

The PR perspective

 By Leigh Andrews

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Once your company's established with recognisable branding and a slogan on everyone's lips doesn't mean you've ticked 'brand management' off the list - there's still all the PR possibilities to consider, and how those can make or break the brand.

While brand management typically falls to the company leaders and marketing department, many forget that public relations or PR plays just as essential a part in how your brand is perceived by consumers and media alike.

Jana van der Spuy, communications manager at Brandnew Creative Agency, explains that from a PR perspective, brand management is about telling the right audience a compelling story about your clients' brand, ensuring that they hear it, see it and most importantly, feel it.



Van der Spuy

It's easier said than done though, as today's consumer has heard it all before. You need to use diverse, interesting angles, newsworthy stories and an emotional connection so that media and customers experience the brand's storytelling in a way they understand and can easily relate to and digest. And it doesn't stop there – you also need to identify opportunities that your clients' brand(s) will benefit from involvement in, recognise design that will play a vital role in sending the right message to attract the identified market, and advise your client on the best possible option, answers and opportunities to tell their story best.

Van der Spuy lets us in on how she gets this done...

1. Give us a little insight into the brands you manage/communicate for.

Van der Spuy: I'm privileged to work on brands I truly enjoy. My clients are some of the most revered brands in our country and they trust me to tell their story, which is a huge honour. My current clients include Viva Gym, HQ Restaurant in Cape Town, Natura Sugars, Black Key Diamonds and TomTom. I specialise in fashion, wellness and lifestyle brands as these areas resonate and click with me. I pride myself on telling it like it is, because in the end, the message is truthful, authentic and fits the media I target. I do believe in being 100% transparent with my clients, media partners as well as in the message I communicate.

2. How do you tie your overall marketing/corporate communications strategy together?

Van der Spuy: PR and brand management go hand in hand. One cannot live without the other – much like a team. This being said, both roles have very different jobs – one works with media professionals whereas the other manages the effective brand communication of the client. If the key message hasn't been identified as a golden thread, the overall communications strategy will fall flat. It's like when you're re-decorating a room – if you have too many 'big ideas' to fill the room, you'll end up with 10 great things, but nothing that truly fits. A strong message should be simple, straight forward, and easy to understand. If it's not, it confuses the recipient.



3. What do you see currently as the main challenges and opportunities for your brand sectors?

Van der Spuy: The different markets are very saturated, which makes our jobs extremely fun as we need to think out-of-the-box to get our clients' brand messages across. One of the challenges we, as PR/brand managers, face is budget constraints. It's a fact of life, our economy has taken a huge knock and strangely enough, PR/brand management is the first to get the budget cuts. However, this can open up other collaborative opportunities. In 2014, we Brandnew Creative Agency, pulled off an exceptional campaign that won us the 'Best use of PR in Sport' award in the Sports Industry Awards on a limited budget, by leveraging off media and celebrity relationships. It's all up to you, and how you manage your situation and execution.

That mindset's why Van Der Spuy's top three personal brand objectives for 2016 are to have a dedicated city as her playground for a brand activation or publicity stunt; to work with international and local celebrities that speak to the correct markets, in an authentic manner – she lists Jo-Ann Strauss as a brilliant example of a local celebrity who really lives her truth; and lastly she wants to make a difference going beyond the cliché and using her strengths and privilege for good by giving animal adoption some legs and fighting cancer from a PR perspective, especially as a friend of hers has been diagnosed with leukemia. As he doesn't have medical aid, she intends using her strengths in the industry to ensure the word of his campaign gets out and that people can make donations to assist with paying his chemotherapy and other bills.

Here's hoping the PR aspect of brand management gets more focus going forward.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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