

CHAPTER 7

SAY IT'S NOT SO! YOU GOT NEGATIVE PRESS?

“Ninety-eight percent of the adults in this country are decent, hardworking, honest Americans. It’s the other lousy two percent that get all the publicity. But then, we elected them.”

~ Lily Tomlin

The idea of the first story told is the one that sticks. The same is true when it comes to the public relations of your company, products, services, or maybe your own identity. Should your company be mentioned in the press in a less-than-favorable light, any retraction probably won't be run and usually it is best if the story just dies as quietly as possible. If the media has already taken a slant on the story, they will only use your company's information as support of their existing stand in the issue.



Mini-skirt raises more than eyebrows!

In the past, a negative story might be localized appearing in the community paper and that's where it ended. However, TODAY a controversial or politically incorrect statement can be blogged across the world before the newspapers have even caught wind of it. Even the everyday person has a voice. Case in point: Kyla Ebbert, a twenty-three-year-old woman flying Southwest Airlines in 2007, was nearly kicked off a flight for daring to wear what a Southwest flight attendant considered to be “inappropriate.” After a public reprimanding by the flight attendant, Kyla adjusted her tank top up and her mini-skirt down and took her seat. To add even more excitement to the story, some of the bloggers ran wild with it and discovered that, in 1970, Southwest Airlines ads proudly displayed their stewardesses in mini skirts.

It just got worse from there. A complete unknown the day before, Kyla Ebbert elevated herself to virtual celebrity status within forty-eight hours. She appeared on ABC-TV's Good Morning America and told her side of the story in virtually every major newspaper in the United States within twenty-four hours. Was it really a story? No, in the overall scheme of things, some unknown twenty-three-year-old woman's outfit shouldn't even be worth a phone call to her own mother. But such wasn't the case.

Enter Southwest Airlines CEO Gary Kelly, who immediately made a public apology to Kyla. He also issued Kyla a personal apology and invitation to fly free on Southwest Airlines.