

# Cecil the lion's killer: a PR brief too hot to handle?

 By [Kimberley Clare Ogden](#)

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Described as a firm specialising in "crisis and issue management, special situations, transactions and transitions", you could say J. Austin & Associates is the perfect fit to take on the brief. But, should it, or any other agency have taken on Walter Palmer?...



*ICYMI: Minnesota dentist Walter Palmer caused international outrage after it was reported that he paid tens of thousands of dollars to take part in a big game hunt in Zimbabwe that resulted in the death of Cecil the Lion, a big cat well-known to tourists.*

Animal rights groups expressed outrage at the incident, and #cecilthelion has been trending ever since.

I believe no amount of PR can fix the damage caused by Palmer's actions, although speaking professionally, Palmer has a right to have his side of the argument put forward in as professional a manner as possible.

As a PR agency, it had poor ethical judgement and it was a poor business decision. Did it not consider what its existing clients' positions might be? In sensing the negative attention, the agency has ended its relationship with Palmer and in a swift 24 hours. But one has to question what this will do for the reputation of J. Austin & Associates, and the reaction of potential future clients.

In my opinion Palmer is wasting his money hiring a PR agency; the reputation he had, is all but a memory. The only

glimmer of hope would be a heartfelt reinvention, and the only vaguely subtle choice would be to pursue redemption altruistically.

Personally speaking, he deserves all of the public scorn he's received and will continue to receive. He's better off crawling under his dentist's chair, and waiting for the world to tire of him.

In the UK, the incident has caught the attention of the national media and they're allegedly competing to secure exclusives from the R6.2bn-a-year hunting industry in Africa. As more information is revealed, Palmer is unlikely to be the only person whose reputation is forever changed by their actions.

Would you work with a client involved in such an incident?

*\*Note that Bizcommunity does not necessarily share the views of its contributors - the opinions and statements expressed herein are solely those of the author.*

## ABOUT KIMBERLEY CLARE OGDEN

More than 17 years in communications teaches you a thing or two. Along the way, I've learned how to help global businesses build reputations; created demand for SMEs; and delivered society-changing campaigns for NPOs. I've learned how social drives engagement like never before, how advertising still drives mass demand, how media coverage is still critical and how digital can deliver real business impact. And, I've learned how to connect all four, for genuine business-altering results.

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