

PR TAKES THE HELM OF CONTENT CREATION

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THE FIELD OF CONTENT CREATION IN PR HAS BECOME MORE THAN JUST DISSEMINATING RELEASES AND CALLING JOURNALISTS

Our ever increasing need for online engagement, smart devices, advances in technology and a collection of massively popular social media platforms means that the world of content has changed forever. New ways of information consumption, has led to an evolution in terms of content creation, it's not just about developing content, but also having it comfortably exist on multiple platforms, and be accessed via different devices.

With that realisation comes the responsibility for brands to understand social media as a way to reach and engage with their consumers. With this ever-changing social landscape, how do brands make sense of it all?

To begin, it's important for brands to have a presence on a variety of platforms, but only those that fit its objectives. It's easy to get swept up in the hype of something new, so make sure it works for your product, style and audience. Why go onto a platform your audience doesn't even engage on? Who are you talking to?

Unfortunately, brands in South Africa have struggled to keep their ear to the ground on the newest fad platforms and often hesitate to try new ones, or are dead-set in their ways, preferring to stick to what they know. For brands willing to try something

new, who have something to say and have good content, being an early adopter of new communication technology brings great benefit – being a pioneer!

Technological advances have also brought changes to the skills needed within the public relations industry. As content managers and storytellers for our clients' brands, those in PR have had to develop the right skills to create captivating content capable of being supported by social media platforms that are constantly evolving. What does this mean for the future of PR? It means new opportunities and new areas for content growth, which demands bigger investment from clients, translating to bigger content budgets.

So, how do we justify this to our clients, with so much content already out there? Therein lies the opportunity: As content producers, we are in a great position to create content that will stand out from the crowd by identifying what has resonance with our clients' brands and how do we do this? Enter big data! The key to understanding audiences is accessing and properly using data analytics, which helps increase our chances of being more relevant.

Beyond creating content, we have to quickly understand how these new platforms work and what is attracting the public to them. There is a clear need for synergy between PR and business intelligence. For example, many in the industry were debating the possibilities of virtual and augmented reality, yet while this discussion was taking

place, technology did what it usually does; forces change. Suddenly Pokémon GO exploded – augmented reality is now a part of our lives, accessible from our smartphones.

According to mobile internet research firm Digi-Capital in April 2016, the augmented reality market is expected to reach USD90 billion globally by 2020 through hardware sales, advertising spending, in-app purchases and subscription services.

The predicted lag in uptake by the general market due to the high costs of virtual headsets and Google Glass was proven wrong with Pokémon GO, showing us all that five billion people can be – and want to be – engaged through smartphones.

Smart brands are already jumping on the AR trend using the in-game lure function to attract users to their stores, increasing foot traffic. Will we soon see South African brands take advantage of this as well?

Hopefully, yes! Brands need to be bold, evolve with the times and know how and where to speak to its consumers, get that right and being a pioneer will have its own rewards.

Public relations consultants, as content creators and managers, should assist brands in pioneering these unknown waters. It is their obligation to create content that can live on a multitude of platforms in different ways – be it images, text, audio or visual. [#smlr2017]