Aggregation aggravation

By William Smook

How do you get to be a noteworthy South African? Well one way, if you're listed on Who's Who of Southern Africa, is to die an untimely death. Here's how it works...

Up pops an automated tweet with a picture of you and a note which says, "I just moved up to the rank of Noteworthy on the Who's Who of Southern Africa!"

It's precisely what happened yesterday with the profile of acclaimed journalist Mandy Rossouw, following her untimely death at age 33. She was certainly noteworthy enough already, with a regrettably short - yet stellar - career in journalism.

The lesson...This is yet another case study about how careful you need to be in your use of unmediated, social media. Not long ago, a human being would've noticed more hits on Mandy's name and known why. In the world of automated social media, the aggregator sees the hits, promotes her to noteworthy - and sends out what purports to be a tweet by her.

We presume Who's Who will apologise to her family and friends while they wipe the egg of their faces. We also presume they will fix their systems so that such gaffes can be avoided. The lesson? Take care in how you use and consume social media.

ABOUT WILLIAM SMOOK

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