

The role of external communication in PR

By [Miranda Lusiba](#)

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Over the years, what we've been taught is how to put together a PR strategy or Plan for a PR campaign or media event. Once the strategy is approved, then the implementation process starts, and it involves drafting crucial documents that include a press release, fact sheet, internal PR briefing document with Q&As as well as profiles of the assigned company spokespeople for that particular campaign or event.



Source: www.unsplash.com

This process of compiling all these documents is content-heavy, it needs a great deal of attention to detail and it's intensive because of the back and forth with proposed changes that need to be effected during the approval process until the documents are finalised. In PR, however, it doesn't matter how good your strategy is and how well these documents are drafted – we are unfortunately judged on output. This output after all this content-heavy process is done is based on how many media attend an event and how much coverage these campaign or event documents were able to generate.

The publicity or media coverage that we chase as PR professionals focuses on all platforms in the media space – these include print and online newspapers/magazines, broadcasts which include both TV and Radio as well as the breakdown in National, Provincial and Local/Community Media.



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Our traditional media efforts are now complemented by social media because we do understand that not everyone consumes their news through traditional media anymore – other people get their breaking news from Twitter or other social media platforms.

As much as we rely on traditional and social media to communicate to the company external stakeholders including clients and investors to name a few - external communication is another way of complementing all these other efforts and it gives communication a personal touch.

In my past experience, we used mediums that included personalised letters to existing clients, regular newsletters and annual reports to investors as well as both potential and existing clients. These mediums were there to make sure that we didn't rely only on traditional and social media platforms to communicate to the company's external stakeholders. The regular newsletters were in most cases emailed to existing clients and it was also uploaded on the company's website to ensure that even potential clients had access to the updates that the company communicated on a regular basis.



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As mentioned in my previous column on investor relations, we used correspondence such as letters to communicate to Business Connexion's clients when it was time to announce its half or full-year financial results. Letters are also able to give the update required by the company to its clients – the nice thing about them is that they are not generic – they are personalised.

The regular newsletter that was sent either on a monthly or a quarterly basis always gave clients a sense of how the company was performing because it included information on new business, movement in management, mergers and acquisitions and any success stories that the company needed to share. The success stories in particular would be a combination of case studies that outlined what product or service a client received and what the outcome or return on investment (ROI) was to the client as well as testimonial stories.

The testimonial stories are still by far the best ones because they gave credibility to the company's claims. These stories would be based on clients' testimonies to the fact that a particular product or service provided to them indeed delivered the value or ROI that the company was claiming.

To young PR professionals, I would like to advise you to use these external communication mediums to complement your media relations or publicity efforts. They play an important role as much as a story that is published in a newspaper or broadcast on radio or TV.



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My patting shot to youngsters is that external communication is part of the principles of communication, and these are the foundations of what we do as PR professionals. These do not change over time - what changes are the platforms that are now being used to complement traditional efforts. So, in short, social media is not a communication principle – it is a medium that can be used to communicate and doesn't replace the fundamentals and the traditional ways of doing PR.

ABOUT MIRANDA LUSIBA

Miranda Lusiba is the Founding Director of Strangé Consulting - a boutique PR Agency specialising in Communications, Freelance Writing, Media Relations, Reputation Management and Media Training.

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