

Grooming the next generation of young PR professionals

 By [Miranda Lusiba](#)

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As the old-school generation of PR professionals, we were taught that we needed to be patient with the process of learning on the job. That we needed to make sure that our foundation was solid and that there was no task that was beneath us; no matter what we were expected to do in the different corporate or agency environments that we worked in.



Source: pixabay.com

I remember in my first job and specifically on my first day in my internship, my first task was to make coffee in an agency with over 20 employees; and get this - there was actually a tea lady that worked employed there on a full-time basis. My next task was to carry boxes in high heels from the ground floor to the basement.

In hindsight, when I look back at that experience – that was to build my character and to check what kind of person I was. The team wanted to see if I thought that there was any job that was beneath me and if I would be willing to do the dirty work when it was required for the good of the company and to deliver to the client, which in essence were the ultimate objectives.

Good mentorship

Over the years, as old-school PR professionals – my colleagues and I have always been ready and willing to groom the youth that had just come out of university with PR diplomas or degrees. This is because we were also lucky enough to have good mentors during our early years of working. However, our biggest frustration has always been the impatience of today's youth to the process of learning.

Most graduates thought that because they came with PR Degrees or Masters, then automatically they would become junior managers without working at least for five years to master the basics first. And do not get me wrong, this is not the case with all young PR graduates. Some are eager and willing to learn which means that they understand that their growth will not happen overnight.

We have found that the young PR professionals that did not have the patience to learn would end up mastering what we call "Microwave PR". This kind of PR unfortunately takes the prestige and passion away from our beloved profession, it lacks attention to detail and compromises on the quality of work that is delivered for our clients.

I found that a lot of us old school PR professionals who were supposed to act as 'gatekeepers and quality controllers' for work that needed to be sent to clients – we spent late nights in the office cleaning up the sub-standard work that landed on our desks from these young stars.



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Because the PR industry is such a fast-paced environment, clients would almost always want the work to be done 'yesterday' with tight deadlines that did not allow the back and forth with our teams internally; in cases where the work delivered was not up to acceptable standards. In my discussions with my CEO when I was an MD at The GrindPR, we always agreed that every time we looked to hire young PR or marketing professionals – we were always looking for 80% attitude and 20% skill.

We found it easier to work with young people that had less skill or experience; but had the right attitude to learn. This made our lives easier and the coaching or mentoring process worthwhile for both parties involved. As the old-school generation, we continue to hire young PR professionals because it is not only the right thing to do, but also because we know that they also have a lot to offer - especially when it comes to innovative ways of doing things in this digital world.

So, my advice to both young and old-school PR professionals this #youthmonth is to be patient with each other and the process of learning; but most importantly be open to learning from one other.

ABOUT MIRANDA LUSIBA

Miranda Lusiba is the Founding Director of Strangé Consulting - a boutique PR Agency specialising in Communications, Freelance Writing, Media Relations, Reputation Management and Media Training.

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