

MARKETING

KEEP IT FAIR: WHAT PR CAN LEARN FROM THE LATEST TREND ON REDDIT

Study finds fairness at the root of nearly 80% of conversations on Reddit.com

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Fairness has emerged as a prevailing theme among Canadians in conversations on the website that is dubbed the front page of the internet, reveals a study by **National Public Relations** and **Sonic Boom**.

The study, which analyzed more than 20,000 conversations on Reddit, found fairness showed up in nearly 80% of conversations in topics from business to politics. Two years ago, a similar examination by National of conversations on Reddit found no major, unifying narrative and fairness appeared as a theme in only 5 to 10% of conversations.

The study, which was presented at this week's **Canadian Public Relations Society National Conference** in Montreal, defined fairness as having a moral code and a sense of personal and social responsibility as well as being impartial when in a position of power.

Reddit has more than 7.4 million unique Canadian visits per month. Its visitors are young, educated, tech savvy, culture creators whose views often shape the national discourse and foreshadow trends. "These are first thought-movers and we presume [their views] will become part of the general population," said **John Crean**, national managing partner at National Public Relations.

Increased emphasis on fairness is likely an outgrowth from such events as Wall St. scandals and the economic collapse of 2008, Crean said. "People said Occupy Wall Street didn't have an overall theme. Well, it was fairness."

Reddit found fairness emerged as a theme in conversations that ranged from large retailers like Walmart viewed as treating employees unfairly or squeezing suppliers to pharmaceutical companies considered to be withholding information about the side effects of drugs.

Outside Reddit, the theme of fairness is seen everywhere from the growth of environmentalism from a fringe issue to a core issue, to Liberal leader Justin Trudeau making the idea of fairness a core platform of his campaign.

"The words and actions of business, government and people will be viewed through the fairness lens," said **Michael Mahoney**, senior digital strategist at National Public Relations. This has implications on corporate reputation and permeates everything from corporate social responsibility to pricing to how companies operate in their communities, he said.

Crean and Mahoney told the audience that when it comes to fairness, there is a need for organizations to test how they are perceived in terms of the fair treatment of customers, the business community and employees.

As well, companies that aren't getting a fair shake should review their communication plans to determine whether they are doing a good job of telling their fairness stories.

This article provided courtesy of Marketing Magazine

This story can be found at: <http://www.marketingmag.ca/media/keep-it-fair-what-pr-can-learn-from-the-latest-trend-on-reddit-148257>.

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