

When firms fumble the PR play

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In the wake of the recent viral mess that a leading corporate law firm has found themselves in, I thought it would be pertinent to put a few thoughts forward about the PR minefield that many law firms face. It is impossible to control what employees do in their free time but all too often firms are confronted with the fall out that their employee's actions create, which don't mirror the core values of the firm.

The majority of firms don't have the benefits of a full-time communications resource to tap into, so often the response is composed by a partner. A legal expert but not a brand or communications expert! The resulting response is a knee jerk one that merely tries to isolate the issue and distance the firm from the employee's actions. Unfortunately, these responses rarely appease the offended public who have contributed to the issue going viral in the first place.

Make it simple but significant. - Don Draper



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...going business with the firm, they move past the individual's actions and view the firm as an extension of the firm. They are passionate and will attack the firm on all fronts. A response to the firm's social media page is often only the beginning. Their ability to influence opinion can be far reaching and the impact on the brand will be felt for a long time.

It is imperative that the firm responds to the matter in an effective and efficient manner.

- Acknowledge the event! The days of sticking your head in the sand and hoping it goes away are long gone. The public demands more from the brand.
- Condemn the actions of the individual and stress that the actions do not mirror the firm's values.

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- Where possible commit the firm to corrective steps both internally and externally.

Negative PR can cause a loss of trust in the brand, negatively affects revenue, causes irreparable damage to brand equity and damages brand association. Ultimately the situation is an opportunity to learn and grow for all members of staff at every level of the firm. Going forward, make sure you have the best support in place for your firm so your next foray into PR is not a damaging one.

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Law firms are often impacted by the actions of their employees, here are some concrete ways for firms to take effective corrective steps.

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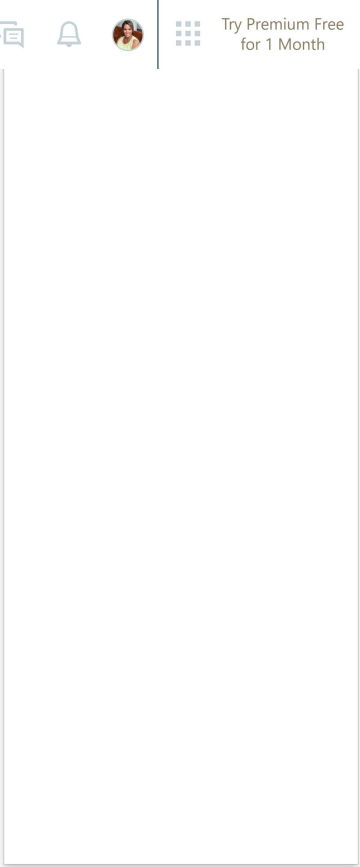
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