

RESOURCING SOCIAL MEDIA DRIVEN ISSUES



“We may not like it but the communications game has changed and unless the wider community, including governments and corporations, adapt to the new reality they will be ambushed at every turn.”

This warning was delivered recently by business oracle Robert Gottliebsen in *The Australian’s* “The KGB Dossier” (March 31, 2017).

He was commenting on the power of social media campaigns being used by activists and activist groups on industry and government and pointing out ***“..that activist power is now being targeted at the customer bases of medium sized companies”***.

His example was the situation Coopers Brewery found itself in recently with the gay marriage debate where by association with a speaker in an organised debate, the brewery was targeted by those who decried the actual debate, claiming it should never have been needed.

And since then has come the inept Pepsi -Kendall Jenner fiasco followed closely by United Airlines’ unbelievable response to a passenger over-book incident that wiped over a billion off the company’s value.

So, how long before that activism hits beyond the large and medium sized companies and lands squarely in the small end of town?

Dealing with social media activism is not easy; requiring communication skill, being social media savvy, and having the ability to respond quickly and completely across the social media platforms.

Small business simply cannot compete with well-funded or driven activist campaigns, and most medium sized businesses struggle as well. They certainly won’t employ specialist in-house staff with the needed experience just in case a campaign comes their way.

And yes, you do get into trouble for employing your 12 year old who has probably mastered all the platforms.

Retailers of course who market on the web, Facebook, and probably Instagram are already well aware of likes/dislikes and other feedback mechanisms and more than one has already been bawled out by disgruntled customers.

According to the Wall Street Journal (Robert Thomson April 5, 2017) Google and Facebook already have two thirds of the digital advertising market and account for over 90% of new growth in digital marketing.

Retail businesses have to be in this space and the vast majority of potential customers, including B2B, will use Google and other search engines to source services.

Given electronic engagement is now all but universal, the spectre of social media campaigns is not far behind.

So what do you need to do to be prepared?

- Undertake a risk analysis on your marketing campaigns before you deploy them.
- Pre-test using experienced and independent communications specialists to review campaigns before they are fired on the target market, particularly if the campaign incorporates social messages.
- Establish relationships with firms who you can call on to step in to assist you in dealing with such social media campaigns.
- Be transparent with your communications and objectives.
- Have a crisis communications plan, incorporating a social component.
- Practise dealing with the plan so that your organisation knows what to expect and how to deal with these situations.

The most important advice is two-fold and timeless: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” and “don’t try to sucker the market”.

Anger is the most transferable and acted upon emotion so act with principles, keep stakeholders informed and test your communication or marketing campaign first.

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