PR for PR people

You've heard the saying about how the cobbler's children go barefoot. It seems to me that this is especially true for PR agencies and practitioners. They don't seem to get that they need to think about their image and their relations with their public. They are in PR but don't practice PR for themselves.

Recently, a large PR firm had layoffs. They were not publicized as most companies like to keep this information quiet. I happen to have a connection to some of the people that were laid off, and I heard that the layoffs were not handled nicely (or a nicely as being told you are losing your job can be handled). The people who were laid off were given just a few minutes to collect their belongings and leave the office. They were only given two weeks severance. One of them did not get a chance to take her personal stuff with her, and the agency "lost" it. In short, they were not treated very well.

What's astounding to me is that a PR agency that is in the business of making clients look good can do things that make itself look bad. Why would you not handle a layoff in a more caring and thoughtful fashion? Don't you know that people have friends and friends have social media? Don't you know that reputations depend on cultivating good feelings and trust?

And then there is all the questionable personal stuff that PR people do in business settings, like having incomplete or outdated LinkedIn profiles or using Twitter to post automated horoscope listings. And then there are stories about PR executives that go on Twitter to rant and rave, and sometimes even post nasty comments about clients, as if nobody can see (and copy and disseminate) that?

PR people (and agencies) must learn that what they do—both publicly and privately— is open for scrutiny, and in a digital

world, news travels fast and wide. Ultimately, public relations is about protecting reputation and helping build and protect an image. PR agencies and practitioners need to think about their own reputation and image, and act accordingly.