

# Mastering PR: staying human in a tech-saturated world

*Is PR dead or evolving? With technology, data and transparency reshaping the landscape, PR professionals that know how to balance human creativity with data-driven ingenuity will shape the future of communication.*

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PR professionals are the ones who keep brands human, relevant and credible in an increasingly tech-driven and fast-paced world. So, how do we stay ahead in an ever-evolving landscape?

## **Challenge 1: Influencer fatigue – authenticity over sponsorships**

Influencer marketing has been a key component of modern communication strategies for some time now, but audiences are growing weary. They've seen it all – the over-promoted products, the scripted content, and influencers whose primary interest seems to be a paycheck rather than a genuine connection with the audience.

Yet the power of influence hasn't disappeared. According to [Meltwater \(April 2025\)](#), **33.6% of South African social media users follow influencers**, and [93% of them say influencer recommendations impact their purchase decisions](#). What's changed is who they trust: **micro and nano influencers (5000–30,000 followers)**, valued for stronger engagement, community connection, and better ROI, are winning in the South African market.

PR professionals can strengthen their impact by fostering authentic, natural-feeling collaborations that go beyond paid endorsements. Micro-influencers, who boast smaller but more engaged audiences, are an ideal solution. These influencers come across as real people rather than walking advertisements, making their endorsements more believable and impactful. When the story is real, people listen.

## **Challenge 2: Cutting through the noise – quality over quantity**

Today, everyone has a voice. The digital space is saturated and every brand, influencer and consumer is vying for attention.

Shifting the focus from quantity to quality with niche, targeted content will be more effective than a broad, one-size-fits-all approach. Consumers want meaningful engagement. Think about how Nando's turned their user-generated #NandosMoments content into a powerful tool for connecting their brand to the everyday lives of their customers. The content didn't need to be flawless, it needed to be real.

The lesson here? Be authentic and engage with your community. Don't try to appeal to everyone – build relationships with those who resonate with your brand story. That's the way to stand out in an oversaturated market.

## **Challenge 3: Data-driven PR – can analytics inspire creativity?**

Tools like social listening, sentiment analysis and audience tracking provide a wealth of insights. South African brands are increasingly using analytics to refine influencer campaigns, particularly in **selecting micro-influencers to achieve stronger ROI per rand spent** ([Meltwater](#)).

The problem? Data can tell you what worked, but it can't always predict what will inspire next. So, how do you balance data with the human touch needed for compelling storytelling? The solution is to blend data-driven insights with creativity. Use analytics to inform your strategy and use data to understand what's resonating with audiences, but don't let it stifle the innovation that drives truly memorable campaigns.

## **Challenge 4: Social media overload – standing out amidst the noise**

With billions of active users across social media platforms, standing out isn't just hard, it's almost impossible without a strong strategy. In South Africa, [93.9% use WhatsApp, 71.8% Instagram, and 73.6% TikTok](#), making it one of the most connected markets globally.

Personalisation is key. It's no longer enough to simply have a presence on every platform. Brands need to move beyond broad broadcasting. Focus on content that speaks to your audience's values and deliver it through channels that feel personal – **micro-influencers or user-generated content often outperform generic brand posts**. The takeaway? Stop broadcasting and start engaging. Build loyal communities who care about your brand and share your values.

## **Challenge 5: The trust dilemma – building faith and credibility**

Trust is fragile. With fake news and viral outrage taking centre stage, how do brands rebuild confidence or it's lost? The answer isn't just reactive, it's proactive. In [Edelman's 2025 South Africa Trust Barometer](#) **68% trust business and 78% trust their employer, but only 36% trust government**.

Brands need to establish transparency as the cornerstone of their communication strategy. Discovery Health, for example, during the Covid-19 pandemic didn't just react to the crisis; they proactively communicated protocols, clarified insurance processes, and supported frontline workers. This transparency didn't just reassure their members, it reinforced their trustworthiness. In 2025, brands need to own mistakes, stay transparent and always communicate openly.

## **Challenge 6: The trouble with tech – enhancing human storytelling not replacing it**

While AI, blockchain, and big data have changed the environment in which PR professionals operate, providing opportunities and tools to enhance the human storytelling experience, empathy and creativity remain irreplaceable.

AI-powered media monitoring and social listening tools are invaluable, but only **41% of South Africans say they're comfortable with AI when societal inequality or grievance feels high** ([Edelman Africa, 2025](#)). Tech gives better insights, faster responses and more accurate predictions, but it can't replicate empathy, creativity and authenticity. At the heart of every successful PR campaign is a story that connects emotionally with people. Tech will never replace that.

## 5 ways to stay relevant in 2025

1. **Be ready to act fast:** Invest in real-time social listening to track sentiment and engage before issues escalate.
2. **Choose authenticity over perfection:** People connect with real stories. Focus on building genuine relationships.
3. **Lead with transparency:** Trust isn't built during good times, it's earned during tough times. Be honest even when it's uncomfortable.
4. **Embrace tech but don't lose the human touch:** Use AI and data to amplify human storytelling, not replace it.
5. **Create communities, not campaigns:** Build long-term, meaningful relationships with your audience. Engage, listen and involve them in your journey.

## PR isn't dead, it's evolving

The PR industry of 2025 isn't just about managing media relations or getting coverage – it's about becoming an authentic, transparent voice in a world full of noise. By embracing technology, balancing data with creativity, and building genuine, values-driven connections with consumers, PR professionals can not only stay relevant, they can lead the way into the next chapter of the industry – one engaged community at a time.

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