

HOME

VIEWS

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PLATFORMS

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RT JOBS

PRIZES

RT FILES

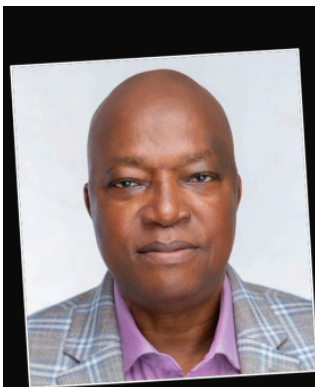
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# Public Relations, Ethics and Influencers for the Common Good



Public relations is a process with its own set of standards and priorities that have become part and parcel of business life. These processes require time, commitment and consistency to achieve success for organisations in terms of credible communication, reputation building and strategic business relationships.

- Dr Wole Adamolekun

POSTED BY: [WOLE ADAMOLEKUN](#)    SEPTEMBER 26, 2024

**The World Public Relations Forum (WPRF) held its first conference in Rome, Italy in 2001 and since then ten different editions have been held with the 2023 edition in Chennai, India.** The Bali conference’s running theme of **“Purposeful Influence for the Common Good”** is germane to the current realities of our times in the AI age and the rise of influencers and disruptive technologies that continue to challenge age old culture, attitudes and certitudes. Co-hosting with the Global Alliance is Perhumas, Indonesia Public Relations Association with Official Event Management



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Katadata Indonesia. From the perspective of the hosts of the 2024 WPRF, the conference intends to explore the power and responsibility that comes with the ability to influence public opinion and behaviour in the new hybrid virtual workplace and living experiences since COVID-19 pandemic.

The currency of public relations, ethics and influencers is both appropriate and timely in view of the craze for content creation and trending for personal gains rather than consideration for public relations' ethical practices and even public good. Generally, there are two types of public relations; proactive and reactive. Most organisations, for some inexplicable reasons are stuck with reactive public relations leading to a situation where they take their publics for granted. Such organisations only get jolted into action when problems arise as they act surprised and claim their actions are in the best interest of the public. Incidentally, some organisations adopt the strategy of procuring the services of influencers during such heady periods to make their case to their publics. These approaches inexorably lead to ethical conundrum that complicate more than solve the unforced corporate errors especially if they get stuck with influencers with moral baggage.

Public relations is a process with its own set of standards and priorities that have become part and parcel of business life. These processes require time, commitment and consistency to achieve success for organisations in terms of credible communication, reputation building and strategic business relationships. Public relations continues to thrive on principles such as truth telling, persuasion, driving corporate mission and vision, listening more and talking less, problem solving approach, knowledge driven and upholding professional ethics.

In Nigeria, some of the highly rated influencers include Davido (24 million followers); Burna Boy (18 million); Yemi Alade (17 million) while at the global stage we have Cristiano Ronaldo at 917 million followers; Selena Gomez (688 million); Taylor Swift (550 million) to mention a few. The combined impact of these influencers worldwide have made influencer communications and marketing a phenomenon to be reckoned with in the societal affairs. In fact their followers have almost deified them such that the frenzy with which they are trusted

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and believed is almost cult like and infectious. Ethical public relations, therefore, should be a guide for hiring influencers to be involved in public relations related programmes. After all, a problematic and unethical influencer will become an albatross for any organisation that fails to prioritise ethics and social responsibility. Therefore, the engagement of influencers that will add value and advance corporate causes, communicate to manage issues and mitigate crises, partner with the civil society groups for socially responsive programmes for development and evaluate and monitor progress are areas that require strategic considerations.

Public relations and communications are experiencing challenges posed by media convergence and the impact of digital technology especially the unfolding dynamics of AI that is a game-changer. Some of the areas to watch in the evolving scenarios are: audience analysis, content optimisation, trend identification, disinformation and fake news, personalised outreach, crisis management and content creation. All these public relations and communication elements require professionalism and strategic approaches for wholesome results in the new era. These three recommendations could be useful in managing the impact of influencers just as public relations and ethical standards are maintained:

- Ethical public relations is no longer an option for organisations. It is obligatory as corporate success, perception and reputation are directly linked in modern business environment and governance.
- Influencers that are ethical, professional and trusted should be engaged when the need arises to avoid collateral damages
- Organisational communication should continue to be substance-laden, useable messages that helps to deliver on corporate goals and objectives that meet the expectations of its various stakeholders

