

The year for stronger strategic intent

 By [Claudia Smith](#)

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At the very heart of PR is reputation and in today's volatile world we are constantly reminded how reputation impacts individuals, businesses and even governments and nations.



Claudia Smith, business director at Orange Ink. Source: Supplied.

While previously PR was seen as the 'poor cousin' in the marketing mix and in many cases an afterthought to marketing discussions and strategies, over the last few years we have really started to see the shift to more strategically aligned PR - outside of crisis and into broader reputation. This will likely continue into 2023 and beyond. And I can hear every PR professional saying 'finally'.

Of course, many agencies have been pushing for this and driving the strategic narrative and the role that PR plays not only in media channels but in the boardroom. While many businesses haven't listened, some have and have rightly embraced

the power of PR to the extent where they now view it as a silver bullet for reputation.

“ *PR was seen as the poor cousin in marketing and treated as an afterthought* ”

Reputation is of course a combination of multiple facets and while PR can make a commendable effort, it is the ‘essence’ of business or brand that truly makes it distinctive, and the PR then elevates it. PR can help shape those core characteristics and provide the soundboard to let go of acquired behaviours, push boundaries in objective thinking and elevate the heart and soul of the businesses through content, communication and collaboration.

In fact, it is the sound advice behind closed doors that protects and enhances reputation. And if done correctly, PR drives the right conversations at the right time. And now that PR is finally being provided with a seat at the table and is welcomed more and more into the business conversation, getting involved in areas that it perhaps traditionally wasn’t before, where reputation is elevated beyond just crisis, means that we are likely to see the following key trends in 2023:

Strategic Intent

More and more businesses are integrating change initiatives – from sustainability and net-zero targets to ESG, diversity and inclusion, and purpose-driven outreach. PR’s role is also being elevated as a result, as it provides a critical business counsel component, bringing a unique edge, as businesses carve out new, white space. Additionally, as PR reporting and measurements become stronger, the more boardroom buy-in we will see.

Fuelling an ecosystem of co-creation

Marketing and PR will become closer than ever before. While PR has always been a part of the mix, it has usually played a supporting role. With ‘outside the box’ thinking being pushed as technologies and platforms increase - and reputation becomes more embedded in not only what businesses say, but what they do - we are likely to see a much stronger ecosystem of collaboration and co-creation.

Personalisation to add value

There is so much content currently being created that users are becoming very selective in terms of what they spend their time on, and we know it must add value to their overall experience. Personalisation of content will continue to grow, and PR will continue to play a key role in developing this personalised content, as well as stakeholder engagement, ensuring that tactics don’t alienate portions of their target audience.

Innovation

The world will continue to experiment with AI, extended virtual reality and even the metaverse and PR will need to go beyond its comfort zones and reconsider the very essence of digital PR and how to explore potential opportunities and challenges in these new mixed reality spaces.

So, 2023 is not only set to be the year of strategic intent, but I believe that brands will utilise PR more and more to not only build their presence and visibility but safeguard their reputation of the future.

ABOUT CLAUDIA SMITH

Claudia Smith has an impressive consulting career and her fair share of industry stories to tell. And she does exactly that - tell brand stories, backed by strategy and high-level consulting - all focussed on impact. She believes in the power of the African continent, the value of insight and experience and the importance of relationships on the continent and beyond its borders. She thrives on challenge and as a Business Director at communications agency, Orange Ink.

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