

# Coca-Cola Steps Right into a Racism Debacle

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One of the duties of a PR person is to monitor the environment and give feedback to the executives of a brand so that they can align their vision and their activities with the trending sentiment of their publics. However, this can prove to be a tricky tightrope act. Witness the Coca Cola debacle of “sensitivity” training intended to lessen racial tensions in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement.

What no doubt started as an attempt to improve their corporate culture turned into a PR nightmare. Now they have a reputation management issue on their hands. Currently, five of the 10 items on page one of Google News for a search for Coca Cola are about this training session.

Creating a more inclusive and less racist work environment is a laudable goal, but unfortunately their training session – now leaked online – fell far short of that intention.

The very first thing a brand should consider is, “How will this play if it get published online?” You can put money on the fact that if it pushes anybody’s buttons, or is controversial in any shape of form, it will get leaked. There are no corporate secrets anymore.

And if the Coke execs did think this through and figured that if it were publicized it would bring them kudos, they miscalculated. Badly.

The country is very polarized right now. As much as we should work hard to eliminate racism in all corners of the society, it shouldn’t be about being black or white. Instead of

polarizing the public, how about teaching your employees to be kind and considerate human beings – aware and inclusive of all races, religions, and ethnic origins?

As Buddy Brown says, We need to be less stupid.