

## STOP MONKEYING AROUND

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Many business owners think that marketing and communications are one and the same. They're not. And if you're only focusing on one and not the other, you may find that what you're actually communicating is missing the mark – in this case, your target audience.

Engaging with your target audience can be challenging. Customers, prospective customers, media, key opinion leaders, influencers, investors and employees each have their own needs and expectations to be addressed through communications. Therefore, understanding your audience, tailoring your message and carefully selecting your communications channel is imperative.

With so much information accessible online and offline, you need to stop monkeying around and be vigilant when it comes to managing your brand profile and communicating with your stakeholders. Regardless of your target audience, message or channel choice, here are my top tips for shaping your business communications:

### **Put a name to a face**

Too often, people make their messaging about the brand – not the leaders of the brand. While this approach works, clients and customers are savvy, and they understand that most brands are only as good as the people running them. To make a genuine, long-lasting connection with your audience, let them know who's at the helm, what your vision is and how you plan on realising it. That will help build trust.

### **Keep it real**

Nobody likes feeling like they're being spun a line. When communicating with your target audience, remember we have two ears and one mouth. Listen to their concerns and deal with the elephants in the room. But most of all, make sure your messaging is genuine. Corporate messaging that sounds like corporate speak doesn't result in successful engagement.



## **Choose your channels wisely**

Not so long ago, the options to communicate your message were limited to a couple of forms of print media; newspapers, brochures, newsletters. With the dawn of digital media, the options have increased as rapidly as our reliance on them, which leads to two key points:

- If you don't know how to drive a car, don't get behind the wheel. The same can be said for any of the social media options. Make sure you have a good understanding of the mechanics behind the channel you choose and do it well.
- Remember, social media is just one tool in your overall communication strategy. It shouldn't be the only tool. When you do this, you're at the mercy of somebody else's algorithms and shareholder profits. And if your target audience aren't playing in that space, should you be spending all your time there?

## **Focus on the bigger picture**

In the world of communications, things are not always black and white. The area between the two is a vast landscape of grey. Understand your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for each of your target audiences, but don't sweat the small stuff. Keep an eye on the bigger picture and the real risks to your brand.

## **Don't wait for things to go south**

Like the Girl Guide's motto – be prepared! Know who your audience is, how to reach them and what to say – especially in a crisis. This approach means that you are always ready to communicate with your target audience and mitigate any potential damage to your reputation that may result from not being prepared.

