

THE 5 GOLDEN RULES OF SOCIAL PR

HOW TO AVOID THE BIGGEST PR MISTAKES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The biggest PR blooper of the year on social media goes to MasterCard UK's agency who, in an effort to promote the brand's sponsorship of the BritAwards, demanded journalists promote the event on Twitter using the hashtag #pricelessurprises at specific times with specific phrases in return for accreditation to attend. Moments later the agency found itself at the centre of a Twitterstorm with journalists expressing their displeasure at conditions set, forcing the agency to backtrack.

The outrage was sparked by The Telegraph's Tim Walker who tweeted: 'Please fellow journalists do not agree to the absurd conditions for covering @BRIT Awards. I've even just been told what I should tweet. No.'

Was the agency wrong for merely doing their job in getting publicity for their client? No. But did they choose the right channel to dictate what they want publicised? Absolutely not.

Social media, no matter how vast the reach and how effective a marketing platform, has and should always be managed differently from other media channels for PR purposes. This is because, and as the name clearly suggests, here it is about networking, socially – showing character versus corporation, sentiment versus selling and most importantly perspective rather than pitches.

In this white paper, we lay down the 5 golden rules that PRs need to keep in mind when managing communications on social media to ensure their strategy stays socially engaging and never finds its way to the hashtag #PRFail.



RULE 1: CREATE A SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Should your CEO announce important organisational changes directly on social media? Can employees tweet on the official account after a heavy night out? If a crisis should occur, who is the first point of contact for all social comms?

If you don't have answers to the questions above (and others like them) your social media strategy could be



heading for trouble. It is imperative for all companies on social media to have a policy that outlines the objectives of the company's online presence and lays out guidelines for employees when posting anything in connection with the brand's name.

After the MH370 disaster, one of the aspects Malaysia Airlines was most criticised for was its ineffectual social media response which despite following a crisis comms procedure, was careless, causing irreparable damage to the brand reputation.

This social media policy should therefore include a well defined crisis management plan in preparation for a social calamity, should it arise. A well thought out social media policy for the business is further recommended as it keeps the conversation tone consistent and within the framework of what is beneficial to a company's reputation and legal interests.



RULE 2: PIQUE VS. PITCH

Whether you're trying to engage with online influencers or consumers, social media should be used to pique interest in the topic you are trying to publicise. As Oliver Thring, journalist for The Sunday Times told Vuelio: 'I get several press releases on email a day and sometimes PRs get in touch with me on social media only to tell me they have

sent me the email. That's of no use.

Instead send me a catchy tweet or initiate an interesting discussion around it on another platform and I'm more likely to check that email right away and give the PR a call.'

So, instead of using social media to push out links and as another touch point for

media, try to make it a conversation hub. Follow

(loosely) the social media 'Rule of Thirds' - 1/3 should be your own content, 1/3 should be curated content, and 1/3 should be engagement.

Social media monitoring is also a great way to find out what people (and competition) are talking about so that you are constantly in the know, and ahead of the game.

RULE 3: DIFFERENT STROKES

How often have you cringed at seeing someone's beach snap as their LinkedIn avatar? No, that's great for Facebook but not here! The same goes for brand communications. PRs need to try different strategies and use a different tone with each networking platform they address. A catchy post accompanied with a picture on Twitter, a video on

Facebook with an opinion poll, a debate question on LinkedIn to gather industry perspective or a photo essay on Instagram, are some of the different ways PRs can change their approach to suit different platforms and address the audience appropriately.

Various tools help you manage multiple channels simultaneously while tracking brand mentions and evaluating performance. Introduce social metrics to your weekly reports and include social statistics in your marketing funnel.

RULE 4: ASK, DON'T TELL

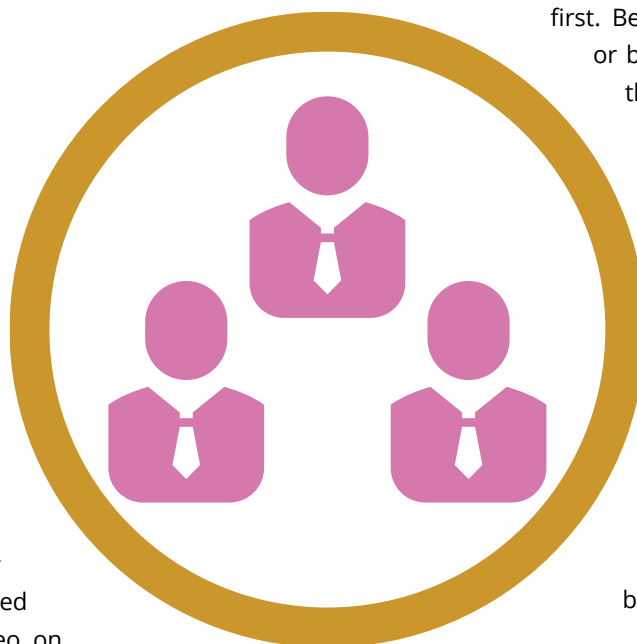
Influential fashion and lifestyle blogger Vicki Day's biggest pet peeve with PR is the way some PRs pitch to her. In a recent Vuelio webinar she shared several horror stories when she was told what to write and when to share on social media.