In conclusion, the often quoted ethical and people centered counsels of The Rotary Four Way Test are germane in the new world of public relations that is populated by both professionals and non-professionals – *Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build goodwill and better friendship? and Will it be beneficial to all concerned?* Indeed the world is evolving and we must always ensure that our communications

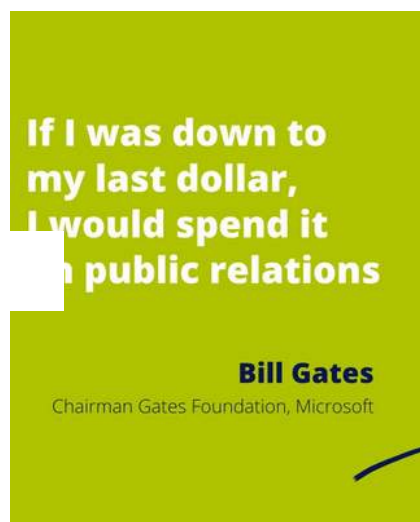
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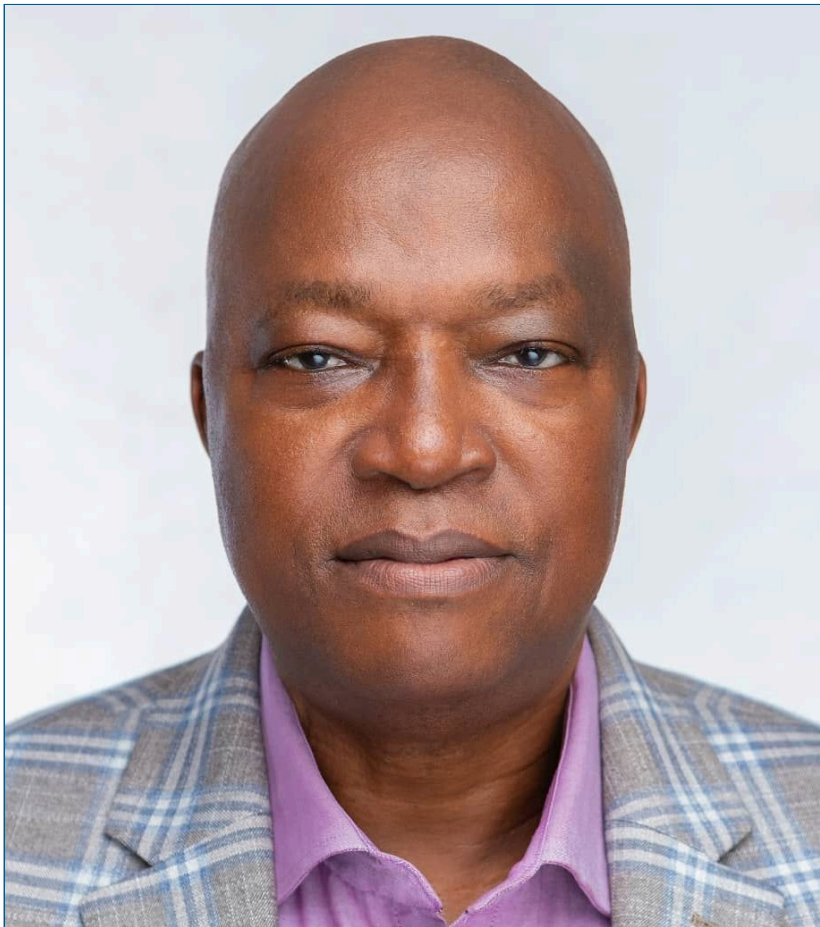
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should focus on public relations for the common good for a better and more inclusive and sustainable world.



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entrepreneurship. He has authored/co-authored four public relations books, authored/co-authored twelve chapters in public relations and communication books and several scholarly articles in peer reviewed journals worldwide. A Fellow of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations, Fellow, Nigerian Institute of Management, former Secretary General, African Public Relations Association (APRA), Board Member & Chair, Academic and Research Council, Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, Senior Member, International Public Relations Association (IPRA), Fellow and Ranking Council Member, African Public Relations Association, Member, Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), and Member, Chartered Institute of Public Relations, United Kingdom (CIPR). He was the interim Dean, Student Affairs and is now interim Head of Department of Mass Communication and also interim Director of Academic Planning, Elizade University.

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