

Twitter: The (career) carnage continues

 By [Sandra Roberts](#)

17 May 2013

Ex-spokesperson for the Hawks McIntosh Polela is the latest to be felled in a spate of twitter-induced career suicides (or at least setbacks), demonstrating that the balance between communicating quickly and communicating carefully can be difficult for communicators.

Twitter is an excellent way for communicators to build their personal brand, communicate with their clients, beneficiaries and electorate. No communicator, PR or spokesperson can afford to ignore the power of the medium.

Twitter allows you to be up-to-date immediately on trends, news and opinions. Of course, there is a downside, because information is so instant, it may not yet be verified. So it is necessary to keep an eye on the conversation, because if you know how to you can use it to double-check the initial story.

Increasing penetration

Twitter penetration is increasing all the time, as mobile phones give people instant access to media and social media. It is no longer the preserve of the glamorous celebrity twitterati, but the new home to the opinions of all manner people.

With this penetration, it allows for communicators, PRs and spokespersons not merely to speak, but to listen to their audience, be it citizens or clients. Just imagine the potential in terms of fighting crime (for police), service delivery (for government and NGOs), and client service and marketing (for private companies).

Don't shun it, use it!

Yet, according to Aniesha Bulbulia of the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism, government and NGO communicators are hesitant to attend training on social media.

Lack of training on how to engage on Twitter will not stop people whose job is to communicate from communicating on the platform. Rather than cap communications on Twitter, professionals would be better served by guidance on how to use the platform optimally.

And there is no getting around taking responsibility for your tweets. According to social media expert and veteran journalist Ray Joseph "Tweeting in my private capacity is an urban legend, you will be held responsible for what you say. If you won't say it to someone's face, or in print, don't say it."

It's a catch 22 situation, communicators should and arguably need to be on Twitter, respond timeously and sometimes immediately to issues, but are accountable at times for rash statements. This is why the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism offers training on how to engage, verify, respond and converse on Twitter and other social media platforms.

ABOUT SANDRA ROBERTS

Sandra is a experienced media and social researcher, with her D Litt et Phil in Sociology. She is increasingly interested in how to solve issues related to the the converged media environment. She is Academic/ Research Head at [frayintermedia](#).

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