

What did Horace Rumpol say about questions? That's right: *"Never ask a Question, the Answer to which you do not know"*.

So why, why do people continue to run social media campaigns inviting consumers to share their experiences on a global platform?

You would think after our national airline's misconceived #qantasluxury campaign, or the #putoutyourdress and the *Fresh in our Memories* campaigns, that people might have got the message.

Apparently not. The latest own-goal goes to Victoria's Taxi Association which played hopscotch in the social media minefield with the launch of a big promotional campaign which asked users to tweet their taxi experiences.



No prizes for guessing what happened (<http://www.smh.com.au/national/my-cab-driver-fell-asleep-taxi-industrys-social-media-campaign-backfires-20151109-gkuwis.html>). On and on it went and as funny as some experiences were, there's a swag of allegations sufficient to keep plaintive lawyers and the boys in blue busy for quite a while.

OK, some might say there's no such thing as bad publicity (only no publicity), but surely somebody considered the risk that someone might actually use Twitter to run up serious allegations about the taxi services? Apparently not.

So the answer to the problem is as obvious as the risk, but the underlying message is pretty simple - understand the strengths and weaknesses of the platforms you're working with, and when it comes to social media controlling the message can be very limited or non-existent.

Social media platforms can be just as effective as print, radio or television when it comes to promoting products and services or points of view, but unlike the more established mediums 'citizen journalists' in the social media realm rarely start with the primary obligation of balance, or disinterest.

And what about allegations and criticisms on the company's Facebook page? Well, if you've got a Facebook page, understand firstly that you have voluntarily relinquished a significant degree of control over the message process - Facebook is a global invitation to comment. Secondly, treat a complaint or allegation exactly as you would if it came across your desk.

All of this and more should be in your company's social media policy document. You remember: it's the one that provides everyone with guidelines on managing internal and external interactions in the digital sphere.

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P.S. You can see more SM disasters by click on the following link -
<http://www.samppress.com/2015/04/epicfail-marketing-campaigns-gone-wrong/>