SEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM 2019

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GRACE YEOH
Current Affairs Editor
Rice Media

Speaker GRACE YEOH

Tackling Crisis through Online Media Storytelling

- Current Affairs Editor at Rice Media
- Encourages more thoughtful approach to the news cycle
- Power of personal story to discuss public policy, counter negative public sentiment, and shape the narrative around social issues
- Enjoys working on in-depth profiles

TACKLING CRISIS THROUGH ONLINE MEDIA STORYTELLING

by: grace yeoh, current affairs editor, rice media

RICE

alternatively:

how to win (media) friends and influence people

here are some questions you may have over the next 20 minutes:

EXCUSE ME? HOW DOES STORYTELLING SOLVE MY CRISIS?



CAN GO HOME ALREADY?!

GOT USE MEH?

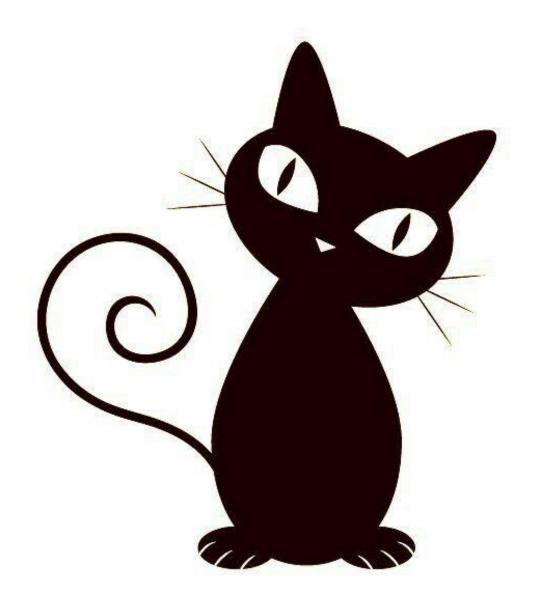
but first,

ACTIVITY.

IMAGINE A CAT.

what does your cat look like?

but this was the cat I had in mind:



my point is:

we tell ourselves **different stories** about the world. this colours our views, and **shapes our expectations** of everything.

including online media.

knowing that,

how can you address the preconceived **biases** towards **online media**?

how can you use online media **storytelling** to **help** your brand recover from a **crisis**?

why do the biases exist?



fear of:

- failure
- weakness
- loss of face
- shame

that's completely understandable.

fuelled by:

- **criticism**
- personal attacks
- cyber-bullying
- shame



Celestine Chong Unfortunately, nice N being a good person aren't the only criteria for this top position.

Like · Reply · Message · 41w







Ian Yap Maybe nice as a person but just isn't suitable for the job.

Like · Reply · Message · 41w





Richie Phua You look for someone that is capable, competent and not just because his heart is the right place. Not logic at all.

Like · Reply · 1y · Edited





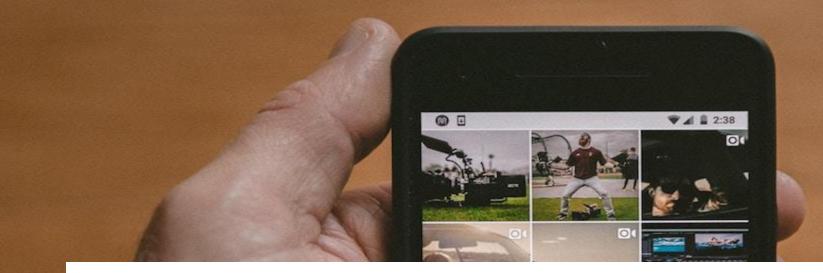


expectation:

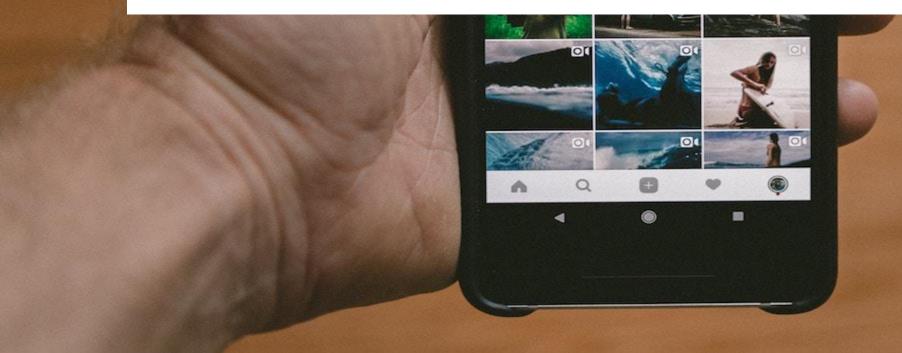
- × unreliable
- **X** unbalanced
- × inaccurate
- x sensational

reality:

- wide audience
- accessible
- relevant



OWN YOUR STORY.



reclaim your narrative:

a **single message** that you want to put out across all media coverage

this is the **one point** that you want everyone to **remember** about your brand **even if they forget everything else**

illuminating.

intentional.

insightful.

language matters:

metaphors, similes, analogies, satire, selfdeprecating humour, references to pop culture are all part of **reputation management**.

shows relevance and understanding of cultural nuances.

