

Disrupting the comms norm with on-demand PR



By Leigh Andrews

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Marcusbrewster, having previously pioneered a new way of PR service delivery with its outputs-based PR Index model, is set to further disrupt business as you know it with its new on-demand PR offering. MD Andre Fourie explains how to use this to your strategic advantage.

The [prominence of public relations](#) or PR as part of the integrated marketing mix is definitely on the rise, with the Loerie Awards incorporating both a new PR award category this year, as well as the two-day annual PRISA conference as part of its Creative Week line-up. Marcusbrewster agency featured at the awards, with [client Takealot](#) bringing home campaign bronze.

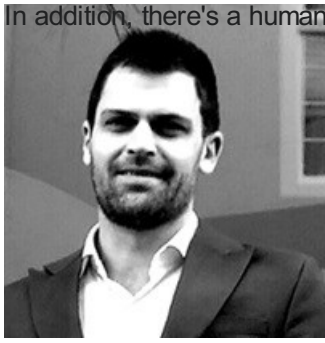
This inclusion in what was formerly seen as the realm of 'creatives with cameras and mics' speaks to the **disruptive power of PR**.

Fourie explains this by talking to researcher Rachel Botsman's seminal TED Talk 'The currency of the new economy is trust', where Botsman says it's not only technology or convenience that is driving the on-demand economy; it's using technology to build trust between strangers. If that sounds familiar, consider that 'trust' is the very foundation of PR. Her talk is embedded below if you have 20 minutes to spare – if not, bookmark it for later!

Fourie adds that we're in what's termed a 'Post-Truth Era', defined by the climate change denial movement and politicians such as Donald Trump, who frame their debates largely by appeals to emotion instead of facts or truth. He says the damage that the post-truth era can cause is seen most clearly in the recent Brexit debacle.

PR as a cog in the well-oiled commerce machine

In this environment then, PR – as both a custodian and facilitator of trust – becomes an essential cog in the machines of commerce and public discourse. While PR can also be applied to the darker side of the coin if it's used to sow confusion and publicise half-truths and misinformation, it's equally well-equipped to remove confusion and dispel rumour in favour of truth and facts. Fourie says that's where PR's disruptive influence sits – as a facilitator of trust in the world where trust is fast becoming the only currency worth investing in.



Fourie

need to access services without paying high ownership costs. Plus, budget pressures mean brands are wary of retainers and everyone is looking to optimise marcomms spend. Welcome on-demand PR, which the strategic communications firm [announced the launch](#) of last month. It taps into this current status quo by giving clients access to top PR talent without the restrictive retainers the industry was built on – also a must for those who hate an extensive daily commute and challenge-seeking millennial workers as they get to opt in to specific projects that appeal to them and match their skills, while agencies tap into specialist skills without having to incur the overhead costs of long-term employment. It's a win-win.

Fourie explains, "Clients are no longer looking for 'just a PR agency' – instead, brands big and small alike want a partner that can provide strategic business advice as much as they provide communication services." This on-demand talent pool means PR agencies can offer a far larger scope of services without having to incur prohibitive talent acquisition costs. Fourie illustrates the potential impact by saying, "Just think of what a management consultant, brand strategist, IP lawyer and strategic communicator can jointly do for a client launching a new product or service. With an on-demand model, these types of collaborations are not only possible, they're bound to become the norm."

Optimise your marketing and communications spend at the click of a button

On-demand PR is thus a suite of modern communication tools that anyone can access with a few clicks of a button, with the initial offering including content creation as well as targeted placement and facilitation of media interviews, all built on the agency's outputs-based billing model that only incurs costs upon successful completion of a particular task or placement of an article. They've also included a crisis communications offering for brands that need quick assistance with an immediate crisis, and plan on expanding on their consulting services portfolio soon to also offer clients access to management consulting and capital-raising support.



That ties in perfectly with the current business environment, where budgets are strained and the pressure on the broader economy shows no signs of easing. Fourie expects to see clients demand even greater accountability of their marketing and PR spend as a result. "With the confluence of digital and social technologies in the PR context, clients will increasingly demand agency reporting standards to measure "outcomes" – customers secured, bottom line impact achieved... all provided by means of the highly trackable and measurable digital tools available to modern communicators."

That's why Fourie says to expect continued disruption of client-agency retainer or project agreements to bring agency activities more in line with an 'outcomes-focused approach'. Little wonder marcusbrewster dubs #ondemandpr their move to be the agency of tomorrow.

[Click here](#) for a reminder of my #BehindtheSelfie interview with Fourie just before his [promotion to MD](#), access the beta site for On-Demand PR [here](#) and visit the marcusbrewster [website](#) and [Twitter stream](#) for more, and listen to marcusbrewster PR chairman, Marcus Brewster himself, on a recent episode of our Biz Takeouts podcast explaining the current state of the PR and communications industry in SA, the on-demand PR service in particular and what the future holds for marcusbrewster and the PR industry alike:

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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