

Vatican is a bit late in the PR game

By various reports over the past week or so, it was clear that Pope Benedict does not understand PR. Why? Well, the Vatican recently revoked the excommunications of four priests, one of whom has publicly denied the Holocaust ever happened, going so far as to claim that Jews were never gassed and that at most 300,000 Jewish people lost their lives not the 6 million. Now, Holocaust denial is outlawed in certain countries, most notably Germany and Austria. Holocaust deniers in other countries such as England, have been taken to court. Jewish groups were outraged and Angela Merkel, Germany's premier, spoke out against the Pope. Finally, today, the Vatican called for the priest to recant and retract his statements about the Holocaust. (Here's the NYT Times article)

In my opinion, the damage is done, and in more ways than one. First, it makes the Vatican appear callous in the face of an outraged public. And second, it makes the Vatican seem to finally buckle, but only under pressure. Either way, it is not good public relations practice. Public relations is concerned with how your publi

To extract for more real world/corporate settings, here are a few thoughts:

- Vet your candidates properly (this goes for President Obama too)
- If there is a problem with someone you are publicly supporting, immediately look into the matter. Do not pretend everything is A-OK.
- Do not let others dictate your response—then you have lost credibility
- Deal with problems as they arise, especially with sensitive matters