

SCS 3034 Gillette PR Strategic Communications Plan

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Issue Analysis

Threat assessment

Gillette is a 118-year U.S. company based in Boston, Massachusetts. The brand is owned by Procter and Gamble that sells shaving and personal care products. The products were quite popular during the First and Second World Wars.

Their old slogan dates from 1989: “The Best a Man Can Get”, and the company tried to rebrand their slogan to “The Best Men Can Be” by producing a short film in the form of an advertisement titled “We Believe: The Best Men Can Be”. The video was based on the themes of anti-bullying and harassment by men. Some of the language that was offensive to viewers was the notion for men to “shave their toxic masculinity”.

Magnitude

The advertisement resulted in 1.5 million dislikes versus 811,000 likes on YouTube, with a total of 33 million views. The backlash extended to a \$8 billion loss for Procter and Gamble¹, and the Vice President of Global Communications and Advocacy, Damon Jones, fielded an interview with journalist Michelle King from Forbes.²

Brand director of Gillette, Pankaj Bhalla, attempted to clarify the company’s intentions of the advertisement. The explanation given was that the advertisement was centered on elevating the slogan, rather than the company trying to make controversial statements.³

¹ Naidu, Richa, and Soundarya J. “P&G Posts Strong Sales, Takes \$8 Billion Gillette Writedown.” *Business News*, Reuters, 30 July 3n.d., www.reuters.com/article/us-proctergamble-results/pg-posts-strong-sales-takes-8-billion-gillette-writedown-idUSKCN1UP1AD.

² King, Michelle. *Gillette Responds To Controversial Advert Challenging Toxic Masculinity*. Forbes, 20 Jan. 2019, www.forbes.com/sites/michelleking/2019/01/20/gillette-responds-to-controversial-advert-challenging-toxic-masculinity/#5c1af5ba5bb7.

³ Berkowitz, Joe. *Gillette Responds to the Backlash against Its Woke Viral Ad*. Fast Company, 17 Jan. 2019, www.fastcompany.com/90293402/gillette-responds-to-the-backlash-against-its-woke-viral-ad.

The co-presenter of Good Morning Britain TV program, Piers Morgan, announced his opinion to boycott the brand on Twitter.⁴

Consumers responded by starting a #BoycottGillette campaign on Twitter and calling for an apology video from the company.

However, there were consumers that backed the advertisement on Twitter. The commentators stated their support for Gillette's messaging and that other consumers should appreciate the sentiment behind the advertisement.⁵

Likelihood

The potential damage that may result from the advertisement is loss of reputation, continued tanking of stock value and less products sold from consumers who have vowed to boycott the company's products. If Gillette does not take steps to remedy the situation, the financial loss could cause employees to be laid off and irreversible brand damage and loss of trust that will be very difficult to restore.

Affected stakeholders

Internal stakeholders	External stakeholders
Gillette's employees	Current consumers and potential consumers
Proctor and Gamble's employees	Current investors
Gillette's board of directors	Media
Proctor and Gamble's board of directors	

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Internal stakeholders affected by the crisis would be the Gillette's employees, Proctor and Gamble's employees, Gillette's board of directors and Proctor and Gamble's board of directors.

External stakeholders affected by the crisis would include the brand's customers, investors and the media. Particularly, investors are negatively impacted by the large tank in the stock price. Existing consumers threatened to no longer purchase Gillette products and this hit on its reputation would make it difficult to attract new consumers. The media, including both traditional media like TV, radio and newspapers and social media, such as Twitter and YouTube, had a barrage of commentary from the public.

⁴ Morgan, Piers. Twitter, 14 Jan. 2019, <https://twitter.com/piersmorgan/status/1084891133757587456?lang=en>.

⁵ Estrada, Meera Solanki. "COMMENTARY: Backlash against Gillette's 'Toxic Masculinity' Ad Reveals Exactly Why It's Needed." *Commentary*, Global News, 18 Jan. 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/4858439/gillette-toxic-masculinity/>.

