

Socially savviness is well planned

 By [Wayne Flemming](#)

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Today, almost everyone's a critic, complete with an unfiltered opinion. Be it the clout chasers or active advocates, many take to social media to air these opinions and grievances where the views are met with either support or scorn; and the line between the two are often blurred. The simple truth is that anything online lasts forever, but reputation does not. Brands face the risk that a simple post or content piece could be the cause of unintended reputational damage.

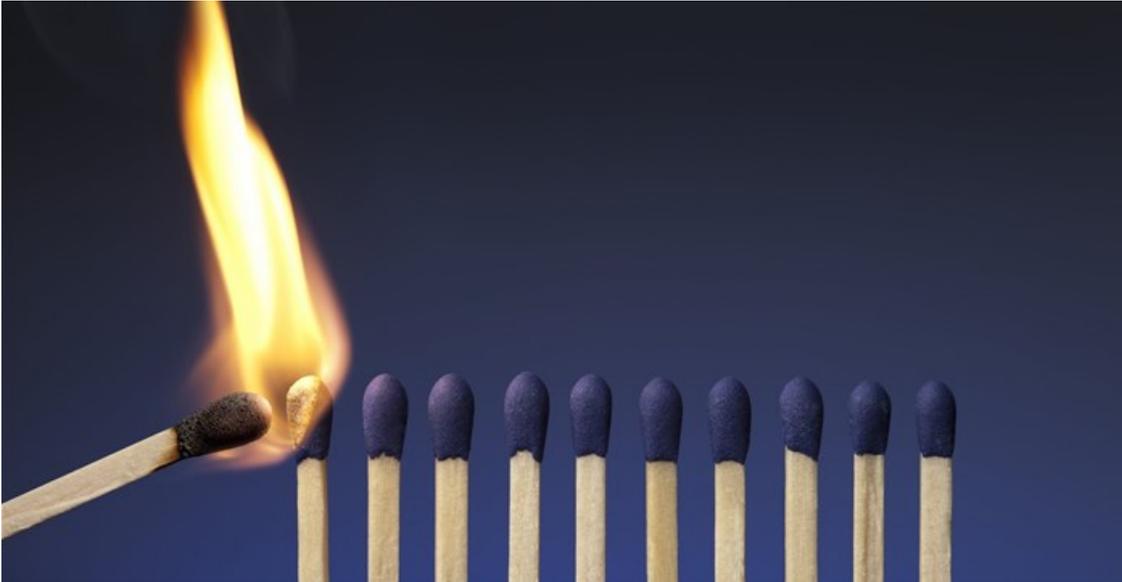


Image source: Gallo/Getty Images.

To be present online, one must plan well and be equipped with a solid risk register to deal with any potential reputational damage that could occur. While a tweet may lead to brand tragedy, it could also lead to business popularity - it's all dependent on metrics. A well-planned social marketing and content plan that considers all options should be viewed as a lifeline.

Make metrics matter

Any social media strategy starts from an objective and ends at an evaluation, but what if the audience relevance is not just missed, but misunderstood? This could lead to a disaster. Brands must plan a reaction for any possible audience commentary situation. Introducing a reputational scoring system into the strategy builds a broader picture that enables the brand to understand various perspectives and either adjust the approach or respond accordingly.

A scoring system can be built as a quadrant, whereby a risk analysis is completed on content created. Using the quadrant programme, strategists are able to determine if the risk is worth the reward and gauge how their audience may perceive it. It speaks directly into the objective of the content and whether the overall tactic, be it shock or awareness, will work.

Consider the viral campaign #VWDriveDry by Volkswagen, which set social media ablaze with speculation and in equal parts concern. It featured a well-known influencer involved in a car crash while conducting an Instagram Live video. While it worked in achieving critical conversation, many saw it as causing unnecessary emotional distress. The overriding factor was the time from which the incident took place to its reveal as part of a 'drive responsibly' campaign. If VW had announced its intentions sooner, the conversation would have catalysed at concern around the topic - not distress around the tactic.



#VWDriveDry: Encouraging South Africans to drive responsibly

15 Jan 2019



Businesses and agencies who do risk analysis before advertising campaigns will help ensure that they land the correct intended message within an engaged audience.

Stakes and stakeholder management

With the average person exposed to between 6,000 to 10,000 adverts and messages a day, it becomes increasingly difficult to have an impact in such a cluttered space. Due to hyper-personalisation and contextual marketing on digital and social platforms, brands and agencies often opt for bigger, more impactful (and what they think is better) and riskier campaigns to win the user's attention.

When a brand decides to go big or go home with a campaign, they have to consider the impact this could have on the overall brand image and not simply the short term gain. Engaging various internal stakeholders is imperative to create a collaborative risk mitigation approach. Also, by including the PR team in the process, you allow for an additional layer of risk evaluation based on the many possible outcomes of the campaign.

Online and offline conversations

Sometimes it isn't the campaign itself but the consumers that trigger a social media uproar, and while a risk analysis will assist in the response planning, a social listening tool will highlight the impact or the conversational volume.

#McDStories launched by popular eatery McDonald's was intended to encourage positive adventures individuals had with the brand, however, it soon turned sour with many using the hashtag to share their negative experiences. The campaign sentiment was skewed and while the brand tried to limit the hashtag, it had spread. By using a social listening tool one can pick up on changing sentiment fast, allowing the brand to react and control the online conversation much quicker. It also provides insights into account validity, allowing brands to identify spam versus real and when to address the incident. If you can, take the customer service conversations offline into your platform's private direct messages instead. If the impact remains high (reach) and consistent (frequency), a public announcement may be needed.



Beware the #bashtag

Louise Marsland 13 Jun 2014



Ultimately, this year has been noted as the year of honesty, whereby consumers are no longer just stagnant but active in

communicating what they want, how they feel and what needs to happen. Social media is a powerful tool for brands to use and when used correctly it can prove invaluable, but always ensure there is a strong crisis mitigation strategy in place for any brand faux pas or customer comment.

ABOUT WAYNE FLEMMING

With solid experience in the industry, Wayne Fleming is a business visionary and IMC content creator who describes himself as a "marketing fanatic". His bold thinking is supported by his strong strategy and leadership skills, and he is also a storyteller at heart. As a changemaker, he thrives on disrupting the marketplace which is why he started BrandTruth in 2016 with co-founder Zubeida Goolam - crafting digital and content campaigns that both inspire and drive critical engagement.

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