

# Let's get something straight

 By [Jennifer Stein](#)

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Misunderstandings, misconceptions, myths and facts: call them what you will. Within PR and communications, as with any other industry where success rests very much with the relationship between clients and agencies - managing expectations is key for both parties. However, there are still certain fictions and realities which cloud the dynamics.



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## Reputation management doesn't come cheap

Businesses need to understand good-quality PR and reputation management costs money. The skills we deploy to secure an opinion piece in *Business Day* cost far more than a selection of copy-and-paste pieces in some online titles, but often clients still see the result as one piece of coverage versus several. If they want to pay a small fee, they will get a small result. And this leads neatly to the next point.

## Neither does crisis communications

Reputation management and crisis communications are intrinsically linked. Yes, they can stand alone as separate communications pillars, but there is little sense in that. So when an issue rears its head and either threatens to or, becomes a crisis, please don't quibble about charges and don't ask what it will cost. It's globally accepted that crisis communications management is charged by the hour.

Why? No matter how well one plans and prepares for a crisis, none is ever logical, linear or predictable and there are so many factors at play that influence its outcome. All crises cost money, but they don't always damage brands – poor crisis management does (just ask Tiger Brands). You can't always control what happens to you, but you can control how you deal with it, manage and contain it – a much better scenario than the other way around.

## Manners maketh man

What happened to good old-fashioned manners in the workplace? They seem to have gone the way of the typewriter and telex machine – yes, you can still use them but no-one really does.

What is it about potential clients who don't respond after a new business presentation? I've lost count of the number of times we've been briefed on a new business project, spent countless hours developing the response, presented or pitched, and then ... nothing.

We've been told, post-presentation, that there is actually no budget (should have thought about that before briefing agencies), or that it's been decided to stick with the current agency/strategy/campaign (should have thought about that too). But worse is when there is just a deafening silence or when there is no feedback on the promised date and no response to queries about when a decision will be made.

When an agency comes to a meeting prepared with ideas, concepts, approaches and creative campaigns, respect them. They didn't magically appear on a PowerPoint slide and we didn't conjure them up out of thin air – they will have been carefully thought out and compiled. Even if it's not something you think worth pursuing, or something doesn't fit, the least you can do is give feedback or advise the agency.

## **Media and events attendance**

Please don't place all your hopes and dreams on media attendance at events. As much as journalists wish to attend an opening/launch/seminar, their wants and realities are often two different things. Their realities, amongst other things, are under-resourced, short-staffed newsrooms, pressing deadlines, breaking news and conflicting appointments.

We've seen it far too often: a number of journalists promising to attend a client event but last-minute cancellations and no-shows result in real numbers falling far short of that. Please don't blame your agency and please don't think the media don't care or aren't interested. More often than not they do, and they are. Rather than focusing only on the number of reporters who show up, appreciate those who write up.

## **ABOUT JENNIFER STEIN**

Jennifer Stein lives and breathes PR. With over 25 years in the industry she has extensive corporate and consumer PR experience across a number of sectors including automotive, IT, fast moving consumer goods, pharmaceutical, property, luxury brands and various services industries. Her areas of expertise include strategy, crisis communications, high level client service and counsel, project and budget management...

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