



# PR - Is it a game worth the candle?

I have been in the PR industry for almost 2 years now and the first things I thought about PR at the beginning of my studies was strategies, media thrill, tads of glitz and glamour...

...campaigns, product launches, crisis management, issues management and the whole pack. But I guess I was in a nine day's wonder.

I had the privilege of doing my experiential learning at one of South Africa's top 5 PR consultancies. One of the things that I loved about that consultancy was that it offered a lot of training on issues pertaining to the PR industry and their commitment to hiring students to do experiential learning, as their form of commitment to empowerment in the industry. Their internal communications was just superb, as well as their black empowerment compliance.

But after the end of my contract with that consultancy I went in search of a consultancy that would offer me greater responsibilities and challenges, but only to be taken aback, I found myself still doing monotonous tasks I did in my experiential training. There I was ready to put my shoulder to the wheel, but eventually couldn't spot the difference – continuing to have administrative “dirty” work cringed down my throat.

I then realised that internal communications wasn't one of the consultancy's strongest points and yet we advised clients on how they should implement effective internal communication strategies. How are you supposed to be a consultancy's voice outside of it when you have not the slightest idea of decisions and visions?

One thing that strikes me is that do you really teach people anything when you shove “dirty work” down their throat instead of providing them with mind broadening responsibilities? Even when one tries to be proactive and trying to first seek to understand their work place than to be understood, it's still the same. It is fair that not having your own transport in this industry is a major obstacle, but +- 75% of one's time is spent in the office liaising with media and clients and whoever else one needs to communicate with.

One of the other things that concerned me in this consultancy that I am with was the lack of black empowerment in terms of management/director level. Maybe everyone has their own understanding of what black economic empowerment is, but if you only have black people at junior level and none at senior level, does that classify you as being on the right beam of empowerment? Again some PR consultancies advise their clients to comply with empowerment charters when they themselves are not compliant to black economic empowerment.

It seems that in most PR businesses the human element is not as important as the financial or technical element; yes... yes... yes... the first priority is to deliver to the client first. But I also agree with Steven Covey when he says “you save time, energy and money when you tap into the human resources of a business at every level. When you listen, you learn. And give people who work for you and with you psychological air. You inspire loyalty that goes well beyond the eight-to-five physical demands of the job.”

The first element that people are concerned with in the PR business is profit, overcharging clients and coming up with some excuse to justify the heavy charges. Where is the conformity to the PRISA code of conduct?

To end, I don't mean to be racist but it seems that when you are black and working in a white dominated industry you become quite limited to do tasks, sometimes it feels as if you can't be trusted to run with things. It confirms the saying “...a black man is always a suspect..”

I hope I have not laid on with a trowel... but at this point in time I do not feel that I will be springing like a mushroom where I am currently working and some of these ignored issues in PR are just a thorn in the flesh... if you know what I mean ;-)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>