

Nthabiseng Mokoena, "Storytelling is critical"

By  Emily Stander

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We spoke with Nthabiseng Mokoena, who works for Bolt as PR manager for Bolt in Africa.



Nthabiseng Mokoena

After a year of a failed attempt at a BCom degree, Mokoena enrolled for a diploma PR course at Varsity College in Pretoria. "I was fortunate enough to get an opportunity at RedStar Communications as an intern and moved along through various small and medium-sized agencies," she said.

Here, she tells us more about the importance of PR in brand management and some predicted trends for the future...

■ *How would you describe your organisation?*

Bolt is a mobility platform in Europe and Africa focused on making urban travel more safe, affordable and sustainable.

■ *How would you describe your role in your organisation?*

I strategise communication plans, work alongside agencies to deliver and execute strategies, and measure results for PR activities to ensure consistent positive coverage for the organisation.

■ *Tell us more about your career highlights in PR so far?*

Career highlights include having worked for really exciting agencies, and working on brands like Mango Airlines, T-Systems, Coca-Cola, KFC and DSTv. These agencies and brands helped harness my PR skills in various sectors and offered the opportunity to apply myself to be a PR professional leading six markets with their different nuances and dynamics.

■ ***How, when and why should PR be factored into advertising and creative strategy briefs for best ROI?***

Each brief is different and serves a different purpose. It's important not to apply a generic approach, however, including a communication strategy and PR in the creative brief could be the cornerstone of success for any advertising or creative strategy.

With PR defining the communications objectives and the desired outcome, they can be integrated into the advertising and creative brief, which further allows strategy to be applied to the channels that can give the brand even more leverage, and support our qualitative methods to evaluate the success of the strategy/campaign.

■ ***How important to brand reputation is storytelling about individual personalities in business?***

Storytelling is critical as it helps drive the purpose, and organisations with purpose are noticed and earn the loyalty of stakeholders. Therefore, it's not enough to have a product or service that solves a problem - your organisation needs to remain top of mind. In addition to this, it will maintain attention and increases understanding of brand values and beliefs while the brand remains human.

■ ***Does PR contribute and promote advertising agency rankings and brand reputation?***

Yes, PR can help with developing a credible relationship with clients, and presenting a positive image. According to Forbes, "The most important thing about having PR as part of your marketing mix is setting expectations as a company. Publicity is a reliable way to be moving your company forward constantly, but you've got to be willing to do it right the first time so you can stay on top of all the other things your business will be doing."

■ ***What qualities or qualifications would you recommend for aspirant newcomers to the industry?***

These are some qualities I believe are essential:

- Flexibility
- Meticulous learning and attention to detail
- Ability to gather information and ask the right questions
- Seeing the bigger picture
- Interpersonal skills
- Strong writing abilities
- Honesty and integrity
- Thick skin

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Qualifications I believe will help, include a Diploma in PR or a degree in Communications, and further post-grad degree in Strategic Communications or BTech in PR or Communications can help improve knowledge on the field of communications.

■ ***Could you share any future trends or predictions for the PR industry?***

Embracing humility: Brand and communications leaders should be asking themselves two questions; How is your brand relating to people's actual identities, emotions, and complexities? and are you missing the mark by leaning into their virtual and artificial personas, roles or abstract profiles?

Many brands have started to take a more intentional, consumer-centric approach to marketing - but talking the talk isn't enough. Introspect and rework your entire internal and external communications strategy to focus on the individuals you're trying to reach, whether it be customers or employees.

Good content is authentic: Tools like Teams, Zoom, Google Meet, and others have enabled people to conduct business as usual, connect with family and friends, and in the process, have created a new acceptable casual aesthetic that has penetrated digital and traditional media alike. For instance, corporate executives have changed their profile pictures from wearing suits in an office to wearing polos in their home with their kids in the background to showcase the realities of life. Even 'produced' television ads are being made to look like they were created in real-time, while others are using raw footage to share a similar sentiment.

Renewed vision and purpose: Executive thought leadership campaigns and content will be invaluable as stakeholders seek to do business with and align themselves with organisations that share similar values and beliefs. Communication or PR practitioners should consider proactively using social media to give their leaders a platform and a voice to make a real difference in people's lives. This is not exclusive for executives, but general employees too who could advance the employer branding narrative through their experiences.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

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