

Putting a name to PR business expertise

 By Leigh Andrews

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Hot off the back of their PRISM Award 'campaign of the year' win, PR Expert shares insight into the top five PR trends of the moment as well as the importance of mentorship in building the industry's future professionals.



Janine Lloyd

Janine Lloyd, entrepreneur and founder of PR Expert, explains that trends in business names –especially for SME startups – are moving towards making the name easily associated with what you do. This makes your business easier to find on the web and creates instant realisation about what you stand for. As an expert is someone who is highly knowledgeable about a particular area and their expertise is PR, the name 'PR Expert' was fitting and simple when it started in 2012, as a consultancy for SMEs primarily.

'PR Expert' they certainly are, having cinched top honours for Campaign of the Year at the 19th [PRISM Awards recently](#). Lloyd – who previously founded the Livewired PR in 1993, which she successfully grew to one of SA's top agencies and sold to the Fore Good Group – explains how PR Expert is making a name for itself, where new business is a dime-a-dozen yet professional service is in short supply...

1. Public relations or PR is vastly misunderstood by those not in the industry. Sum up the crux of what you do.

Lloyd: PR is mostly associated with publicity, but it is so much more than that. I simply explain it like this: Positioning and branding is everything. It is the foundation of your business, so PR is about helping you stand out in unique ways to grow your business. How do we do this? By properly positioning your business by getting your message right; then communicating your message or story effectively to your target audiences; and then finally engaging with your market to build relationships, influence their choices and bring them in as a customer. We do this with the aim of boosting your business so people want to buy from you which ultimately affects the bottom line.

2. What are some of the biggest trends in the PR industry at the moment?

Lloyd: My top five are convergence, driving business results, more effective use of digital channels, content amplification and online reputation management (ORM):

1. Convergence: The lines will continue to blur between marketing, PR, digital and advertising. PR agencies have to constantly re-invent themselves and their skills. In addition, they face increased competition from companies that are not traditional PR agencies. Organisations looking for an integrated offering are getting better at managing multiple agencies or departments to service their business, but I believe there will be a need for a position such as integration leader (a team or person who will pull all teams together to get the best out of multiple divisions or teams).

2. Driving business results: There is also a greater move towards proving business results and sales. This is affecting the type of tactics we employ as PR agencies that go beyond what we traditionally provided. This is where the cross-over with marketing is taking place. A client who needs sales-driven activities will require a different approach.

3. More effective use of digital channels: Digital is a huge component of any PR agencies' repertoire, we will need to leverage it properly if we are to remain competitive in the digital space.

4. Content amplification: There is an increasing need to develop content in multiple formats for various channels of communication as well as marketing driven tactics. Repurposing or amplifying this content through different channels in written, visual, video and audio form is becoming a bigger part of the role for PR.

5. ORM: The need for online reputation management is a critical component and while some bigger agencies are doing well, we need the pricing of tools required to do ORM effectively to be lowered. My prediction is that this is going to happen soon.

3. Is enough done to explain PR to the youth as a career opportunity? Explain the importance of mentorship in the industry.

Lloyd: The role of mentorship is absolutely critical for the industry. These are the future leaders and professionals in our industry. The PR environment is currently facing several challenges when it comes to talent shortages within the industry. Although colleges and tertiary institutions deliver many graduates on an annual basis, not all of them find a position or are equipped to enter the workplace. There is often a disconnect between the student's and the employer's expectations. This is also amplified when you consider the Millennial generational needs. The biggest issue is the intern's readiness for a fast-paced work environment. How do you get them to become a valued team member in a short space of time? Most interns are frustrated and believe they are not given meaningful work.

What our UJ partnership demonstrated was that with mentoring, management and regular feedback, students were able to experience an agency environment before entering the workplace and they were able to do it quickly, on real work that was meaningful. This required buy-in from the client, however they saw the value and were willing to work with us this way.

Students learnt how an agency operates from a 'planning, documentation, reporting and results' perspective and got to participate in really groundbreaking work. They were involved in four main areas: publicity; digital and social media; content creation; events and promotions. We also had a dedicated client service and reporting team responsible for the overall client service, a key component of the agency environment.

100% of the team leaders in this project found an agency position, which is very encouraging. Feedback from students was positive with many stating they had a renewed appreciation for PR and learnt hugely how a professional agency operates. Others found their strengths, which gave them direction in their choice of career.

Just what South African commerce needs. For more on PR Expert, visit [their website](#) or follow their [Twitter feed](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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