

## **Social Media in PR Falls Short of Expectations – What Went Wrong?**

Pressing need for companies to move beyond simple adoption to the full-scale integration of social media

**SINGAPORE** – Social media has altered the public relations industry dramatically, yet the benefits of going social are not proportionate for the many corporations that have ventured into the space. The unfamiliarity and lack of quick results tend to dampen the initial enthusiasm for social media such that practitioners have developed a love-hate relationship with the medium. As a result, many cautious players are reduced to retaining a high volume of inactive social media channels, wasting the communication potential of these tools.

The root of the problem is manifold, but boils down to the fact that most companies do not know how to best optimise and unleash the true potential of their social media presence. From platform selection, integration, and content development to continuous engagement and maintenance – only a concerted commitment to each step of the digital communications strategy can pave the way to greater benefits reaped from social media in the long-run.

“Organisations have to establish clear objectives and a long-term strategy for digital media to be successful. Jumping into the online world just because everyone else is is a guarantee for failure,” says Mr . Adrian Heng, Head of Digital Practice at Hill & Knowlton (SEA) and Honorary Secretary for the Institute of Public Relations Singapore, “Organisations cannot just put their messages out there and expect their audience to accept it wholesale just because they say so.”

Another key problem that PR practitioners face with social media is the challenge of crafting strategies for the medium while tying them back to traditional communication plans.

Mr. Edwin Yeo, General Manager of Strategic Public Relations Group Singapore, also cites this as one of the biggest challenges that PR practitioners face today, “Most marketers still use social media as another form of traditional media, and use traditional marketing principles behind their social media strategy.”

“Social media operates under a very different set of rules than traditional PR,” says Mr. Douglas White, Founder of PRDA, a renowned digital communications agency based in Hong Kong, “Short-term PR campaigns do not make the best use of social media and engaging consumers and new media on social media is a very different strategy than traditional press.”

Brands that have succeeded on social media tend to have one thing in common – a specific social media communications strategy developed with a clear understanding of the characteristics and advantages that their chosen social media platforms possess. Dell was one of the first organisations to fully integrate social media as part of the greater corporate plan.

“To be successful, companies should develop an overall entry and exit strategy with senior leaders appointed in the areas of Listening, Engaging, Collaboration and Monetization.” says Mr. David Lee, Head of Social Commerce for Asia Pacific Japan at Dell. The technology company has even invested in an internal command centre dedicated to the listening and tracking of consumer sentiments on social media.

According to Ms. Mylinh Cheung, Head of Media Relations, Corporate Affairs for Asia Pacific at Levi Strauss & Co., brands should listen more instead of randomly pushing their brand assets and messages on social media without thinking the communications strategy through. “If the listening is done well, social media can assist companies gain honest insights directly from stakeholders, which can be very helpful in enabling brands and organizations to stay relevant.”

With over 75% of global companies on social media, it is all the more pressing for companies to develop an edge over others on the increasingly overcrowded yet promising platform. As such, the upcoming Social Media & PR Conference held in Singapore and Hong Kong in March 2012 has gathered experienced practitioners to address critical concerns in social media PR, including topics such as Social Media Integration, Brand Engagement, Crisis Management, and PR Measurement.

The annual event, which celebrates its third anniversary in March this year, will see experienced practitioners such as Adrian Heng, Edwin Yeo, Douglas White, David Lee and Mylinh Cheung speaking and debating on pertinent challenges faced in social media PR. Deutsche Bank, Hotels.com, Adobe Systems, HBO Asia and Quintiles are amongst the many organisations that will be sharing their insights at the conference this year.

“PR practitioners need to come out of their comfort zone,” says Ms. Angelina Ong, Regional Managing Director of Asia Pacific at Burson-Marsteller and one of the key speakers at the conference, “I hope my session serves as a friendly wake-up call, a reflection of where PR stands in today’s marketplace and reenergises my peers to embrace the future and regain control of our leadership reins in the marketing space.”

#### **More Details:**

Social Media & PR 2012 Conference

- 5 - 6 March 2012, Grand Corpthorne Waterfront Hotel, Singapore
- 8 - 9 March 2012, Regal Hongkong Hotel, Hong Kong

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Attachment: Full Programme

Full programme can also be found at: <http://conferences.com.sg/s1395-spr14-62a-sin.pdf>

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