

Any Room For PR on Mark's 'Platform?'



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I'm sure Mark Zuckerberg knows something I don't, but the word 'platform' reminds me of the messy balcony restoration being noisily done at my condo.

Every day I see weary hard-hat-wearing workers standing on dirty wooden platforms dangling in the wind, held up by ropes along the side of my hi rise, The Chalfonte, in bustling Boca Raton FL.

So, why the tired, over-worked word "platform" beside the brave new futuristic "Meta" in FB's new moniker, Meta Platform Inc.?

To have created Facebook, I'm sure Mark Zuckerberg must be a genius, and now as the pilot flying it into the meta world, I still don't see much PR in his toolbox or cockpit.

Look at the interview he did a while ago with Lester Holt on NBC News and see how strained and nervous he looked. Had he ever thought of undergoing what I do for a living—media training?

What about public relations? Does he believe in it? Understand it? Subscribe to it? PR guys like me would have picked apart his “platform,” maybe even that curly image next to Meta that looks like a high-priced pretzel

Mark and his colleagues also didn’t impress me how they answered that whistleblower complaint filed on behalf of a former employee. Frances Haugen claimed the social media giant doesn’t stoop down low enough to take sufficient action against hateful content.

I’d call his crisis management weak and his PR response lukewarm at best, which again is surprising from a genius. I can’t help wondering if he has a good PR department, or maybe he just doesn’t listen to them, which often happens when founder CEOs are that astronomically successful.

And now as if Mark didn’t have enough troubles, a bipartisan group of state attorneys general from at least 11 states have opened an investigation into Meta Platforms Inc. for continuing to promote its Instagram app despite being aware of the risks of mental and emotional harm to teens who use it. The investigation, which came about after leaked documents known as The Facebook Papers revealed that internal company research found teenagers suffered body image issues when using Instagram.

What Chance Does FB’s Rebrand Stand?

Marketing experts say the company formerly known as Facebook Inc. has a steep mountain to climb before reaching the

metaverse.

I just noticed that Meta Platforms Inc. is starting off with a net favorability rating of negative three percent, according to data from Morning Consult Brand Intelligence, which tracks metrics including favorability, trust and buzz for brands.

But that's not all. Net trust in the company is also a laggard, now at negative five points.

It seems Meta Platforms Inc. has spent the past few weeks trying to convince the public that its new name and direction are more than just a stunt to deflect from a slew of bad press.

Talk about declining favorability, Facebook's has been heading downward since the Cambridge Analytica scandal in 2018, while "negative buzz" about the brand has reportedly spiked in recent weeks following the leak of internal documents and a widespread outage that hit its platforms.

There's also some evidence that the new brand is not actually new – or improved – in the eyes of the American public.

Though most Americans aren't yet familiar with the new brand, net trust in Meta is also in a negative zone, clocking in at negative five points among all adults.

Among generations, millennials were the only cohort to report positive net trust in Meta. Conversations about the new brand have also been more negative than positive.

Brands not well-liked rarely spawn brands that's are likeable, according to Allen Adamson, co-founder and managing partner of the brand marketing agency Metaforce and an adjunct professor at the New York University.

Generation Z and millennials, groups typically skeptical of corporate America, see Meta more favorably than the general public. The brand has a net favorability rating of one point

among Gen Zers and four points among millennials. That, however, could be because they view Facebook so negatively that any change in name was likely to draw more positive outlooks.

Meanwhile, Meta is trying to regain the attention of young users who are increasingly captivated by competitors such as Snapchat and TikTok. But some think a name change on its own won't be enough to accomplish that goal. It's going to take something else—like smart glasses.

The smart glasses developed in partnership with EssilorLuxottica's Ray-Ban are just one small part of Meta's ambitions in the virtual and augmented reality space. The big plan is to build out a "metaverse," which Zuckerberg described as "an embodied internet where you're in the experience, not just looking at it" – and that might just appeal to young consumers who have jumped off the Facebook platform in recent years.

Younger audiences like things they can use and Meta lacks that right now. One thing rebranding might have accomplished is preventing another news cycle surrounding those leaked Facebook Papers.

Another Meta Fan

After Zuckerberg, the most enthusiastic supporter of the metaverse after Mark Zuckerberg may be Epic Games Inc. Chief Executive Officer Tim Sweeney.

The Epic founder has reason to be bullish, as his company's Fortnite has rapidly evolved from a popular multiplayer game into an online space where people socialize and big-name musicians host virtual concerts.

Over the coming decades, some believe the metaverse has the potential to become a multitrillion-dollar part of the world

economy. And I'll bet Mark's among them.

Still, the metaverse is a term like the internet and no company can own it, not even Mark Zuckerberg.



About the Author: Besides an inveterate blogger, Tom Madden is an author of countless published articles and five books, including his latest, **WORDSHINE MAN**, available in January on Amazon. He is the founder and CEO of **TransMedia Group**, an award-winning public relations firm serving clients worldwide since 1981 and has conducted remarkably successful media campaigns and crisis management for America's largest companies and organizations.