⁶ Doorley, John, and Helio Fred Garcia. *Reputation Management The Key to Successful Public Relations and Corporate Communication*. 3rd ed., Routledge, 2015.

Additional information

Primary research	Secondary research
Media content analysis	News articles
Communications audit	
Environmental scan	
Competitor analysis	

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Research that should be conducted in regards to primary research would be media content analysis, communications audit, environmental scan and competitor analysis. Performing a media content analysis would help with learning more about the target audience, which can help in development of tactics for the campaign. An environmental scan can gauge the public perception of the organization, helping to measure the reputational damage caused thus far. A competitor analysis would provide guidance on the successful messaging from competitors in the world of shaving and personal care product companies.

Regarding secondary research, news articles could assist in addressing the gaps between the expectations of the consumers on a company like Gillette and what type of initiatives they would like to see.

Issue Management Plan

Business objectives

There are three main goals that are the aim to be accomplished post-crisis.

1. To restore the reputation of Gillette in its consumers and investors.
2. To increase market share to make up for the losses in stock.
3. To re-affirm the organization's commitment to anti-bullying efforts everywhere.

Issues management strategies

The business objectives will be achieved by explaining the initial stance of the company and apologizing for missing the mark on the advertisement. The brand must remain consistent in all interactions with the media in its response regarding the crisis and at every opportunity to reinforce the anti-bullying initiative that the company stands behind.

Actions to take

- Draft press release
- Public relations staff to connect with media outlets to locate opportunities for Gillette to score interview time

⁷ Cardin, Maryse, and Kylie McMullan. *Canadian PR For The Real World*. Pearson Canada Inc., 2015.

- Public relations staff to provide training to executive on potential questions that the media will address
- Conduct internal meetings
- Executive to conduct interviews with media through television show appearance, joining a radio talk show and partaking in a newspaper interview
- Consult the matter with crisis communication counsel
- Host meetings with client

Staffing

The core team accountable for the results of the plan will include public relations staff and an executive who will represent the face of the company when conducting interviews with the media. The public relations specialists will be responsible for drafting the press release and preparing the executive on how to answer any questions that the media may have. External resources to draw upon could be legal counsel to consult regarding the current situation and potential legal implications.

There will need to be some scheduled meetings and/or conference calls with the client to obtain approval for the plan, to go over the press release before it goes out and to review the plan as it progresses.

Logistics

Supplies required for the issue management plan would include a public relations specialist to draft the press release, a senior public relations staff to brief the executive on how to face the media, an executive member to field all interviews with the media, stationary for the public relations staff, access to the building after hours if needed, dinner for staff that are required to work late during the crisis and transportation back home if the staff are working at hours close to midnight.

Budget

The budget for the campaign would not have a hard limit, as it is imperative that the issue is managed properly. However, an estimated budget of \$3,500 should be set and reviewed if necessary.

Total budget for campaign	\$3,500
Fees (rate is \$100/per hour)	\$2,500
Research	\$700
Developing Press Release	\$300
Follow-up Interviews with Media	\$500
Consultation with legal counsel	\$500
Meetings with Client	\$500
Hard Costs/Out of Pocket Expenses	\$1,000

⁸ Cardin, Maryse, and Kylie McMullan. *Canadian PR For The Real World*. Pearson Canada Inc., 2015.

Communications Plan

Communication objectives

There are two main objectives of the campaign.

1. To restore trust in consumers and investors of Gillette's senior management team, its board of directors and direction of the company.
2. To garner more awareness and donations for the anti-bullying initiative that Gillette sponsors in 1 year's time.

Communication strategies

- Keep investment analysts in the loop of any progress made
- Keep consumers and general public in the know-how of efforts the company has made in its anti-bullying campaign

Target audiences

Internal target audiences	External target audiences
Gillette's employees	Current consumers and potential consumers
Proctor and Gamble's employees	Current shareholders and potential investors
Gillette's board of directors	Media
Proctor and Gamble's board of directors	General public
Gillette's senior management	Youth
Proctor and Gamble's senior management	Activists
	Academics
	Government

In prioritizing which audience are crucial to reach in the campaign, these ultimate audiences would have a direct link to the success of both the campaign and the company.⁹

Ultimate audiences	Influencer audiences
Gillette's employees	Media
Proctor and Gamble's employees	Investment analysts
Gillette's shareholders	Academics
Proctor and Gamble's shareholders	Consumer advocates
Regulators	
General public	
Youth	
Activists	

⁹ Doorley, John, and Helio Fred Garcia. *Reputation Management The Key to Successful Public Relations and Corporate Communication*. 3rd ed., Routledge, 2015.

