

Agility vs integration in the PR industry

 ByLwazi Piti

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Working in the PR industry makes for an interesting conversation starter with vastly different public opinions. Within the industry, there hasn't been much chatter around the integration and agility of PR agencies, which raises an interesting discussion.



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There is a transition from traditional stand-alone PR and communications services to integrated service offerings that work in parallel to various business functions. This is most noticeable in digital PR, social media campaigns, HR and business development ventures making the role of PR unclear.

This change brought about two things:

Digital came to the fore and to remain relevant PR agencies amplified communicating the benefits of being part of integrated agencies. For clients this means that their PR agency has direct access to experts in digital, design and SEO, should the need ever arise.

However, the access to diverse in-house skills brought about the second point, the importance of agility. In a *Forbes* 2018 PR trends [piece](#), John Hall, co-founder of Influence & Co, explained how PR is an indispensable tool for marketing, investor communications, recruiting and various other areas of the company.

However, PR tends to live in its own little silo but is set to change. Hall went on to say that “he recently saw a head of content marketing and PR, and it made him really happy because it means companies are starting to realise how much crossover there is between areas of communication”.

The crossover of roles and skills moves the conversation away from how vastly diverse the skill sets are that an agency has to offer, to how fast and nimble the agency is with its offering.

Big impact from smaller, agile teams

Smaller agencies are rarely in a position to boast about their “fully-integrated” offerings as their services are often limited to their talent pool. These five to ten individuals in the team must have the know-how to provide and support vast client needs

as and when they arise. This teaches the team to move swiftly and easily, learning on the go to deliver results. This is agility.

Today, agility is a prerequisite to successful PR. The aim is to always shape stakeholder perception through either brand or reputation management - going against uncontrollable and unforeseen external influences.

A new time calls for a new unfixed approach

Developing a rigid PR strategy was outdated years ago and as Klaus Schwab said:

“ *In the newworld, it is not the big fish which eats the small fish, it's the fast fish which eats the slowfish.* ”

A crisis or opportunity may come from anywhere. A strong, agile PR agency needs to have the tenacity, if not the know-how, to take it on. However, this isn't always in the strategy or rigid SLA.

Gone are the days when a crisis with the potential to tarnish a brand's reputation can be managed with a holding statement or press briefing. Brands are dragged through the mud on social media faster than a PR team can write a press release or hold a briefing.

On the flip side, this vulnerability also makes brands more accessible. For example, when KFC in the UK faced a chicken shortage crisis, this opened up an opportunity and they won the public over with a rapid and witty “FCK” apology on Twitter, which goes to show how much the industry has evolved.



#KFCCrisis: The ABCs of KFC's FCK apology

Leigh Andrews 27 Feb 2018



Relevance is only relevant to timing

Agility is vital in this age, everything moves quickly and relevance is relative to timing.

Integration is also incredibly beneficial and a huge plus for any agency. Relevance today goes hand in hand with pace and knowhow and this concoction makes for rapid, impactful PR that clients just cannot get enough off.

ABOUT LWAZI PITI

Lwazi Piti is a PR/ICT and B2B consultant with over four years experience. He started off doing consumer PR and Communication, consulting for a broad spectrum of clients. He spent a year working on a Multinational National Telecommunications client, Angola Cables, which helped him find his niche - tech. Currently, he is working as a Senior Account Executive on at WE Communications, working on a South African mobile communications company, providing voice, messaging, data and converged services.

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