



Xanthus Communications

# Media Jockey

*A Newsletter from Xanthus Communications*

## Brand Under Fire



**As professionals we must be prepared for the inevitable-sooner or later our professional brand will come under fire. Here is some sound, practical advice about what to do: [PRforPeople Brand Under Fire](#)**



**Freedom means there is nothing left to lose**

**Issue 35      July 14  
2010**

**Dear Friends and Colleagues: Greetings!**

Whenever a company experiences crisis, scandal or disaster, it can fire its management team and start all over again. A company can lay responsibility for the crisis on the mighty heads of the fallen. Crisis management can then be structured by the new leadership whose take-charge-of-the-situation attitude and very presence strongly symbolizes that positive change is already taking place. With a change in leadership, the company sends the following message: *We are on the mend. Whatever mistakes that have been made in the past are being corrected. The damage has been contained. Mea Culpa.*

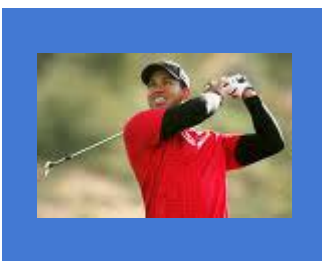


Managing one person's brand is a more precarious task than it is to manage the brand of a company. If something goes wrong with your own professional brand, you can't fire your management team. And more often than not, you do not have the resources to hire legions of PR teams to do damage control for you.

So what course of action should you, a professional, take when your brand is under fire? A tarnished professional brand will undoubtedly have a disastrous impact on your job, your business and your reputation. Usually a professional cannot hire a new management team to restructure his or her professional face to the world in the same way as a company. It is up to you to bear the burden of reinventing yourself. And reinvention of your professional brand is not a small task.

**In this issue of Media Jockey, we will explore crisis management for people. If your brand comes under fire, what should you do? Please**

A discussion of people who are in need of crisis management and effective PR would not be complete without mentioning the iconic Mel Gibson, to whom the concept of *freedom* so eloquently featured in his film *Braveheart* apparently means the ability to bash Gays, Jews and Women with equal hateful fervor. As of late, Mel Gibson has been battling his ex-girlfriend, Russian singer, Oksana Grigorieva, over custody of their 8-month-old baby. She claims he beat her up, which may or may not be true (it's under police investigation), but it is clear that he called her wildly profane and unspeakable names that have been recorded and since widely circulated around the internet.



Tiger Woods took it in the pants for weeks while the tabloids roiled with revelations of one more mistress to add to his growing litany of dalliances with a small army of starlets. When

see the entire article [PRforPeople--Brand Under Fire](#)

Stay cool in the heat!

Best Regards,  
Patricia Vaccarino,  
Managing Partner  
[patricia@xanthuscom.com](mailto:patricia@xanthuscom.com)

Visit [PRforPeople](#) to learn more about our experts

### BP's leadership and its PR strategy

BP Oil must ask itself if it could have saved tons of money if it had credible and sincere leadership in place instead of Tony Hayward, who was clearly ill prepared and ill-suited to do the job. Instead of projecting the integrity and the commitment to solve a problem, Tony Hayward came off as *Mr. Fancy Pants*, a petulant British schoolboy who pretended to be attacked by a bully when he indeed had taken the first swipe at something as small and as sweet as a baby sea turtle.



In all of his stammering, sniveling and dropping of selfish little bon mots, the question remains: Was Tony Hayward ill advised by his swarm of PR advisors? It is doubtful that Tony Hayward could have gotten so much bad advice, not with the millions of dollars being spent to prop him up and to make him look good before the cameras of a global audience. It is entirely plausible that the innate material itself was seriously flawed—even with the best PR coaching in the world, Tony Hayward just wasn't good enough to rise to an occasion that called for serious leadership.



Despite the failure of BP's leadership, its PR strategy was so effective that everyone including the most staunch environmentalists referred to the disaster as an *oil spill* instead of naming it for the catastrophe that it really was—an outright volcanic gusher of oil. When you think about it, a spill comes from a barrel or a ship and it can be contained, but a gushing leak from the ocean's floor demands a different type of *raison d'être* and response altogether. BP's PR machinery has done a superb job, because here we are, all of us, calling this disaster *a spill* as if it is the smallest of environmental mishaps, a tiny oil hiccup, a little brown bubble washing out to sea.

Tiger finally did make his apology-rather dull news when compared to the tantalizing procession of hot babes-it was anti-climactic. Some PR strategist in the Tiger Woods camp had decided the time had come for Tiger to apologize. The buzz and gossip had run its course. It was time for Tiger to get back to the business of playing golf.

**PRforPeople programs and speakers are in place, but stay tuned, venues may change.**

**Sunday, August 1st, 2pm to 6pm,**  
Michael Kostov,  
Kostov Productions at the  
Whispering Wind Ranch  
**Woodinville, WA**  
Re: How to use digital  
media to generate buzz

**Wednesday, Sept 1, 4pm to 6pm,**  
Julie Tobiason and  
Timothy Lynch, artistic  
directors of Seattle  
Dance  
Project at ACT Theater  
Seattle, WA  
Re: The legacy of dance  
in the cultural landscape  
of the Northwest

**Friday, October 1, 4pm to 6pm,** Rainier Club,  
Seattle, WA Re: The new  
era of journalism: what  
reporters now  
need to cover a story



For the rest of us, i.e., people, we are professionals who do not have the luxury to afford to screw-up like Mel Gibson or Tiger Woods. Most of us are among the working professionals--we can afford to finance our lifestyles, our business ventures, our families, and our savings & retirement, but we do not have the money to finance strategic PR operations that can undo any damage that is done to our professional brands. PR can be expensive and the most expensive form of PR of all is crisis management and damage control. You can't necessarily *Do It Yourself*. In fact DIY PR is like pulling a tooth that has already abscessed. It's time to let the experts get to the roots to contain the infection and cut it out.

So if you don't have the money or expertise to fix your broken or sullied reputation, you really do not have the luxury of screwing-up. For most of us, we are working professionals, and we are accountants, lawyers, medical doctors, chefs, educators, designers, scientists or IT specialists, and we really don't have the time or money to get caught up in a juicy scandal.



You can't afford to make the type of high profile mistakes made by Tiger Woods or Mel Gibson. So be on alert. Don't ever assume no one is watching or no one is listening. Today, everyone has a camera embedded in their cell phones and a craven desire to take anyone down a notch in order to experience *Shadenfreude*, which loosely translated from German is pleasure derived from the misfortune of others. *Shadenfreude* may be a private feeling, but then there is **Open Schadenfreude**, which is outright public derision. In the new media world, pleasure derived from the misfortunes of others has become more than a very popular mass movement, **Open Schadenfreude** is the new Zeitgeist. We just love to make people roll around in the detritus of their own greed, corruption, lust and misguided carnality, but only if they have been caught in the act. We want them to pay the price, not so much for what they did, but we want them to pay the price for getting caught!

**pr for people™**  
Be famous for who you are and what you do.

**Monday, November 1st,  
4pm to 6pm**

Skye Burn, Executive  
Director, The Flow  
Project

The Flow Project works  
with artists to identify  
principles of art and  
artistic practice common  
to the artistic experience  
across mediums and  
works with leadership  
educators to translate the  
principles of art into  
principles of leadership  
and leadership practices.

**Wed, December 1st  
Annual Holiday Party!**

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For questions or comments, please reply to [patricia@xanthuscom.com](mailto:patricia@xanthuscom.com)

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