

## Three social media lessons for brands after the Crocs/David Bowie backlash

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**David Bowie's** death was undoubtedly an event of great cultural importance, prompting a period of intense reflection among fans and music lovers.

The response from at least one **brand** also showed that it's very hard to deliver successful real-time communications, especially in response to such big, sensitive, cultural moments.



**Crocs** discovered this yesterday [when it faced a backlash from some Twitter users](#) after posting an image of one of its shoes alongside a “**Bowie** flash” and the words: “Your magic will be missed, but your inspiration lives on forever.”

The tweet was deleted swiftly in response to criticism on the **social** network, but if the **Crocs** community managers had asked three questions in the first place, would it have been posted?

1. **Is it relevant?** All **brands** should ask the question “why am I getting involved?” before responding to an event. It's hard for **brands** to positively contribute to culture as opposed to just issuing a **brand** In **Crocs'** case it simply placed the “**Bowie** Flash” across its shoe and shoved it out on its Twitter stream. At **Blippar**, we made the decision to offer a tribute to David **Bowie** by encouraging people to create their own Ziggy Stardust image by “Blipping” the album artwork to trigger a ‘selfie’ with the distinctive flash. We'd argue that this was relevant because we'd noticed **Bowie** fans

tweeting “selfies” as Ziggy so thought it appropriate to encourage people to “bring out your inner Ziggy”.

2. **Do we understand people’s mindset?** Also, **brands** need to understand the mindset of people involved in big cultural moments, consider how the **brand** can add value and be welcome in the moment. Is the tone and content of the communication in keeping with people’s mood and are you adding anything that will be useful to people?
3. **Can we take the flak?** It’s also worth asking whether, if your **brand** gets involved, you are willing to face down the inevitable criticisms. It’s in the nature of **social** media that a bunch of people will slap you down and **brands** that are very active in **social** tend to understand and accept this. Some of the more corporate **brands**, less familiar to life on Twitter et al, need to realise this too. In terms of the **Crocs** episode, it’s worth considering that most of those ranting about it were serial tweeters looking for more retweets themselves – which they may or may not get.

It’s clearly difficult to assess opportunities quickly, in real-time and deliver an appropriate response. But, unless a **brand** is able to answer “yes” to each of these questions, then it’s best not to press “Send”.

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