

PR industry professionals must stand up for integrity

 By Janine Lloyd

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It is a sad day when PR firms tarnish the reputation of the industry as a whole.

For those not in the know a UK-based PR firm, Bell Pottinger and its MD in South Africa are under the microscope when [The Citizen](#) revealed documents of the firm's shenanigans on behalf of the Gupta family. According to the article the PR firm has been accused of "intentionally sowing the seeds of racial division in order to distract from allegations of state capture by the Gupta family and Zuma".



The debacle which has swept social media and the press has been dubbed "The sultans of spin" and #blackMonday on Twitter. It is an utter travesty and the PR industry as a whole should be outraged by the UK firm's actions.

Many PR firms in South Africa adhere to the [Prisa code of ethics and professional standards](#) for the industry and this crisis should reaffirm every PR leader commitment to drive ethical practices.

In particular, these codes should be looked at and implemented within every PR company in SA:

2.4 We are committed to ethical practices, **preservation of public trust**, and the pursuit of communication excellence with powerful standards of performance, professionalism, and ethical conduct.

2.6 We shall conduct our professional lives in accordance with **the public interest**. We shall not conduct ourselves in any

manner **detrimental** to the profession of public relations.

2.7 We have a positive duty to **maintain integrity and accuracy**, as well as generally accepted standards of good taste.

2.8 We shall not knowingly, intentionally or recklessly communicate false or misleading information. It is our obligation to use proper care to avoid doing so inadvertently.

7.1 We respect the principles contained in the Constitution of the country in which we are resident.

My thoughts on the matter:

- Underhand approaches should not be used as a PR Tactic. Not ever. PR professionals must drive this within their organisation and push back on any client who would require them to do so.
- Choose your clients carefully by researching them and their business practices and get a credible outsiders opinion.
- Don't take on clients whose values do not align to yours, not only will the client tarnish your reputation but you probably won't keep them for long, as they will ditch you for a PR firm who will do what they say.
- Commit to the industry's codes of conduct and make sure your staff understand the ramifications of not doing so.

ABOUT JANINE LLOYD

Janine Lloyd is the CEO of PR Expert, an entrepreneur and motivational speaker. With 27 years in leadership and entrepreneurship in the communications, marketing and branding fields, Janine is known for being an inspiring leader, razor-sharp strategist and successful entrepreneur. She has led her business to achieve the highest accolades in the industry winning multiple awards and recently PR Expert won the PRISM Campaign of the Year for 2016.

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