredient to avoid a social media crisis

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There is a stigma attached to social media. It's seen as an instant communications channel and therefore little to no planning is necessary in creating content. Arm a resource with a phone, drop them into a live event or in front of a screen and let them have some fun talking to people online.



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Okay, so this is an exaggeration, but it puts into context how little attention is given to social media... until a crisis strikes. This shouldn't still be the case, social media as a communication platform isn't a new concept nor is there a limited amount of help available, resources or experts in the industry. Live content can, and should, be planned and approved by relevant parties prior to an event.

Simple solution with a little planning

On Sunday 23rd July 2017, Primedia Broadcasting and 702 came under fire for posting a tweet comparing babies to dogs. This debacle could have been completely avoided with planned content and some foresight. Prior to the event, the social media team would have decided what they wanted to post about, and clearly dogs and babies were on their agenda. Both relevant "cute" topics in their own right and something worth tweeting about in the context of the event.

This is where the opportunity existed to avoid the subsequent crisis. The social media team responsible decided to combine the two concepts into one single 140-character tweet. Clearly not a pre-scripted tweet either. The result? Creating another social media meltdown which could have been completely avoided.

The solution would have been so simple with a little planning. Plan two tweets and then sample images live at the event.

For example:

Post 1: Cute dogs

Our furry friends came out to walk their humans today for this year's @Walkthetalk_ #MTN702WALK

[Insert images of walkers with their dogs]

Post 2: Cute babies

Loving these smiles, giggles and waves from our tiny @Walkthetalk_ supporters! #MTN702WALK

[Insert images of parents with babies, toddlers and young children]

The above tweets don't offend or aggravate anyone. In fact, I would bet that both would have received great engagement. In fact, anything similar would have received great engagement. The idea that content cannot be planned and that live content can only be decided at the last minute, is an antiquated concept. In the world of social media, and an ever-evolving industry, shouldn't more thought be put into its effects on businesses? Surely as an event owner, you know what to expect... dogs, humans, babies. Plan accordingly.

Guidelines are important

Social media has become a primary communication channel for brands and their partners. Not only did PriMedia Broadcastings reputation suffer, but also that of the main event sponsor for Walk the Talk, MTN. The balance for an event such as Walk the Talk should be 70-80% pre-planned content with the remainder of the content being spur of the moment content (that should still be vetted to avoid issues).

The copy of the tweet should be planned and images sourced at the live event if they cannot be sourced or designed prior. Unplanned content, should still adhere to certain strict guidelines that would be determined by the company, examples could include:

- Could this tweet upset any race, religion, culture etc?
- Is this information necessary/relevant?
- Is this the best way to communicate this message?

How are you as a brand or SMME ensuring that you aren't involved in the next social media storm?

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