

NEW RELEASE

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GHANA'S BIGGEST PR BLUNDERS OF 2015

INTRODUCTION

From Ghana's biggest high-level alleged corruption scandals and political controversies, to Nana Aba Anamoah's 'photo-bombing' twitter-bash, to Ghana's shortest ever celebrity marriage, there is no doubt 2015 was a year full of brand and image destroying PR Blunders. It was a year when political leaders, companies and celebrities found themselves in the limelight for all the wrong reasons. And of course it is time for Ghana's most anticipated PR Blunders League Table

NEW IN THIS YEAR'S COMPILATION

For the first time, we introduce the following new additions to the report:

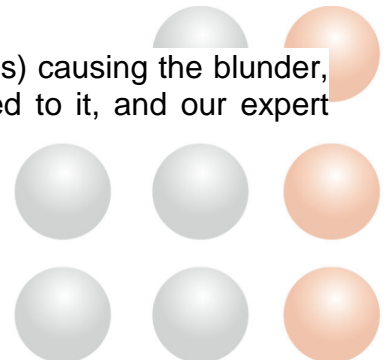
- An overall ranking of the top PR Blunders of the Year
- Best Performing PR Personality of the Year
- Best Performing PR Department of the Year
- Worst Performing PR Personality of the Year
- Worst Performing PR Department of the Year
- Special Mentions
- Biggest Global PR Blunders of the Year

We believe these categorisations and comparisons will bring more excitement into the compilations to make it easy for our readers to appreciate the issues and the lessons to be learnt.

However, as it was in the first, we give you a summary of the event(s) causing the blunder, the damage done to the brand involved, how the brands responded to it, and our expert opinion on how the response strategy has fared.

The report is divided into a four different categories as follows;

- Biggest Political PR Blunders,
- Biggest Corporate PR Blunders,
- Biggest Celebrity PR Blunders; and



- Biggest PR Spectaculars.

HOW TO MAKE IT TO THE PR BLUNDERS LEAGUE TABLE

To qualify to be included in the list of the biggest PR blunders, the incident must have attracted significant media coverage for a minimum of two days and on a minimum of two media platform - radio, television, print, or online/new media.

It is however important for readers to note that this compilation is not based on a scientific data analysis. It is based purely on qualitative monitoring, analysis, and expert judgment of the authors based on their tremendous level of experience in the PR, Media, Communications and Reputation Management industry.

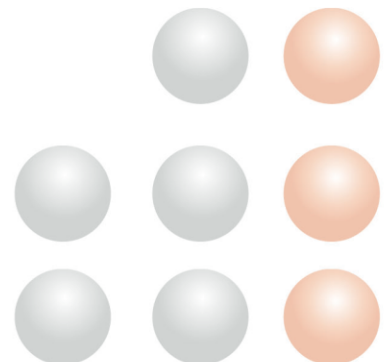
Nevertheless, since image/reputation is a product of perceptions, we believe our expert analysis of the PR implications of certain occurrences and events and how they have contributed to hurting the reputation of government, political parties, companies and individuals, would be an addition to knowledge level in the industry. We also believe our invaluable free advice and strategies contained in the report would be useful to all readers particularly CEOs, Marketing Managers, Brand Managers, Public Relations Officers, Entrepreneurs, Journalists, aspiring PR Practitioners, academics, and many others.

Below is the overall league table of the worst damaging to the least damaging in rank:

OVERALL RANKING

Ghana's Biggest PR Blunders of 2015:

1. Opposition NPP in leadership crisis
2. The Persistent Dumsor Fiasco
3. The Judicial Bribery Scandal
4. GH3.6 million Bus Branding Scandal
5. Ameri Energy Group Scandal
6. Missing Presidential Speech
7. Stan Dogbe tape smash saga
8. GNPC Ex-gratia payment controversy
9. Ghana Gas-Power Ministry tango
10. TV3's public suspension of Nana Aba
11. Money laundering banks
12. Nana Aba's alleged photo theft scandal
13. The Asamoah Gyan sex scandal
14. Kyeiwaa's marriage fiasco
15. Amanda Afriyie Acquah's sexual gaffe



CATEGORY RANKINGS

Biggest Political PR Blunders of 2015

1. Opposition NPP in leadership crisis
2. The Persistent Dumsor Fiasco
3. The Judicial Bribery Scandal
4. GH3.6 million Bus Branding Scandal
5. Ameri Energy Group Scandal
6. Missing Presidential Speech
7. Stan Dogbe tape smash saga
8. GNPC Ex-gratia payment controversy
9. Ghana Gas-Power Ministry tango

