

Some lessons from the Bok book on marketing blunders, bluster, bravado and bullsh#t

One of the more interesting lessons to emerge from the chaos surrounding Bok rugby is how not to do PR and marketing.



By [Richard Clarke](#) 30 Nov 2003

To engage in successful PR for an existing brand like the Springbok rugby team there must be a buy in from top management that attention will be paid to the image portrayed in the media and friendly relations with the media are of course imperative.

The Bok brand currently revolves around Pieter van Zyl attacking a referee, Krige concussing Andre Pretorius while trying to hit yet another English player at Twickenham and Bakkies Botha as an alleged eye gouger.

Add in apartheid era caveman romps in the bush and the racial issues and you have a recipe for disaster. The challenge is there for an astute PR practitioner together with a marketing person that understands brand building.

The downside of this apparently challenging position is that the person employed would be the only person in top management with any accountability and performance clauses.

Straueli may feel that he doesn't need the media but his coaching contemporaries around the world seem to think differently. Withdrawing into the laager at the first sign of media restlessness does not make it all go away.

And of course threatening the media is the first thing they tell you not to do in PR 101. Straueli is made of sterner stuff however and the media are just an irritant that needs to be swatted.

The fact that the media are an important link between the team and their supporters, sponsors and management seems to have escaped the current Bok mastermind.

There is always much talk about government interference in rugby but Straueli and company have had a free hand to do pretty much as they liked and they have failed to stop the slide into the second division of world rugby.

More importantly from a PR perspective they have not bridged the racial divide and brought players of color on board. Francois Pienaar was a role model for this entire country in 1995 and cemented a bond with Madiba.

Eight years later the rugby team is not only the laughing stock of the world but most South Africans couldn't care less if they win or lose.

I don't know whether there is a position open at South African rugby headquarters but I do know that I wouldn't consider it unless there was a major change in focus away from a small minority that regard rugby as their personal fiefdom.

The analogy with politics in this country since 1990 is an instructive one. SA rugby needs its very own F.W de Klerk. The current model is unworkable and is sustainable only in the direction of becoming a truly marginal sport just like jukskei.

ABOUT RICHARD CLARKE

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