

The state of PR in the new age

 By [Thandukwazi Gcabashe](#)

14 Feb 2018

A far too common event that brings much angst to many a public relations consultant (and I'm sure I speak for the majority) is being told that we have, with our ideas, potentially overstepped some invisible boundary separating traditional and digital PR.



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Throughout the industry, it is widely believed that PR is the exclusive realm of press release creation and distribution, thought-leadership pieces, broadcast interviews, crisis and reputation management, and events. Anything outside of this lot is for the newer and “cooler” digital agencies. But I argue that the introduction of digital platforms should be seen as just that – platforms. Public relations must evolve with the times, and the same principles of creating content and establishing strategic relationships with suppliers, journalists, producers or bloggers remains the core of what we do.

The new platforms are there to improve on what was available in the past. We now have benefits like SEO and analytics tools that allow us to measure tactics and offer insights post campaigns. This, of course, means we can suggest more than just a press release, but use newer tools like social media as part of our messaging execution. The boundary, or line, between traditional and digital PR, is not just blurred – in fact, there is no line at all.

Practice of strategic tactics

Consultants should be able to give their clients the best way to roll out a campaign without fear of overstepping any so-called lines. Depending on who the primary audience of the message is, a consultant should be able to steer the campaign using the correct platforms. For example, if you are targeting the youth, social media, blogs and internet radio will be your primary platforms. On the other hand, if your audience is comprised of middle to senior business people, magazines, broadcast (mainly radio) and online platforms are best to distribute the message.

Public relations is a practice of strategic tactics, and categorising some as traditional (which implies old) or digital (at best) stifles the broad potential such tactics can achieve in partnership; whatever their classification, traditional or digital PR tactics are two sides of the same coin. These “two sides” should be left uncategorised and allowed to be one.

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