Biggest Corporate PR Blunders of 2015

1. TV3's public suspension of Nana Aba
2. Money laundering banks

Biggest Celebrity PR Blunders of 2015

1. Nana Aba's alleged photo theft scandal
2. The Asamoah Gyan sex scandal
3. Kyeiwaa's marriage fiasco
4. Amanda Afriyie Acquah's sexual gaffe

Biggest PR Spectacular of 2015

1. Handling of the Judicial Corruption Scandal

Best Performing PR Personality of the Year

1. Her Ladyship the Chief Justice, Mrs. Georgina Theodora Wood
2. Nana Yaa Gyantuah of the PURC

Best Performing PR Department of the Year

1. Public Utility Regulatory Commission

Worst Performing PR Personality of the Year

1. Mr. Stan X. Dogbe
2. Hon. Kwabena Donkor (MP)

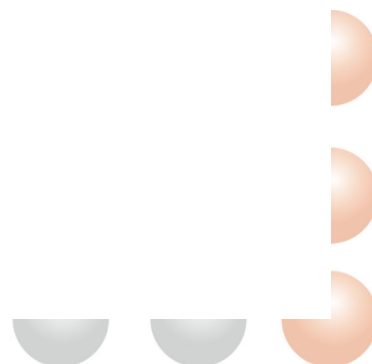
Worst Performing PR Department of the Year

1. Electricity Company of Ghana
2. Ministry of Power

Rising Small-Business Brand of the Year

1. CookHouse WaakyeonWheels

Global PR Blunders of the Year



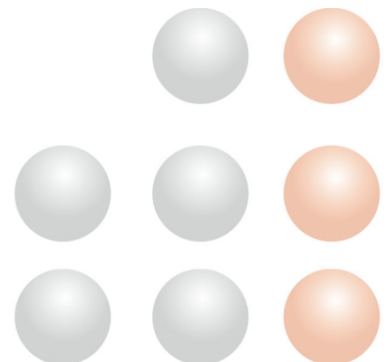
1. VW's emission test cheating scandal
2. Steve Harvey's Miss Universe gaffe:

Please refer to the detailed report below for the analysis and reasons behind the rankings.
All enquiries should be directed to the undersigned.

Thank you.

Signed:

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GHANA'S BIGGEST PR BLUNDERS LEAGUE TABLE

Below is the detailed analysis of the individual and category ranking of the biggest blunders of the year.

Biggest Political PR Blunders of 2015

Public perception is the greatest factor in the game of politics and governance. For political leaders, all their actions, public statements and decisions are influenced by a desire to own the biggest share possible of the perception of the voting public. Unfortunately however, this year has seen too many scandalous events that had the impact of depleting that positive share of the public perception in favour of the political leaders. The government and the main political opposition have been in fierce competition to outdo each other when it came to these image destroying scandals. Below is the list of the Biggest Political PR Blunders of the Year:

1. Opposition NPP in leadership crisis

The first in this category as well as the overall on the league table is the opposition New Patriotic Party's national leadership crisis.

The Blunder: The main opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP) seems to have become an opposition on to itself in opposition, than being seen as an alternative to the ruling National Democratic Congress. The party has been embroiled in the most protracted and destructive leadership struggle between two fiercely opposed camps; namely the Kufuor-Alan camp and the Nana Akufo-Addo camp. This was merely a perception until the party's last delegates congress which elected its national leadership as well as the Presidential candidate. Ever since, the party has registered a number of violent clashes at its headquarters than any other party in the political history of the country under the 4th Republic. This led to the suspension of its elected National Chairman, Paul Afoko, Vice-Chairman Sammy Crabbe, and General Secretary Kwabena Agyepong from office. Some have described it as a political 'coup de etat'.

The Damage: As a party that has lost two major elections, the least expected of the opposition NPP is to position itself as a credible alternative to the ruling party. However, events of the last one year which at the time of writing do not appear to be settling anytime soon have probably weakened the party's chances even greater than it was in 2012. It has attracted the longest running media attention for the entire year. For some, if the party could behave in such a disorganised manner in opposition, then one could not imagine what they would do if they find themselves entrusted with the management of the people and resources of the country. In our view, the events of the last year within the NPP have no doubt severely damaged its image and may have drastically depleted its share of the favourable public perception.

