

The PR services iceberg



By [Dominique Pienaar](#)

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There is a misnomer that delivering public relations (PR) services is easy - that it is the cheaper alternative to advertising and that determining its value is as simple as knowing what an Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE) is.

But we don't place significant emphasis on AVEs and increasingly, neither do our clients. We talk about impact, placement of content by media priority and message delivery in the content we produce.

So when we were asked by a client to articulate the value of what he had delivered over the course of 12 months, we realised that what the client 'sees' from PR services, versus the amount of effort it has taken to achieve, is distinctly different.

We needed to find a visual to illustrate what it takes to deliver the results and were drawn to the rather infamous iceberg principle.

The one that depicts an iceberg appearing to glide effortlessly on the surface of the water, versus the mass of ice that holds the iceberg up, below the waterline.



Irrespective of the size of the iceberg above the waterline, the mass of ice below the surface is always bigger, in order to keep it steady, and moving.

And for PR and digital services, it is this 'top of the iceberg' perspective versus what happens below the surface that makes the reality, reality. For PR practitioners many of the conversations we have with clients and prospective clients are about justification (what we do). Too often though, the emphasis is placed on the output, the results, and the input is underestimated.

Taking a step back from just the results, we know that at the base of any PR or digital services campaign, needs to be a solid foundation and for us, this is the strategy.

The strategy is the container inside which the tactics, messaging and true value of public relations rests. It is the one element of the planning and initiation cycle of onboarding a new client that for our business is a non-negotiable. Without a strategy in place, there is no differentiation, no pressure testing of messages.

The risk is the inability to elevate the messaging and tactics to rise above the clutter of an industry sector (in our case, the ICT sector). No strategy means no view of the competitive landscape or clarity on what is happening in the industry at

large.

A lot of what good PR does is proactive pushing - and this forms the middle layer of any iceberg. It is the critical mass of activity, delivery of services and fine tuned media relations.

Proactive PR comes from a deep confidence of insight and understanding of the client, where to find the opportunities, which to grab with both hands and which to pass on.

The ability to deliver good PR starts with solid content. And we talk about the content trifecta - thought leadership, press announcements and opinion pieces. Tools like whitepapers and case studies become part of the amplification and extension of credibility and creating compelling content. Content that is not just about what the client wants to push out, but relevant, refined and relatable.

The integration of digital takes this content to a new level. Never before has PR been more accountable and the integration of SEO and tracking capabilities provide the ability to track and measure the success of content.

The result?

Our industry's ability to move beyond the humble AVE, and show the impact that PR content has not only on traffic to company websites (or other digital assets) but also lead generation and prospective sales.

ABOUT DOMINIQUE PIENAAR

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