Messages

Three core messages were developed for the campaign and will be posted on Gillette's website and social platforms, which encompasses Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. The messaging will also be quoted in the press release and the brand will need to remain consistent in communicating all three messages each time they are responding to the crisis or in their work regarding anti-bullying.

1. Stand firm against bullies no matter the gender.
2. Help empower our children.
3. Moments today will decide our future.

The first message illustrates that men are no longer targeted in the anti-bullying stance held by the company, that this message applies to all genders. The intention of the message is to let consumers know that their voices were heard and the company has since corrected the wording.

The second message focuses on what adults can do to help with the development of children to help prevent bullying.

The third message places an urgency on the notion that what we do now will directly impact our future and has a call-to-action for everyone to act now.

Communication tactics

- Provide regular financial updates to investment analysts via e-mail, phone or letter mail¹⁰
- Host an in-person meeting with dial-in conference call with investment analysts and shareholders
- Prepare senior management to respond to inquiries from analysts and shareholders
- Sponsor anti-bullying events around the world
- Continue to establish strategic partnerships with anti-bullying causes, particularly among youth
- Hire influencers that can do a Q&A on Instagram story and Instagram live on their experience with bullying, whether the experience is firsthand or a story that they can share. The stories should be saved to highlights on Gillette's Instagram page for those who missed it so that they can watch it later. Moreover, it is an accessible place for the public to have access to the Q&A.
- Shoot new advertisements on YouTube to replace old advertisement
- Shoot new print ads to go on billboards to help in replacing old advertisement
- Follow-up with the media to find opportunities to join a radio talk show, make a television show appearance and partake in a financial newspaper interview

Documents

All documents will contain the three core messages to ensure consistency across the board. Call centre scripts also extend to the customer service response through e-mail and letter mail. Any retail workers at a Gillette outlet will receive training to provide the customer with a booklet that directs them to contact

¹⁰ Doorley, John, and Helio Fred Garcia. *Reputation Management The Key to Successful Public Relations and Corporate Communication*. 3rd ed., Routledge, 2015.

the call centre, customer service team through e-mail or through letter mail. The retail workers will refrain from commenting on the situation.

- Draft a press release
- Media Q&A
- Call centre scripts
- Call centre Q&A

Communications logistics

Supplies required for the communications plan would include a team of public relations specialists to draft the documents including the press release, media Q&A, call centre scripts and call centre Q&A. In addition, a senior public relations specialist would be required to approve the documents. Other logistics to be considered is stationary for the public relations staff, access to the building after hours if needed, dinner for staff that are required to work late during the crisis and transportation back home if the staff are working at hours close to midnight.

Success criteria

In order to measure the effectiveness of the campaign, performing a media content analysis and environmental scan for both traditional forms of media and social media could be a good indication of whether or not the brand has recovered its image on various platforms. For Gillette's social channels, the metrics used will be the traction gained from the organization's Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter. Specifically, to see if the goal of reputation restoration has been achieved, it would be important to look at the number of followers, likes, comments and shares on posts and compare the post-campaign numbers to the pre-campaign numbers.

Regarding traditional forms of media, some popular columns that ran news articles showing a negative view of Gillette after the controversial advertisement are Forbes, Reuters and BBC News; to name a few. A successful follow-up with journalists from the same columns would greatly assist the company in clearing up its name.

The dollar amount of products sold post-campaign can be compared against the pre-campaign data to help gauge whether consumers have regained trust in the brand. Additionally, comparing the market value post-campaign and pre-campaign will reveal if the campaign has made a significant positive impact on investors.

References

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