The Response: The first response of the party's Presidential Candidate, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo to the unending crisis within his party was to remain silent; a move

which perhaps, may have contributed greatly to the worsening of the situation. He may have engaged in a silent diplomacy behind the scenes to try to resolve the problem. But to his critics, he was not providing enough leadership. The next attempt was to hold a press conference to virtually downplay the effect of the chaos. But as later events showed, it was clear that the problem may have been underestimated. Then followed his nationwide tour during which he appealed to members of the party to stop taking their internal problems to the media. That call too seemed not to have been heeded. Additionally, many of the party's numerous communications directors also downplayed or virtually wished away the enormity of the problem. Even a special intervention by key elders and religious leaders at a truce meeting called by His Excellency Former President John Agyekum Kufuor could not end the issue.

Expert Opinion: However, this is where it should have been clear to all the parties that if they were interested in regaining political power, then there was the need to bury their differences and focus on the goal. Sadly however, that appears not to be their desire.

By all standards, the NPP turmoil poses the biggest challenge to any PR or Communications strategist. Such a problem would require the greatest level of PR skill, dexterity and fortitude. The first thing which could have been done in an attempt to halt the fracas was for the party's Presidential Candidate and his team on the one hand; and the National Chairman and General Secretary on the other to be brought together for a discussion aimed at burying their differences and forging ahead towards winning the 2016 elections. This may have contributed to reducing the mistrust in the leadership of the NPP. Secondly, the Flagbearer of the party could have been more forthright in standing behind the duly elected leaders of his party and calling his perceived supporters to order.

If the NPP is really serious about returning to government in the next election, then it would be in their interest to do tremendous rebranding and image rebuilding for the next ten (10) months before the election. Otherwise, they may wake up again laughing at the wrong side of their mouths as it happened in 2012.

2. The Persistent Dumsor Fiasco

In the second position is the three-year old Dumsor Debacle.

The Blunder: One of the greatest and long running challenges to the image of the current government and the President is the persistence of the debilitating electric power shortage. Despite numerous high-level promises by the President and his power sector ministers, the situation had gotten worse each passing day. Even the emergency Karpower Barge that was promised took much longer to arrive contrary to promised deadlines. The public is now not in doubt that a lot was being done to increase the country's power generation capacity. However, it appears even those at the centre of fixing the problem are themselves getting frustrated at breaking their own promises to the people. There was no better evidence of this than when the out-spoken Power Minister, Dr. Kwabena Donkor refused a journalist's request for information on when the so-called 'Dumsor' will end mantra. Instead, he asked the journalist to direct his question to his (Minister's) boss, the President because he (Dr. Donkor) does not speak for the President.

Another humiliating development surrounding the dumsor debacle was when persons associated with the government allegedly labelled unmarried Ghanaian celebrities (who were in support of a 'dumsor must end' campaign) 'ladies of the night'. This also generated huge criticisms and negative commentary against the government.

The Damage: The Minister's attitude towards that interview made him come across as being insensitive or arrogant. In another respect, his attitude portrayed mistrust of his own President. In other words it was like "I did not say when I am going to announce the end of dumsor. So go and ask the person who told you I am going to say something like that." It certainly dealt a great collateral damage to the image of the government, as well as his own image as a Minister.

The derogatory description of young successful but unmarried women was even more hurtful to the image of the administration. It had threatened to antagonise a whole constituency of young influential women with huge public following, which could certainly affect the party's political chances in the elections of 2016.

The Response: The official response to the Dumsor has been quite inconsistent, although it may not have been deliberately done. From our point of view, the President and perhaps his Ministers may have been misled by the technical teams on many of the failed promises about the possible end of dumsor. But the problem is that once you failed on a promise, a perception is formed about your character which makes it impossible for anyone to trust you. That is exactly what is happening to the current regime.

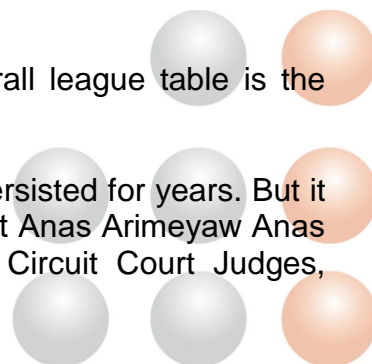
Secondly, the maker of the derogatory comments about the celebrities, who was also at the time nursing the ambition to represent his party as a parliamentary candidate was forced to eat humble pie and apologise for the comments. Although his apology was largely not believed as genuine, it at least halted the negativity against the government.

Expert Opinion: Speed is a critical factor when it comes to dealing with damaging bad publicity. It could be manifested in words or conduct. The Power Minister could have apologised for his perceived condescending attitude in that interview, or be reprimanded by his appointer. Elsewhere, that could have resulted in the end of his Ministerial career through resignation. Also, the NDC party could have issued a public statement condemning the behaviour of its member for insulting young industrious women and to reaffirm its commitment to the course of women. This would have undone a bit of the damage done.

