

The inconvenient truth about PR

 By [Keri-Ann Stanton](#)

23 Apr 2018

Legal trumps public relations nearly every time. Class action suit anyone? Bringing in the muscle after the fact is just spoiling for a fight that will leave at least one side bloodied and bruised. Shareholders want returns. Corporate conscience eats into those margins. Reputational currency needs to be earned *before* the crisis.

Which means you need EQ smart leadership that has their comms team sitting at the table with them, before the lawyers get called in.

“ We’ve sent about-to-be launched campaigns into dark rooms to think about themselves by showing execs and creative teams what the hashtag is actually affiliated with. Or pointed out that the chronological story of a company’s history may not be the best way of winning hearts and minds. ”

Or kindly, very kindly, explained that when the CSI video is juxtaposed against the company’s turnover, we really do need to try harder and/or say nothing at all.

If you have sat with any in-house comms team during a crisis, you will know that everything the public is aching for them to say, they are gagging to do. But business is a machine. Shareholders are hungry animals and lawyers are gatekeepers.



(c) deklafenak - [123RF.com](#)

Look for the leadership that takes risks. Maybe they stutter and splutter their way through a press conference (but with authenticity and passion). Maybe they shed a quiet tear of shame and remorse, like the Japanese do. Or maybe they just keep us involved real-time, like Elon Musk.

Behind them, next to them, are the comms people. Shaping narratives, isolating key messages. Listening. Hearing. Guiding. Course-correcting.

“ *And smart leadership knows intuitively that media are the umbilical cord to your stakeholders.* ”

If you have not dealt with a Rob Rose or an Eusebius McKaiser on a good day, you really don't want to be answering their questions on a bad day. You earn your reputation before and after a crisis, not just during it.

We like clients who NDA us because then we know we are about to be entrusted with critical information. We like clients who share data and strategies so we can pinpoint, predict and foresee issues. Context shapes comms. We like clients who are a little scared of the media because that means there is respect there.

Building trust is a 365-day job – that is the inconvenient truth of PR. Quick fixes, rushed statements or asking for a press release is rookie territory – PR with no purpose.

The arrogance and disdain and legalese we have seen of late from brands will hit their balance sheets. And when the balance sheets get hit, then maybe they will start looking at the true cost of protecting and creating their reputation.

ABOUT KERI-ANN STANTON

Keri-Ann Stanton is Head of Communications at M&N Brands.

- #Prisms2018: The inconvenient truth about PR - 23 Apr 2018
- Growing brand belief - the core of PR - 21 Apr 2015
- [Trends 2015] Back to basics communications engagement - 27 Jan 2015
- Retainers vs projects - 6 Feb 2013
- Is this how you choose your PR agency? - 31 Jan 2013

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>