Qualities of a PR Pro

PLEASE READ UPDATES AT THE END OF POST

In the last couple of weeks, I have come across a few blogs where the authors are complaining about inappropriate public relations overtures or of getting mass and untargeted pitches. I have come across a great deal of grammatically incorrect, spelling challenged and generally poorly written PR material.

I also have met several PR people who don't really follow the news or ever read a newspaper (including online). A few months ago I witnessed a gathering of PR professionals who expressed fear of social media, and resistance to change.

Today I came across this excellent and cautionary article, Almost Everyone Gets PR Wrong by Nick Morgan in Forbes, about public relations and public perception, and how PR folk just don't seem to know how to shape the narrative. Morgan writes the following:

> *Executives everywhere take note: Beware the power of the narrative. Stop keeping score, and instead look at your organization from the outside. What is your basic job, as far as the world is concerned? And what is the story that has developed over the years? That's where your PR efforts should be focused. That narrative has to be simple, consistent and all about your functional role in the world. You've only got one story. Make it a good one.*

All this made me think about what makes a good public relations person (no matter if he/she specializes in media relations, crisis communications or strategic communication). Following a list of qualities a PR pro should have, in my opinion:

- Ability to use the language correctly (grammar, spelling, word usage), both written and spoken
- Common sense: being able to see what is important and what won't make a difference
- Interest in the news and the news business
- People skills and emotional intelligence (e.g. being able to pick up cues)
- Understanding what public relations attempts to accomplish (getting the big picture)
- Ability to network (meeting people and being able to connect with them is a learned and important skill)
- Eager to learn new skills and communication trends
- Seeing the possibilities and being creative ("thinking outside the box")

UPDATE: As per the two comments below:

- **Listening skills (not as easy as it sounds!)**

In short, a PR pro should be a great communicator and should be able to understand how communications works to shape perception.

UPDATE: Just read this great post about the 14 attributes for new PR practitioners. Matches up quite nicely.

What makes a PR pro in your opinion?

Share / Save ...