3. The Judicial Bribery Scandal

Occupying the third position in this category and third on the overall league table is the Judicial Bribery Scandal.

The Blunder: Rumours of bribe-taking judges in the judiciary has persisted for years. But it remained in the rumour mill until Ghana's finest undercover journalist Anas Arimeyaw Anas exposed the bad nuts in the judiciary. Several High Court and Circuit Court Judges,



Magistrates and court officers were caught on video tape collecting bribes in various sums of money, goats, tubers of yam, cassava, gari, among others.

The Damage: This was the biggest ever corruption expose to hit the judiciary in the country. Ghanaians have never before seen a scandal so deep and widespread and affecting the most revered institution of our democracy like this. Indeed the mythical piety of the judiciary was completely eroded by this scandal. It was obvious a lot needed to be done to attempt to undo the damage and begin a major image repair process.

The Response: The first response of Her Ladyship the Chief Justice, Mrs Georgina Theodora Wood to the scandal was to act swiftly in suspending all the lower court judges implicated in the scandal. She also immediately began the processes spelt out under Article 146 of the 1992 Constitution to get the implicated High Court Justices investigated. Despite several attempts by the judges to frustrate her efforts through multiplicity of suits, the Chief Justice remained resolute in her determination to clean up the mess. This forthrightness and firm leadership of the Chief Justice has resulted in minimising the impact of the damage done by the scandal. This is what is needed in order to bring back public confidence in the judiciary.

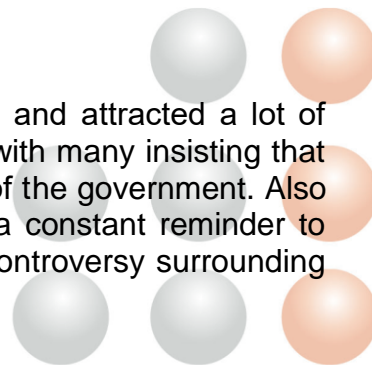
Expert Opinion: We believe the Chief Justice deserves to be celebrated for her sterling leadership in curing the ills and repairing the image of the judiciary. In scandals like these, you need high level leadership action with speed to take control of the situation. Her readiness to communicate her efforts at dealing with the situation is the recommended strategy for all leaders, both corporate and individual.

4. GHS3.6 million Bus Branding Scandal

Next to make our list at the 4th position is another scandal against the government, involving the Transport Ministry and its decision to spend GHS3.6 million to rebrand 116 Metro Mass Transit Buses.

The Blunder: The scandal came to light during a parliamentary scrutiny of the accounts of the Ministry. The contract was awarded to a celebrity who publicly campaigned for the governing party and doubles as the wife a known member of the ruling NDC party. The figures presented to Parliament showed that the rebranding of each bus cost the nation about GHS31,000. The obviously inflated cost was met with immense public outcry which led to an investigation by the Attorney General sanctioned by the Chief of Staff. The subsequent report of alleged malfeasance occasioned the resignation of the Minister for Transport.

The Damage: This scandal gripped the nation's attention for days and attracted a lot of media mention on all platforms. Social media also went agog on it, with many insisting that this was another episode of alleged 'create loot and share' strategy of the government. Also the continued presence of the posters on the buses will serve as a constant reminder to Ghanaians of the scandal. This, following right on the back of the controversy surrounding



the AMERI Energy deal will add to the brand damage and negative publicity about the government going into an election year.

The Response: When confronted perhaps for the first time with the figures in Parliament, the Transport Minister, Mrs. Dzifa Attivor stated that she did not have information on it at the time but promised to furnish the house with it afterwards. After further details of the scandal unfolded, it became obvious that the government was in for another episode of embarrassment. The Chief of Staff immediately ordered a review of the contract by the Attorney-General. Three days later, the Transport Minister, Mrs. Dzifa Attivor took the bold but unusual decision to resign her job due to the embarrassment cause by the scandal. After receipt of the Attorney-General's contract review report, the Chief of Staff ordered the contractor to refund about GHS1.9million Ghana Cedis back to the state, confirming the allegations of corruption in the award of the contract.

Expert Opinion: This scandal alone has done a huge reputational damage to the government. It will take a great deal of effort and leadership to reverse the impact. We are of the opinion that the Transport Minister's salutary decision to resign in the wake of the scandal is one of such strong actions required to start reversing the reputational damage. Secondly, the speed of the Chief of Staff's response in ordering an investigation of the contract is commendable. The order for refund of the extra GHS1.9million will do a lot of good in halting the reputational damage caused by this scandal. We are of the view that the government has so far proven to its critics that it is intolerant to such corrupt behaviours. It would ultimately do a lot of PR good to government's image.

