

5 minutes with Lorraine Maisel

#LockdownLessons explores the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on businesses, how they prepared for lockdown and its impacts on operations and employees, as well as lessons learned that we can take into the post-Covid-19 era.

With over 30 years of experience in the fashion industry, stylist and art director turned entrepreneur, Lorraine Maisel, has had a finger on the pulse of current societal events for quite some time.

Lorraine Maisel, founder and director of [Styling Concepts](#) in Johannesburg and [Press Room](#) in Cape Town, shares insights to key topics like the Covid-19 pandemic, its relation to PR and the broader fashion scope in SA.



#BehindtheSelfie with... Lorraine Maisel

Leigh Andrews 16 May 2018



■ Covid-19 has halted the steady flow in which PR operates on a day-to-day basis. In your opinion, how can a PR agency plug in and stay relevant during this uneasy time?



PR Agencies are a vital part of handling crises. In my opinion, this is the best time in which PR agencies should be used to ensure that a brand remains relevant and that it stays at the top of the audience's mind.

Retail is going to take strain in different aspects relating to the ways in which consumers, consume. We as agencies must take care of our clients during this unstable time and we must assist in establishing exciting content and campaigns to ensure that there is consistent talkability and brand value in the consumer's eyes. Identifying key channels (i.e. social media) followed by brainstorming how to spark an interest and lastly, stellar execution.

■ ***Fashion PR is at the forefront of change, or is it? What are your views? What effects do you think Covid-19 will have on brands going forward in SA?***

Let me start by saying that PR is not what it used to be two years ago, PR is definitely not what it used to be 5 years ago and PR has completely turned upside down in the last 10 years.

There are going to be different outlooks when it comes to shopping and consumer behaviour. Consumers are going to take careful note of the value that something like a non-perishable adds to their lifestyles.

People's priorities are going to change, and we need to be gentler with the consumer and give them a valuable product with meaningful experiences. The consumption of products (regardless of its division) will be lessened and I think that people are going to spend their money on valuable items (not in the monetary sense) that are going to ensure that life has more meaning for them.

■ ***From a South African fashion industry perspective, what advice can you give small brands that want to engage in PR but can't due to budget restrictions?***

Budget restrictions are always a problem when it comes to smaller brands, however, if I can give one piece of advice, it would be to ensure that you are engaging in a holistic brand experience whilst harbouring effective relationships (with your customers, friends of the brand and media) along the way. The brand must evoke an emotion and there has to be a feeling to it because now, it's more than just taking something off of the shelf or adding it your online cart.

“ If Covid-19 has taught me anything through pure observation, it's that consumers are not going to spend recklessly until their financial situation stabilizes but will eventually have the financial capacity to invest in your product if it means that they get more than just the tangibles out of it. ”

Another tip would be to find that exclusivity factor in your brand, this will create a natural avenue to leverage off from a PR perspective. It's not always about mass market so remember to be unique.

■ ***Let's talk about team encouragement both in and out of the workplace, why is it important and how do you go about it?***

As someone who is extroverted and outspoken, lockdown has been extremely confining but rewarding in that I have had the

opportunity to take a step back and re-evaluate my personal environment, lifestyle and work.



My teams and I have a daily meeting at 9:30 sharp and we discuss various topics around both work and personal spheres. I believe that it is vital to encourage my team to push the conversation and maintain a stable balance, especially when working from home during this time. Being part of something bigger is what PR is about I always use this example when encouraging my team.

■ ***Will Covid-19 change the way in which you live your life?***

Yes, it will 100% change the way in which I live my life. In PR we always refer to the journey that we have with our brands and it's not about going into a cold, calculated store and buying something that catches your eye anymore – it's about the increasing levels of expectation. Service delivery is going to change with simplified means of living.

■ ***Your mantra to get through the lockdown?***

Think big, expand your thinking and your situation will soon follow.

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