

Bad publicity is just plain bad publicity

 By [Lucinda Boddy](#)

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There can be no greater myth than the old adage, "no publicity is bad publicity". While brands and organisations cannot always control the kind of publicity they receive, how they react to negative publicity can make or break their reputations.

With social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, blogs and online forums the consumer has an open stage to voice their opinions. This can be rather daunting for a company or a brand, when you consider that reputations that take years to build can be destroyed in matter of seconds via social media networks.

Livewired's approach centres on education, both for clients and the journalists who write about them. Our clients are coached on how to handle negative press that occurs on social media networks. Interestingly, I have found that in many cases social media fans police the forums themselves, responding to complaints from a position of brand loyalty.

Of course, this is far more credible than any response the brand could provide itself because it comes directly from the consumer.

I also believe that educating the media is an important step to combating misperceptions...

Setting the facts straight

In the past, we have had experiences where negative publicity has come about simply from factual inaccuracies. In such cases, one would contact the journalist responsible and provide them with the correct information. When journalists and consumers are armed with the correct information, there is less chance of inaccurate reporting damaging the brand or company's reputation.

The relationship between an organisation and its public relations agency is key when it comes to building and managing reputation. For example, when we take on a new client, we undertake a comprehensive analysis of potential risks, which allows us to devise a relevant crisis communication plan, which can be adjusted to suit the situation at hand.

Keep it open, keep it honest

An open and honest relationship between client and agency is vital - knowing the risks and pitfalls inherent in particular situations allows for effective troubleshooting.

I believe that a proactive approach must be taken from a PR perspective... Connecting with the media and the consumer by

providing quality content is the first step to building a healthy brand or company profile.

Core to the process of managing negative publicity in a responsible manner is being honest and transparent at all times. It's about responding quickly and providing all the facts. Trying to hide information from consumers or the media is the worst course of action. Often it is the way in which an organisation handles a crisis in the media that earns them loyal consumers, or conversely, causes irreparable damage to their brand's reputation.

I don't agree with the notion that appearing in the media - no matter the context - is better than not being spoken about at all. The risks inherent in negative publicity are endless and can translate directly to a decline in brand and company loyalty, sales or investors. And while it may not be possible to control what is said about your brand in the media, a prompt and honest response goes a long way to gaining the public's respect.

ABOUT LUCINDA BODDY

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