5. Ameri Energy Group Controversy

In the 5th position is the controversy about how Ghana allegedly signed a \$510million deal which could have cost the country about \$300million less.

The Blunder: Another major event which threatened the image of the government was the Dubai-based African & Middle East Resources Investment Group's (AMERI Group) \$510million gas power contract with the government Ghana. According to a Norwegian Newspaper's publication, Ghana could have saved \$300million if it had procured the gas turbine units directly from the open market. This has generated much publication in both print and electronic media.

The Damage: Although this alleged scandal was still unfolding at the time of this report, there is no doubt it is going to linger on for a while. It is already causing severe dent to the image of the government and adding to the perception of corruption in the country. Many, particularly the political opposition are already accusing the President and his businessman brother of wrongdoing, with the opposition whose MPs earlier endorsed the deal without questions, now calling for a bi-partisan parliamentary inquiry into the contract.

The Response: The Power Ministry's immediate response to the allegations was a flat denial that Ghana is paying the said amount. In a statement issued to the public, it attempted to clarify the situation while insisting that Ghana was not paying any money to the

contractors other than the cost of the power produced. The Ministry's Communications Consultant seems to have complicated matters when he gave conflicting responses to questions on Accra-based Citi FM. Details emerging from the contract however seem to suggest that Ghana is required to provide the fuel needed for powering the turbines. Ameri Energy has also denied the malicious publication which has obviously damaged its reputation. It has proceeded to issue legal notice against the VG newspaper claiming \$150million in 15 days or risk a full blown legal battle.

Expert Opinion: This is already proving to be a major communications headache for the government. Although it is possible that no one deliberately inflated the costs in order to derive private benefits, a study of the contracts by international negotiation experts revealed that the contractors may have been smarter than the government negotiators and got themselves a better deal. In a controversy of this nature, the best approach is to 'tell it fast, tell it all, and tell the truth'. Any iota of inconsistency in the response strategy would most likely create the impression that something is being hidden. At this point, it appears not much evidence of wrongdoing has been established in allegations. One activity that could help diffuse the negative commentary would be for the Power Ministry to get independent experts to conduct a thorough assessment of the contract and provide an opinion as to whether Ghana has been given a raw deal here or not. And if so, suggest a way forward for resolving the situation. If this is not done, and it turns out that the turbines fail to function to ameliorate the power challenges, the government may suffer more collateral damage to its reputation and potentially, its chances at next year's polls.

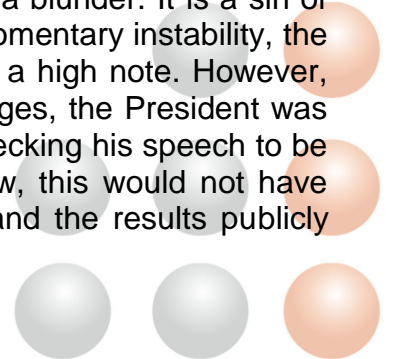
6. Missing Presidential Speech

Sixth on the list is the missing page saga of President John Mahama's ECOWAS speech.

The Blunder: His Excellency President John Dramani Mahama, the then Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was faced with the unusual situation of realising in the middle of a speech to his colleague Heads of States that some pages of his speech were missing. This was an event being broadcast on television and radio.

The Damage: There could not have been a bigger embarrassment to a President of a country than this singular occurrence. It shows that the President's team failed on this occasion to pay attention to their job. It was an embarrassment to the entire country.

The Response: The President's impulsive response was to announce to the cameras and to his audience that he was missing pages in his speech. This was a blunder. It is a sin of public speaking which is never ever done. Nevertheless, after the momentary instability, the President regained control of the situation and ended his speech on a high note. However, knowing the obvious embarrassment caused him by the missing pages, the President was forced to jokingly remark at another forum in London that he was checking his speech to be sure no pages were missing. From a communications point of view, this would not have been necessary if there was some investigation into the incident and the results publicly communicated.



Expert Opinion: It is absolutely critical for all leaders who speak publicly to ensure a thorough prior rehearsal of their speeches before the day of delivery. Secondly, it is important to always ensure you have the correct copy of the speech before you mount the podium. Thirdly, in such a fast-paced technological world, there is absolutely no reason why you cannot have a soft copy of your speech on a tablet or iPad to read. Our President is known as a tech-savvy President. So he should have read his speech from his iPad. Finally, the use of a teleprompter is now becoming a necessity, rather than a luxury. It is important for the President to insist on the use of his teleprompter at all such major speaking engagements. Not only does it make him look more professional and sound more congruent, it also facilitates his delivery a great deal.

