

6. Jul 2017

A group of four people (two men and two women) are sitting on white stools in a modern, brightly lit room with a wooden floor. They are surrounded by various circular icons representing different aspects of social media and business. The icons include a house, a megaphone, a calendar, a cloud, a line graph, a handshake, a person, a magnifying glass, a speech bubble, and a location pin. A central red box with the text "Social Media" is overlaid on the image.

The most recent example is that of Outsurance, where Peter Cronje, Head of the insurance company's marketing division blamed a junior staff member after the 'white' Father's Day advert saga.



Outsurance responds to its 'racist' Father's Day ad, blames junior employee

19. Jun 2017



The real problem is that, once again, a brand blamed a junior employee, as is almost always the case when social media turns ugly. And each time such things happen, we, reputation managers and public relations professionals scratch our heads in wonder. We ask ourselves, why are junior employee being continuously put in charge of organisations' biggest reputation channel?

Yes, perhaps a few years ago companies needed those under 25 to understand the channels, but now that social media channels are well understood by most companies, is it not about time to ensure that these channels are managed by mature employees who understand not only the company strategy but the social context of the market that the company operates in?

In a nutshell, I am going against the grain, saying that social media managers should definitely not be under 25 and there is research to back me up. Numerous research findings state that, when faced with a crisis, many under 25s are mostly likely to respond impulsively and may not be fully immersed in the brand they are representing. The real question is will most under 25s understand the socio-economic and political landscape, and know how to navigate it successfully without damaging the brand's reputation?

Yes, there are some under 25s that are mature and know more about social media than most of us could ever dream, but the point is that being under 25 should no longer be a qualifier to being a social media manager (communicator for a million-dollar brand).

Organisations, therefore, need to make sure that whoever manages their social media account is part of the company's PR team, or works closely with them... They already have the company's communication strategy and key messages, among others, and will be able to provide context to the social media manager.

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