

How to implement those big ideas

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23 May 2018

Is overthinking one of the problems plaguing the communications industry and, especially, the public relations sector of that industry?



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“As any creative knows, it takes considerable time, expertise and nurture to create ideas that motivate brand conversation and have genuine business impact. And our industry is full of very talented creatives. But as a profession, we often overthink,” said the founder of UK business, Launch, Johnny Pitt.

Communications professionals often bandy about the concept that ideas are our currency, and that the true value of anything we give a client resides in the big idea. There is no denying innovation and innovative thinking are the veritable bread and butter of much of what we do. But, is that the long and short of it all?

What, then, of those big thinkers who toss out ideas at the ready, one after the other? No action, no follow through; a lot of cream, and not enough butter.

Without taking away anything from the need for great ideas, there is also a very strong case for action. The public relations space, which continues to grow by the day buttressed by more strategic thinking, is very much a business of relationships and, as we like to say, ‘hotwiring’ relationships. It is an active, doing discipline.

Return on investment

One would be hard pressed to see much return on investment unless these are actioned and churned in the truly positive sense of the word: as in the churning of ‘cream into butter’. You have to truly work an idea to get something useful out of it, and beyond that ensure the idea itself is one that is truly of value and truly relevant.

There's an anecdote about the Battle of Waterloo that illustrates this point almost perfectly. Napoleon, despite his much bigger, much stronger army, was defeated by the proverbial David, the smaller union between the Seventh Coalition under the Duke of Wellington, and the Prussian army under the Prince of Wahlstatt.

Worry not, for most wouldn't remember their names either, and yet Napoleon rolls off the tongue. So, how was he defeated despite having the odds ever in his favour?

Simple: His opponents refused to overthink and go too far out of the 'box' that contained their thoughts. They focused their efforts on changing a simple fact: that only four rounds of bullets could be shot per minute. Nothing more had ever been done or imagined, and only a fool dared try otherwise.

The men trained their smaller, weaker army, day and night, to load their rounds and fire off as many shots as could be done until they mastered it to a tee. Soon thereafter, they managed the previously impossible: a standard of five shots a minute

They defeated Napoleon in a historic effort that proved that discipline and action are the order of the day. Follow-through and a fully-fledged, relevant idea are key. Ideas, yes, but actioned and with merit.

What can we take away from this? Don't think outside the box when the perfect solution lays therein. Second, big ideas do not change the world: people who make those ideas a reality do.

And in a field where hotwiring relationships is the order of the day, action and effort are paramount towards achieving that extra shot.

Ideas alone will only get us that far. After all, we need to make the butter before we can spread it on our bread!

ABOUT TAAZIMA KALA-ESSACK

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