

Dear Journo...

Dear Journalist / Media Person, This letter has been a long time coming. For eons now, you have had the platf to belittle, insult, name-and-shame, and in general be disrespectful towards Public Relations professionals. You have held yourself on a pedestal, while you have called us "scum". I would like to clarify a few of those misconceptions.

 By [Lucinda Boddy](#) 19 Jun 2014

The first thing that we need to get straight is that this is a mutually beneficial relationship. This is by no means a one-sided relationship whereby PR practitioners simply beg for coverage. The system is simple and clear, we provide content and you provide coverage, and we have the clippings to prove this. Strong story angles, access to influential thought leaders, as well as exclusives and announcements are all provided by us. And this isn't a case of us being annoying "gate-keepers" as we are the ones contacting you with the opportunities, rather than the other way round.

Secondly, the media elite will no longer exist, as Rupert Murdoch so eloquently put it. We have access to citizen journalist blogs and our owned media. This isn't to say that you aren't needed, as you definitely are, but it's about the attitude that comes with the title. It's unnecessary and over the top. You also make mistakes; whether they are typos or grammatical errors, and this happens often, just ask anyone who reads.

It's just common courtesy

Also - if you RSVP positively to an event, please pitch up. It's just common courtesy, and your time is no more important than anyone else's. As one editor recently advised PR people "Don't make promises you can't keep"... the same goes here. Simply not arriving is a cardinal sin in any society, on any level, as it's just plain rude.

Recently a media publication published a tribute to South Africa's top media people under the age of 40 years. Not one PR person was on this list. It came as a stab in the heart, as I personally have contributed many articles to this publication. If a person who buys and sells advertising space can be listed then surely people involved in the public relations field can be? Digital professionals were named, yet when PR people pushed digital PR all those years ago, it seemed to hold no weight?

Don't tar everyone with the same brush

And every industry has its bad apple. Too often, you have grouped all PR people in the same boat, and so if you get one email that is not targeted to the correct person, then we are all incompetent. This simply isn't true, just as not all journalists have the same disrespect for PR people. The point is, if I have a bad experience in a restaurant, or in a shop, I do not lambaste the entire industry. What I will do is bring it up with the relevant people in order for it to be rectified. For example you get a bad email, targeting the wrong person and publication, then simply send a return email to the relevant senior person. I am not asking you to sort out the riffraff, but if I go to a restaurant, and do not make it my duty to complain to the manager about bad service, then how will I ever expect things to change?

Now I don't want to be hypocritical, and I am completely aware that not all journalists are like this. This letter is addressed to those that are openly disrespectful towards PR people, as if we don't hold a place in society. I have studied and worked hard just like you and I do not appreciate it when you damage the reputation of an industry that can say 100% that they have contributed to the media landscape. We help build brands, grow profit margins, and provide information that the public needs to know, and therefore deserve the same respect as anyone else within this sector.

Kind Regards,

Lucinda

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