Attack the Goliath, be the David of PR agencies

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When I was studying Journalism, we practically had a module that detailed step by step how to avoid PR agencies; my lecturer for Newswriting had little respect for the profession, often citing how the sneaky little agents use us journalists to mislead consumers for a quick buck.

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And so, I set about to do just that. To sift out pitch articles from well thought out, topical and researched inputs. It was an effective strategy to side-line, delete and disregard content generated by particularly small, new PR agencies.

But that was then. Journalists and traditional media organisations can no longer claim to own media communication mediums. We are no longer gatekeepers who filter what messages can reach whom, and when.

And right there, lies the opportunity. It has never been this possible to beat the goliath in this industry.

Catch the attention of the reader

You can achieve success by understanding WHO the audience will listen to: is it the national newspaper? Is it their local radio station? Is it their lecturer? Is it you?

In fact, I want to pose something interesting altogether. Media is less defined by the medium it appears on, it is less about whether you watch TV, listen to radio or observe status updates on Facebook. Rather, it is more about what you do when you consume that medium. By way of example, some people won't read past the first paragraph of certain articles. Messages have to resonate. That is when they are most effective, and are shared.

There are three accepted media channels: Earned, owned and paid media

Owned media is simple, and of course the simpler the medium the less effective it is. Owned media is where you stand and shout out, "Here I am, this is what I have done, and I am great for it!" It's shameless self-plugging.

Paid media is somewhat simple as well, it is where you pay people to say "There she is, this is what she has done, she is great!" Paid media holds more credibility when compared to owned media. It has a wider reach because essentially, you are paying for someone else to shout how great you are to THEIR audience.

Earned media - now earned media is invaluable; it is the most desirable form of channel, particularly in PR. It's incredibly trustworthy and effective. It is someone else raving about who you are, what you have done and how AWESOME you are with no direct stimulus from you.

The trick used by many successful goliath PR agencies is to combine all three to make them work interdependently and effectively for maximum effect. Paid media, for example, has limitations and can be useless if you can't CONVERT it to earned media.

So now, you are a new and small agency on its start-out phase and you need to beat the Goliath?

Pitch around these three important channels. Tell your prospective clients upfront that you will ensure their successes are shared without reservation on their website, newsletters, blogs, social media profiles and through stakeholder engagements. (Owned media).

Tell them you will ensure they back their clients on matters where there is shared value, that they will champion projects that guarantee them visibility, tell them you will promote Tweets and Facebook posts to reach maximum audience. (Paid media).

Tell your clients you will create advocates and evangelists for their brand. (Earned media).

Most importantly, do what you said you will do. We are working on new media landscapes. This is the environment in which your small agency will wither or thrive.

ABOUT ZIMASEKA NJOMI

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