I Handle Public Relations for SMRT and I Hate Myself



21 Nov 2017



Officially, I get off work at 6:30pm. In reality, I'm always on standby.

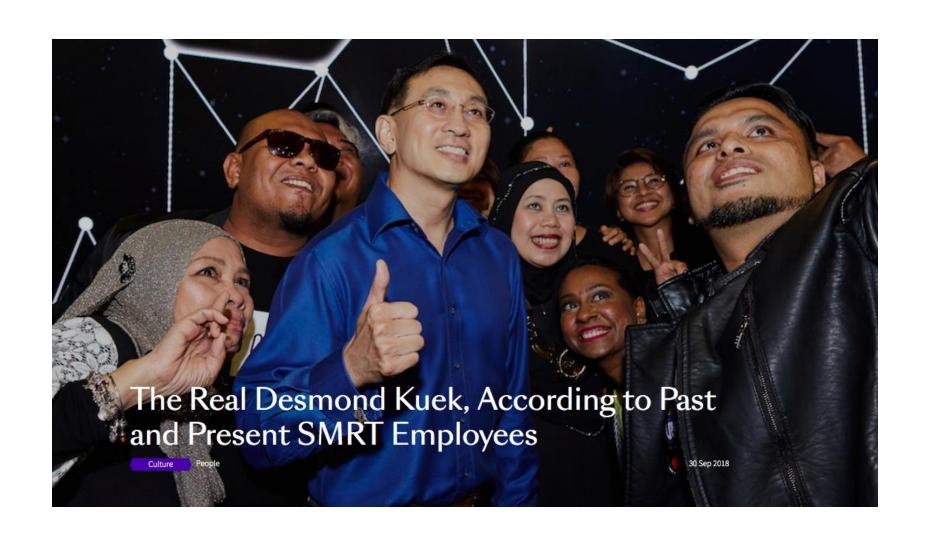
I even take my phone into the shower with me, in case there is a 10-minute train delay somewhere. I wouldn't dare think of washing the shampoo from my hair when I need to ensure all communication channels carry a cohesive message.

The thing with doing public relations for SMRT is you gotta always be on your toes. Some would say it feels like self-loathing, which is a nice way of putting it.

But in all seriousness, I love my job. Online abuse is exactly what I signed up for.

Sure, my colleagues and I occasionally joke about ending it all by throwing ourselves in front of a train. But we always end up laughing at our absurdity. For what it's worth, I hope we never resort to such extreme measures. That would be deeply tragic.

It may cause the East-West Line to break down.



Earlier this year, Desmond Kuek sat down to play a game of chess with a random stranger in a foreign country.

As a chess player, you begin every game with a plan in mind. You don't retaliate at every turn; you wait. In Desmond's case, his strategy has always been to be himself.

If his former and current employees' recounts mean anything, then he is a masterclass strategist and chess player. And so, whatever his next move may be, it will be a winning one. It is as Maya Angelou says, "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

SMRT knew it never needed to defend their former boss against the flames of public dissatisfaction, because the fire would eventually put itself out. And after the dust had settled, there would be just one word to describe the quiet, lasting legacy of Desmond Kuek.

Checkmate.

the core of a good story is honesty.

be vulnerable:

admit you're sorry. be **specific** about your mistakes. take ownership.

but don't just say you'll do better. be specific about how.



a good story begins with a good relationship with a reporter.

a good relationship with a reporter:

needs to be built **years** before a crisis happens. should be **constantly cultivated**. could **reduce brand damage**.

in a crisis, these reporters are your **unpaid spokespeople**.



a crisis is a chance for change. and change is the only constant.

1. never underestimate the power of a **cold email**.



Grace Yeoh • 8:39 PM

Hi Patrick, this is Grace from Rice Media. We're a cultural journalism website. We've actually done a few satire pieces poking fun at SMRT, but all in good fun. Thought it better to state this upfront before you do your own google search of us.

I'm writing because I remember attending a conference where you were a speaker, when I was previously in the public sector. And I truly appreciated your clear insights.

I understand you must be especially busy these few weeks, but would love to chat with you in person one day soon.



Patrick Nathan • 9:18 PM

Sure, you can reach me at @gmail.com.



2. **follow up** even when there's no news to pitch.

3. develop a **meaningful** relationship, not a transactional one.

4. offer the reporter access to **exclusive** information.



don't dos:

- × evade
- X lie
- × hide
- × deflect

uh ok. so what should you do?



AUTHENTICITY:

what's your track record of **being accountable** and **taking responsibility**? have your actions measured up to your words in the past?

a good reporter can sense your authenticity based on non-verbal cues: are you **comfortable with silence**? are you afraid to say **'i don't know'**? do you reveal **half-truths** about facts that are already public knowledge?

HUMILITY:

don't be driven by **ego** to say or do anything. **false modesty** is playing up your sacrifices; inability to laugh at one's situation.

TRANSPARENCY:

how much **truth** do you **owe the media**? there is a difference between a personal and a private story.

EMPATHY:

how much empathy should you show stakeholders? is there such a thing as excessive empathy? is excessive empathy false empathy?

the key is **specificity**. clarity is kindness.

most importantly, remember: a **good company culture** speaks for itself.

your lowest ranking staff are your most honest ambassadors.



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