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Name, company or job title...

SEARCH



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What is the biggest threat to the PR industry and brands in the Middle East over the next five years?

Failing to evolve. Technology is playing a larger role in our lives. That is why I am a proponent of digital PR via my Californian Creativity educational series. We should learn from start-ups based in California and around the world, as well as the early adopters, in order to keep pace.

From 1-5 (low-high), how optimistic are you about the growth of PR and marketing in the Middle East over the next five years – and why?

4. Growth can be achieved through increased collaboration with innovative members of the media community, such as start-ups and podcast production companies. There are already several homegrown success stories in Saudi Arabia, such as the YouTube pioneers Telfaz11 and the podcasts Fnjan and Mstdfr.

From 1-5, how well do you think comms agencies in the region are addressing digital trends? Please explain.

3. We have started to see agencies hire digital specialists and build teams focused on adapting to the evolving media landscape. However, there's room for improvement. Fortunately, entities such as the Middle East Public Relations Association (MEPRA) can fill the knowledge gap via training sessions.

Do you believe the PR role is becoming even more aligned with marketing – and why/why not?

Yes: the lines between PR and marketing are starting to blur due to the drastic impact of the latest technologies. However, it's important to keep in mind each practice's unique purpose and constantly adapt to new means of delivering them throughout the digital decade that lies ahead.

Which organisation has had the worst 12 months in terms of reputation?

Those that have not refunded customers who have been suddenly impacted by calamities such as COVID-19 or have offered half-hearted concessions that appear to be PR stunts. When the smoke clears, people will likely retain those negative memories for a long time.

And which one has had the best year in terms of building brand trust and reputation?

Twitter. By banning political ads it has reinforced its reputation as the people's social network and demonstrated that providing an optimal user experience is a priority. The move was largely applauded back home in the US, as our country prepares for the 2020 presidential election.

Name the media outlet most influential in your life.

The Los Angeles Times: it was the first newspaper I read during my childhood in LA and helped me grow my vocabulary and discover global affairs when I was young. It still plays an important role nowadays: updating me on Southern California events, which I continue to observe from abroad.

Are you using social media more or less – and which platform is most important to you?

I aim to limit my social-media use as part of my digital detox efforts, but Twitter and LinkedIn have been the most important to me for over a decade. Both are among several California-made platforms I teach people how to use for digital PR strategy.

What is your hobby or pastime that helps you forget the pressure and stresses of work?

Being with loved ones and practicing self-care via several means: exercise, travel, practicing gratitude daily (known as 'dhikr' in the Middle East) and fasting every Monday and Thursday (known as 'sunnah'), which substantially increases my patience levels.

What do you predict will be the most important change to the way you operate post-COVID-19?

I plan to increase the amount of time I spend exploring new technology platforms that can be leveraged as alternatives to traditional strategies that have been disrupted during COVID-19.