7. Stan Dogbe Tape Smash Saga

Seventh on the PR Blunders league table is a scandal involving Presidential Staffer Stan Dogbe (Mr.)

The Blunder: Mr. Stan Dogbe was accused of violently destroying the voice recording equipment of a Ghana Broadcasting Corporation Journalist for allegedly recording his private conversation with others. This happened at the 37 Military Hospital where victims of the fatal Presidential Press Corp accident were being treated.

The Damage: As a key staff of the Presidency responsible for the President's communications and media management, this incident was a great source of embarrassment to the President. It angered the entire association of journalists leading to a widely popular petition by journalists for his removal from office. It also attracted media attention and reportage for several days.

The Response: The first response was a private apology by Mr. Stan Dogbe to the journalist with a promise to replace the damaged recorder. Later the Communications Minister, Dr. Edward Omana Boamah stated that Mr. Dogbe was cautioned internally about the incident.

Expert Opinion: This was certainly a blunder which impacted on the image of the President and the Presidency. In our view, it was totally unnecessary. However, the point must also be made that the ethics of the journalism profession requires journalists to ask for permission first before pressing the record button on their recording equipment. This appears to have been overlooked by the journalist. Nevertheless, two strategies could have quickly and effectively diffused the interest of the media in the story; first, a publicly issued letter of apology from Mr. Dogbe to the journalist and his media house; and second, another carefully worded statement from either the Chief of Staff or the Communications Minister regretting the incident and assuring the media of an investigation and resolution would have disarmed Mr. Dogbe's critics and minimised the anger from the media.

8. GNPC Ex-gratia payment controversy

Next on the list in the decision by the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation to pay end of service benefits to four of its former senior executives

The Blunder: A decision by the Board of Directors to pay the outstanding end of service benefits to four of his former senior executives who were removed from office through a political decision or separated from the institution resulted in a major furore. It gained media attention when a former Deputy Energy Minister and Member of Parliament K.T. Hammond went on radio stations berating the GNPC for the decision and suggesting that as much as GHS1million was being paid to some of the former executives.

The Damage: This exposed the GNPC as an institution which was misusing Ghana's oil resources by being eager to settle perceived cronies of the Board members and management. It received several mentions across media platforms and heavy criticisms on social media.

The Response: The GNPC's response was to issue a public statement admitting that an approval has been given to make such payments but without confirming whether the payments had been made or not. Thereafter, the institution decided to remain quiet without any further comments.

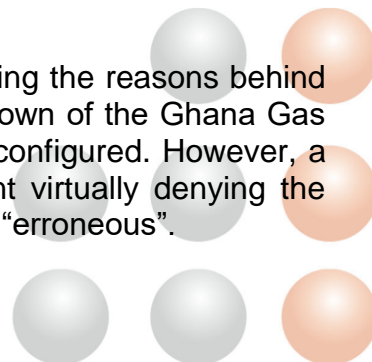
Following that, at least two of the supposed or potential recipients denied receiving any payments but maintained that they were entitled to it. Indeed one of them, Mr. Tsatsu Tsikata has issued a writ of summons against Mr. Hammond for defamation, which virtually restricted further media commentary on the matter.

Expert Opinion: The speed of the GNPC in releasing its public statement on the matter was commendable. It at least helped the media to put the matter into the proper context. Now beyond the initial response, a good PR strategist will get ready with several tools to help manage the situation. Key among them is further commentary from a senior officer to justify the decision. Sometimes, keeping quiet could be interpreted to mean trying to hide the truth. So it is important that the initial response statement is free of all ambiguity. In this specific instance, the GNPC statement was not ambiguous, unless someone is interested in doing mischief. But what appears to have pulled the plugs on further discussion of the story in the media was the lawsuit.

9. Ghana-Power Ministry tango

In the ninth position on the list of the year's biggest political PR cockups was a public tussle between the Ghana Gas Company (under the Ministry of Petroleum) and, the Ministry of Power.

The Blunder: The Power Ministry issued a press statement explaining the reasons behind the worsening of the 'dumsor' problem. It said it was due to a shutdown of the Ghana Gas plant to allow a new Ameri Energy gas-powered power plant to be configured. However, a few hours later, the Ghana Gas Company also issued a statement virtually denying the claims of the Power Ministry, referring to statement of the Ministry as "erroneous".



