

# Gillette's "The Best Men Can Be"...A Mixed Reception (#5 Trending Article in 2019)



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The mixed reception of Gillette's "The Best Men Can Be" campaign stems not just from the Matt Walsh or Jessica Chastain's of the world, but from PR influencers nationwide. Some applaud the sentiment behind the marketing strategy, while others find it forced – with little connection between the socially-conscious messaging and the product itself. I know, it's crazy that people don't automatically connect the dots between toxic masculinity and razors. Some are also saying the ad is too emotional in an attempt to stay socially relevant.

But that's just it – brands *have to* stay socially relevant to survive and thrive.

No matter where you stand, we can no longer deny the fact that today's consumers – specifically millennials – expect their favorite brands to drive societal change. A Cone Communications survey found that 71 percent of millennials "are hopeful business will take the lead" in spearheading change. And, because consumers are more vocal and engaged with brands (thanks, social media!), they aren't just influencing the product, but how the product is marketed.

Here we have a company (Gillette) whose market share dropped below 50 percent last year. This, on top of the fact that they've had to shave (pun intended) the price of its razors to combat sales losses, it's apparent there are some drastic internal organizational shifts happening. As it turns out, not even a household name could equate to conversions.

Suddenly, I – along with everyone else – have uttered Gillette's name more in two days than I have my entire life. It's Internet-only ad has 19 million views and counting across YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, and it's finally sneaking its way back into household conversations.

The risk Gillette faces is the same that Nike and others before encountered – when you take a stand, you make new fans and piss off others. It's inevitable. However, having social purpose matters. Taking action matters. Having an opinion *matters*. That is the tough conversation those of us in PR will eventually face – if we haven't already – with our clients. Some clients stray away from the divisive and stay on the side of Switzerland. Others will dive head-first. But when it comes to consumer-facing brands, we are at a place where it is the expectation to stir the pot and pick a side.

Consumers choose brands not just based on the quality of the product, but the value of what the brand stands for. We're a socially-driven and aware group. There's a reason people still talk about Chick-fil-A's same-sex marriage statements from a few years ago. Societal issues resonate and drive conversation.

If you want to launch a campaign that shakes things up, all power to you! But, keep in mind the following before executing a PR strategy:

- Brands have to believe in something to stay relevant – plug that belief into your messaging.
- Really believe in your statement and don't be afraid to

take a risk.

- Think about how this belief aligns with your business goals. Does it support what you're trying to sell? It's critical to remain authentic and link messaging back to the product clearly, or else you risk destroying your entire customer fan base and tainting the brand name.
- Remember: consumers are smart, and can see through the crap and recognize inauthenticity.

Now, will these efforts enact change, make the world a better place, and increase sales? We'll find out.

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***About the Author:*** Sarah Petitt is a seasoned media and public relations strategist, with a knack for B2B tech and healthcare. As a Media Relations Manager at SSPR, Sarah connects the dots for clients through her outside-the-box ideas and innovative storytelling. When she's not scouring the internet for the latest trends or cooking up a good brainstorm, you'll find her baking a Pinterest-inspired dessert.