Much like the MasterCard example, strict terms and conditions are a big no-no for journalists and bloggers. As Vicki says: 'Don't come to me with your set ideas. I love PRs that say 'this is my client and this is what we would like to promote - what can you do with it?''

Remember journalists and bloggers know their audience best and have more knowledge about when they are most active online and what kind of posts best appeal to their readers. Having said that, it is quite natural for PRs to be particular about what is written about their brand and be concerned about coverage they are after.

An effective way to reach your goals without putting off media contacts is to do your homework first. Before approaching a journalist or blogger, get to know them and their digital network.

Tools such as Vuelio help you determine the topics that they are interested in, what they are currently talking about online and how influential their social media network is. This way you can find out how relevant your news is to them and understand how they might be able to best push it forward.



RULE 5: RESPOND REAL-TIME

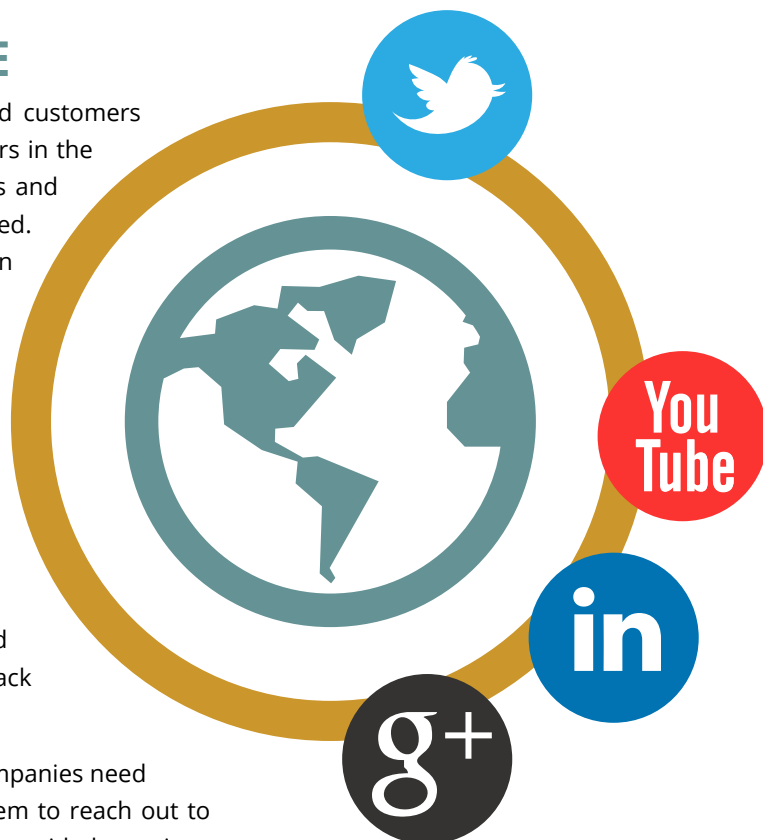
Social media has become a powerful tool for disgruntled customers and a nightmare for brands. A simple rant can incite others in the network to join in and share similar negative experiences and could potentially snowball into a major issue if not curbed. But the worst thing a brand can do is disagree or even worse, rebuke the customer.

The most recent example to stir yet another storm on Twitter comes from Hawke & Co, a US clothing firm who mocked a customer's complaint by replying: "We're sure your 320 followers will understand." The tweet was deleted but not before a screenshot of it was shared thousands of times.

The best thing to do would be to acknowledge the customer's point of view, apologise when necessary and instruct the correct customer care representative to get back to them directly to sort out the issue.

Moreover, for effective online reputation management companies need to invest in a social media monitoring tool that allows them to reach out to people who are talking about their brand and transform one-sided mentions into conversations and relationships.

Keep in mind that social media monitoring is also key in identifying and communicating with influencers.



Vuelio is a leading provider of public relations software that enables professionals to plan, execute and measure influencer-oriented campaigns in one integrated platform. Communication professionals use Vuelio to access the world's largest pitchable media and blogger database, distribute press releases, manage influencer outreach, measure social media activities, and analyse the effectiveness of campaigns. As of the 24th of June 2015, Vuelio, completed the acquisition of the UK operations of the global PR software giant Cision. In 2014 Cision, merged with Vocus, a PR software powerhouse that added yet more sophisticated media relations management software and a wealth of development expertise. Today under the Vuelio brand, these three pioneers in communications software, provide an unrivalled portfolio of products and services to serve the modern public relations and public affairs professional throughout the UK and Europe. Whether you're a communications professional, traditional or new, the Vuelio software suite brings together all the elements you need to tell a great story, as loudly as possible. For more information, visit www.vuelio.com or follow [@Vuelio](https://twitter.com/Vuelio) on Twitter.

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