

# How to avoid online campaign disasters

By [Madelain Roscher](#)

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"Think before you speak" is a nugget of advice that most of us learnt at a young age and continue to see its practical application even in our current daily lives. In the fast-paced era of information sharing, big data and brands perpetually competing for audiences' attention, that same piece of advice can be reinterpreted to "research before you post".



Image credit: Erik Lucatero on Unsplash.

Failed social media campaigns from famous and reputable brands are plentiful on the internet.



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No brand is immune to making mistakes, yet some errors are easily avoidable. Without a comprehensive social media policy and practical social media tools, companies can end up trending for the wrong reasons.

Here are five tips on how brands can avoid digital and overall campaign blunders.

## Diversity cures tone-deaf campaigns

To prevent apparent traps, individuals working on online content creation should come from a diverse background. Blatant errors often happen because those responsible for curating a brand's subject matter are tone-deaf or suffer from tunnel vision.

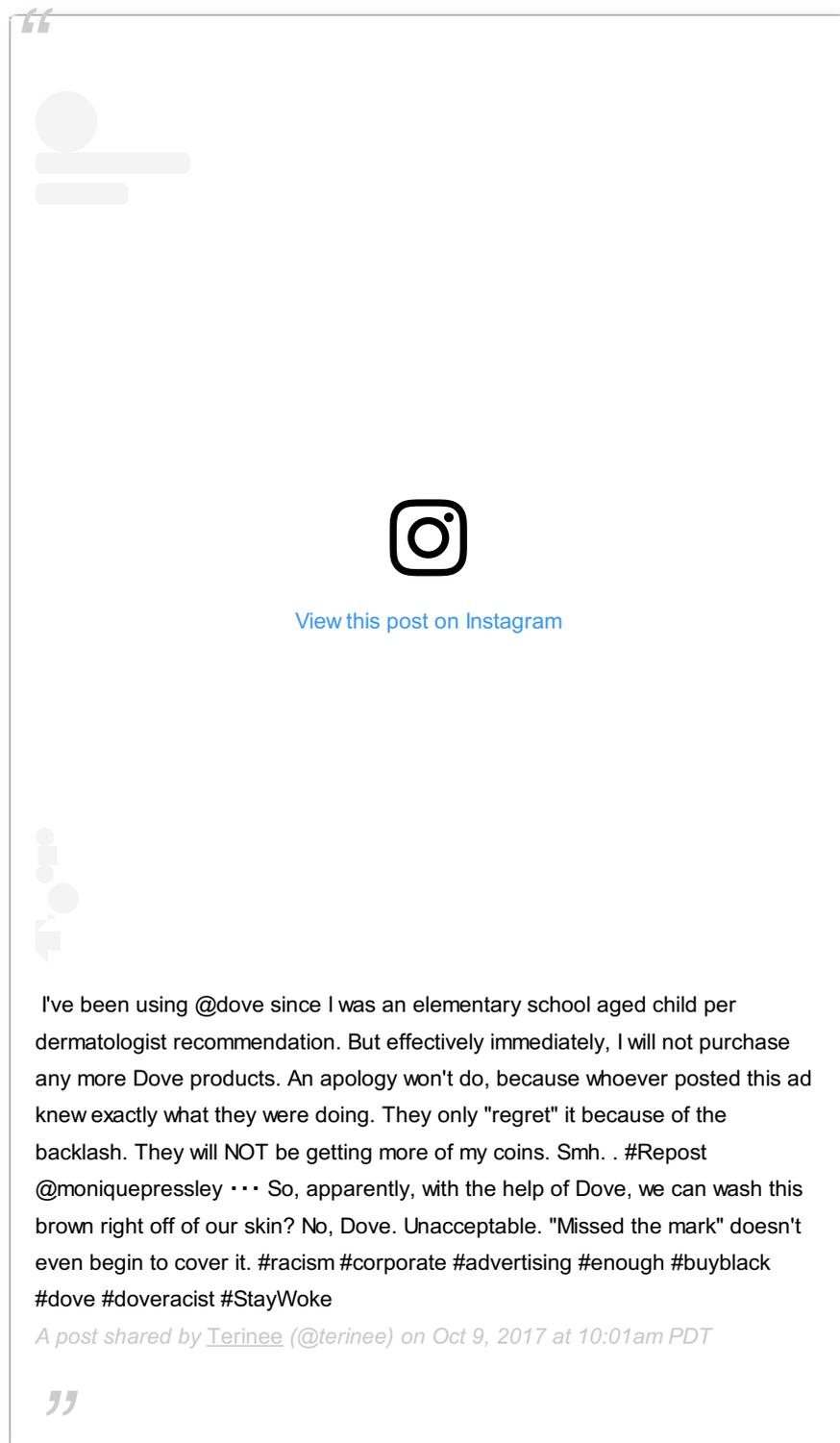


## Prada shelves 'blackface' figurines decried as racist

19 Dec 2018



Having multiple people check the content before it's published also helps to notice typos and grammar errors. The same applies to the use of hashtags. Do a general search to see if that hashtag is not associated with anything that goes against the brand's values.



## Meme your own business

Brands wishing to pivot their presence on the back of a pop culture reference or newsfeed need to have conducted comprehensive research.

They must ensure the context of the reference applies to their messaging and values as a brand.

## The more, the merrier until it is not

A great way of attracting audience engagement is to create a campaign that incorporates user-generated content. This

allows your target market to embody your brand and feel like they belong to the broader community.

But left unattended, trolls can set fire to your campaign – reducing your brand’s reputation to ash. The choice is simple: vet and only allow content that resonates with the brand or refrain from campaigns that rely on user-generated content.



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## Not all funny bones need tickling

Humour is a great way of endearing a brand’s values within the target audience’s emotions. Funny wins big when it lands.

But not every brand can afford to be funny, let alone pull it off. Never compromise a brand’s ethics to gain a few laughs. Humour is subjective, while your intentions may be pure, you may end up missing the mark and receiving huge backlash – especially when trying to lighten up a heavy subject.



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## Brands need to learn to walk before they race

South Africa is a country with a racially-charged history. Some marketers may be oblivious as to how some cultural stereotypes, instead of landing as humorous, may come across as racist. While it is essential to have discussions from all parties around how we move the nation forward, brands wishing to get into the conversation of race need to be careful how they walk that line.

If brands miss the mark, they risk tarnishing their image by grandstanding or diminishing people’s lived experiences to a failed media campaign.

“ Told you'll a long time ago about [@OUTsurance](#). This is howthey see you!!! This is the only way they see us!

[pic.twitter.com/sQZikAqt9a](#)— Andile Ncube (@AndileNcube) [June 18, 2017](#) ”

The internet’s population now sits at 4.4 billion users and has become the easiest way to reach a wider audience while engaging them where they primarily live. But with so many brands competing for audiences’ attention, creating a sterling campaign capable of resonating with so many different personas is no small feat.



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In the digital age, being the first to publish engaging content is excellent. But getting it right is even better.

It is harder for a brand to clean up its tarnished image because they rushed to be first and got it wrong than it is to create and execute a whole well-researched campaign. The costs of not investing in the groundwork for a campaign far outweigh the price and time spent required to getting it right the first time around.

## ABOUT MADELAIN ROSCHER

Described as a Public Relations (PR) guru by her peers, Madelain Roscher is the CEO of PR Worx, a full-service marketing-communications agency, which she established in 2001. With 22 years' in-depth industry experience based on an impressive consulting and corporate career, the firm has achieved remarkable successes under her leadership.

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