

SME - the wave of the future?

Is there an intrinsic change taking place in the size of retainers for public relations clients? Has the Information Communication Technology (ICT) industry shrunk forever or shall we see a recovery? That is the question on the lips of all companies within this environment, especially the PR agencies that work within ICT.

By [Gavin Moffat](#) ^{30 Jul 2003}

Did the big Dimension Data type clients and their insatiable need for PR peak during 2001 and have we seen the last of the big spenders or is there a turnaround in the fortunes of these companies waiting in the wings? The theories abound and few are qualified to answer these questions. Suffice to say that it is unlikely we will see the return of the ICT PR hype and vigour.

So what's next? Are there enough clients out there for the number of agencies within the ICT environment can't see how that's possible. At last count there were around 49 PR agencies servicing the ICT arena in one way or another. In my books that's a couple too many. How are they all going to sustain the continued downturn? Some have gone under, some have branched into other market segments, looking for greener pastures, because after all PR is PR and the essence of what we do doesn't change much between industries.

There is certainly a new wave coming along, one that will be good for those who anticipate and embrace it. It's the Small to Medium Enterprise (SME) wave and the break isn't too far off. The clients that will pepper the landscape of the future will not be monolithic multinationals with plentiful budgets, but smaller organisations with solid financial results needing the same degree of exposure as the big boys.

SMEs have been around for years I hear people wail. Yes they have, but not everyone has seen them or been taking cognisance of their communications needs. The only obstacle is that SMEs tend to be a little less sophisticated in their approach to, and understanding of, the entire marketing mix and the real challenge will be that they are a lot more focused on bang for buck.

SMEs are often family run concerns or have a tight management team and they watch the pennies. They're not listed, as that fad seems to have passed for now, but ultimately, they need a similar degree of PR attention.

Agencies servicing the SME environment face more challenges with regard to ROI and more expectation setting and education processes are required.

Now here's a challenge the Public Relations Agencies can look forward to. Less doom and gloom and more clients to focus on! The wave of the future - could it be the SME?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gavin Moffat is the joint MD of eCommunications and Puruma Business Communications, both companies within the Echo Holdings Group. He has a sense of humour, no real qualifications to pass comments on these matters and all his work is to be read after a strong tequila and a definite pinch of salt.

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