Three tips to help your brand avoid getting eaten for breakfast on Twitter

By Skhumbuzo Tuswa   11 Aug 2016

Making your brand an interesting voice to listen to on social media is a mixture of intuition and trial and error. The Telkom social media accounts lack of both of these was exposed when, on 9 August 2016, the company trended on Twitter for posting a 'shady' Women's Day dedication.

The lack of colour in this picture goes deeper than just the black and white filter. This was picked up even by EFF commander-in-chief Julius Malema among other influencers.

The first rule of managing a social media disaster such as this, is to delete your post and admit you didn't intend on offending anyone. Telkom instead posted a succession of tweets where they 'corrected the problem [of an absence of black women in their message].'

This did not go down well with Black Twitter.

It further emphasises the point that sometimes all it takes to stop a social media blunder turning into a full-blown catastrophe is a simple apology. Of course, what's even better is to avoid putting your brand in that position to begin with. I've been fortunate to work with great social media teams in my career, from McDonald's and Durex to award-winning South African musicians. If there's a formula to avoid trending for all the wrong reasons, it starts with these three tips.

1. Run it past a few people and see what they think

This can sometimes be the hardest thing to do. Advertising agencies are usually very fast-paced environments. It's easy to get caught up in a cycle of constantly trying to get your client's approval instead of thinking about whether it'll make sense for your audience to begin with. Show your work to people that aren't in your team. Show it to your mom or your girlfriend. Do they 'get it'? Remember, these are the actual people that'll see it on their timelines and newsfeeds. They are your real creative directors.

2. If it doesn't excite you, it won't excite anyone

The reason certain content ends up getting a lot of shares, retweets, reblogs, etc. is because it stirs some kind of emotion in the person consuming it. You create or find something that makes you feel something, and you use a social media platform to share that emotion with your network of followers. If someone shows you content and it just makes you cringe, that's your gut telling you a revision is needed.

3. If you know it's risky, keep a back door open

A great way to manage your exposure is to plan for a backlash. The bigger your brand, the more important it is for your team to do this exercise. Make sure you can articulate the intention behind your message, and this all goes back to whether it would make sense to your audience. Then make sure the spirit of your message aligns with your brand's ideals. Defending your messaging is sometimes necessary, and being thorough with your risk management puts you in a good position to do this.

ABOUT SKHUMBUZO TUSWA

Skhumbuzo Tuswa is social media marketer at Just Perfect, a digital agency. Skhumbuzo has managed the online presence of leading South African brands and award-winning musicians. He's a leading voice in the social media space.
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