

Social media should no longer be managed by junior employees

 By Ima Peter

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A few years ago, a string of opinions and articles written by the so-called social media experts surfaced proclaiming that organisational social media platforms should be managed by those under the age of 25 as they were the only ones that truly understood these platforms. That might very well have been true back then, however social media platforms have matured and so have the target audience. So why are brands still falling into reputational ditches.



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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

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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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