

Challenges faced by PR professionals in the midst of Covid-19

 By [Miranda Lusiba](#)

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Covid-19 definitely caught a lot of us small business owners napping. It brought with it challenges that we did not expect and forced us to think quickly on our feet and to adapt or die a slow death. My business had a contract with a medium-sized business last year and the PR strategy for the year was signed, sealed, and delivered by the time the lockdown period started.



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The pandemic, however, showed us that a great deal of what we had planned needed to be relooked. We had to re-evaluate and understand our clients' business strategies at that point; and this meant that we had to amend our PR strategy to respond to our client's immediate needs.

As you can imagine, these needs kept on changing as the time went. For this client in particular, the initial strategy focused a great deal on building the reputation of its brand in the market – so this would have included a great deal of media publicity, thought leadership and media relations. All of a sudden – there was a greater need to communicate with the internal stakeholders – their employees more than ever.

Constant communication

This is because during this difficult period for businesses, there was a lot of anxiety in employees not knowing where they stood when it came to their jobs. Internal communications and engagement became a priority. Constant communications of the changes in the business became a primary need more than anything else. This was made worse by the working conditions that had also changed from office to remotely: “working from home”.

For our other client, traditional PR and media efforts were not a priority for them any more, but rather stakeholder and government relations moved to the top of their list. As PR professionals, we had to play a critical role of helping to open doors for the client to introduce its company and credentials to potential customers. This meant that PR had to work closely with the sales team and be part of the client’s immediate strategy and need - which was business development. We had to assist in creating a platform for the client and his sales team to sell.



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Nonetheless, we still advised the client to adopt an overall PR strategy and not entirely rely on stakeholder and government relations. This is because while focusing on stakeholder relations – it was also important to use other traditional PR, Communications and Media Relations efforts. We emphasized the need for all these methods to complement each other in keeping both existing and potential clients informed on business developments, achievements and more so their success stories. As PR, we knew that it was important for us to play the important role of contributing positively to both the acquisition and retention strategy of the client’s business.

To the next generation of young PR professionals out there, it is very important to understand your client’s needs so that you can develop PR strategies that can respond to the business’ pressing needs. Ultimately, what we want to achieve as PR experts is to add tangible return on investment (ROI) for our clients; and we now know more than ever that we cannot do this if we are not agile.

ABOUT MIRANDA LUSIBA

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