The Damage: It was unusual for one government agency to openly contradict the claims of another on an issue related to it. It sent a signal to the Ghanaian public of confusion within the leadership of the power sector. It also seemed to provide some evidence of a deep-seated turf-war between the Ministries and Power and Petroleum as well as the respective Ministers responsible for the two sectors. This was certainly a PR blunder for government. It attracted significant media attention and publication on all media platforms.

The Response: At first, both the Communications Manager for Ghana Gas and the Power Ministry's Communications consultant declined further comments on the issue. However, another statement signed by the Chief Executive of the Ghana Gas Company later in the evening appeared to have calmed things down, allowing the issue to die a natural death.

Expert Opinion: There is absolutely no reason why two government institutions should expose their disagreement in public. Regardless of whatever the tension or friction, it is always best to deal with such things behind the scene. The Ghana Gas statement signed by its Communications Manager was needless. It was a PR gaffe that could have been avoided. The Ghana Gas CEO must be commended for his bravery in showing leadership by issuing the second statement to essentially mitigate the negative impact of the blunder on both the Ministry and Ghana Gas.

Ghana's Biggest Corporate PR Blunders of 2015

10. TV3's public suspension of Nana Aba

Taking the tenth spot on this year is TV3's public punishment of its choicest and most prized presenter and news anchor Nana Aba Anamoah for what she says was an innocent twitter joke gone bad.

The Blunder: The out-spoken multiple award-winning TV personality was accused of claiming someone's photographs as her own. What was meant to be a football prank went bad when the owners of the photographs accused her of using their photos to suggest she was at a live match at Old Trafford when she wasn't. It attracted huge media attention, both in print, on radio, on TV and online.

The Damage:

Being one of the biggest personal brands in the media industry, the social media bashing of Nana Aba did not only threaten her personal brand, but that of her employers. Many, including colleague journalists went into the ridiculous extent of poking fun at her and questioning the credibility of what TV3 reporters say on air. It was a joke which would prove expensive.

The Response: Concerned about the probability of the situation negatively impacting on its corporate brand, the Board and Management of TV3 announced their decision to suspend Nana Aba from its on-air outputs until it completes its investigation. This announcement was made on the stations flagship and primetime news programme, News360 which is watched by about a million Ghanaians.

Expert Opinion: The decision by TV3 to publicly announce the suspension of its biggest on air personal brand was a fatal mistake. First, it came too late and at a time when the controversy was almost fading away. Secondly, it appeared the intention of TV3 was to weaken, if not destroy the Nana Aba brand. This may have been influenced by a personal dislike for Nana Aba, rather than a professional interest in protecting the station's brand. In our view, the situation could have been better handled by internally communicating the suspension to the employee; but certainly not in the manner it was done. It was no wonder that the decision was greeted with the greatest bashing of TV3 by its viewers. In the end, there was more sympathy for Nana Aba with a popular campaign calling for her reinstatement.

11. Money laundering banks

Claiming the eleventh spot on the list was allegations of money laundering against five major banks operating in Ghana.

The Blunder: Stanbic Bank, Zenith Bank, Access Bank, Universal Merchant Bank, and Societe-Generale were reported by the media to have been accused of money laundering by the Bank of Ghana. It was a multi-currency scandal involving millions of pounds, euros and dollars.

The Damage: It was an allegation which had the potential of eroding the confidence and trust for these banks. Money laundering is a serious offence under the financial laws of Ghana and no bank likes to find itself in such a position. It could result in serious sanctions from the Central Bank which could negatively affect the bank's operations.

The Response: It was a scandal which also attracted much media mention. At the time of writing, only Stanbic Bank and Societe-General are on record to have flatly denied the allegations. The others employed silence as their response strategy.

Expert Opinion: The best approach to dealing with such a scandal is for the banks affected to be issue a strong denial and affirming their compliance with the rules of the game. In such situations, silence is never a good response strategy. A second approach would be to ask the media houses to furnish them with the evidence in their custody to allow the bank to respond appropriately. Where such evidence was lacking, the next step would be to take legal action in protection of the brand. But where it is confirmed that the banks involved were actually guilty of the alleged breach, then it would be necessary to implement a strategy to repair the damaged brand image and reputation. For instance an announcement of a restructuring of the affected department, with clear evidence of action, could be one of the strategies aimed at re-building public confidence in the brand.

Ghana's Biggest Celebrity PR Blunders of 2015

12. Nana Aba's alleged photo theft scandal

Twelfth on the list but first in this category is Nana Aba Anamoah's twitter faux-pas.

The Blunder: Arguably Ghana's biggest Television Personality, Nana Aba Anamoah became a subject of nearly one month of uncomplimentary news reportage after her light-hearted twitter prank turned ugly for her brand. She was accused of plagiarising someone else's photos on twitter.

The Damage: It started as a normal celebrity twitter storm, but ended up as the greatest attack on the Nana Aba brand. It received huge commentary in print, on radio, on tv and online. Indeed it set social media alight with several renditions of picture posts virtually mocking her as being everywhere including on the moon. Fellow journalists did not spare her either. More so, the decision by her employers to announce her suspension on the station's prime time news programme 'News360' dealt the greatest damage to her brand.

The Response: Nana Aba's greatest mistake was her silence in the midst of the storm. She said nothing and allowed the criticisms to run for nearly a week before posting a tweet to say it was a joke gone wrong. This was one instance where silence was not golden. While the story was about dying, her employer (TV3) resurrected it by publicly announcing her removal from any on-air roles.

Expert Opinion: As we always tell our clients, in the midst of a PR crisis, silence is not an option of response. There may be the rare occasions where 'say nothing, do nothing' may work. However where the crisis threatens the survival of your brand, it is absolutely critical that you are seen out there honestly dealing with it. Nana Aba failed to act when it mattered most, thereby allowing her brand to be subjected to needless attacks. The golden rule is in the event of a crisis, you must act fast to provide your side of the story. In a world of multiplicity of media, including the ever ubiquitous social media, speed is of essence. If you don't have the capacity to deal with it on your own, it would be wise to get expert help.

13. Asamoah Gyan sex scandal

Then came the Black Stars' Captain Asamoah Gyan's long running sex scandal, at number 13 and second in this category.

The Blunder: Captain Asamoah Gyan found himself accused by a young woman Sarah Kwablah of sodomy soon after the successful outdoor of his \$3million mansion with a big house warming party. Sarah also claims to be pregnant for Mr. Gyan. It is a scandal that has run for several months until the Attorney General decided not to prosecute the case because of insufficient evidence.

The Damage: A sex scandal is the greatest destroyer of successful personal brands. When the story first broke, it was obvious at the time that Asamoah Gyan's brand was in for some trouble.

The Response: Asamoah Gyan's response was commendable. He chose to deal with the issue frontally. He appreciated the damage it could do to his brand. His lawyers responded

by admitting a prior consensual sexual relationship with Ms. Sarah Kwablah but denied the rape and sodomy allegation. Although the alleged victim's family insists the allegation was true, the decision by the Attorney-General not to pursue the case has weakened the claims of Sarah Kwablah.

Expert Opinion: If you are confronted with a scandal of this kind, the first question that needs to be answered is whether or not there is any truth to it. In order for your PR Crisis Expert to devise a solution, you will be required to tell him the absolute truth. It doesn't matter how difficult this might be. It appears Asamoah Gyan got good counsel on this. It enabled his team to manage this scandal fairly well. However, there is no better strategy, than trying to sort out these issues outside the media limelight. Sex they say always sells. The media gets multiple orgasms on such 'juicy' stories. So never allow it to get into the media. On this occasion, the Attorney-General's disinterest in the case would inure to the benefit of the Asamoah Gyan brand.

14. Kyeiwaa's marriage fiasco

In 14th position and 3rd in this category is Kumawood's shortest ever marriage.

The Blunder: 52-year old Kumasi-based local movie actress, Rose Mensah, popularly known as Kyeiwaa grabbed the media headlines for days for her marriage fiasco. Kyeiwaa got married to a Kumasi-based spare parts dealer Daniel Osei, only to realise a few hours later that her new husband was already someone else's husband. She ended the four-day old marriage by returning the ring and drinks. She was accompanied by her father and a number of Kumawood actors and actresses to end the marriage.

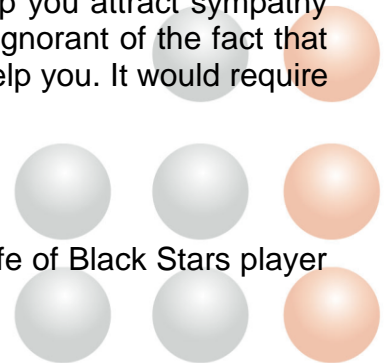
The Damage: For a popular local celebrity, there could be no bigger embarrassment than a four-day old failed marriage. It was a huge PR disaster for Kyeiwaa and one could imagine the emotional turmoil she would have found herself in.

The Response: She initially kept quiet about it, but when it became clear to her that the story about her new husband's existing marriage, she decided to end it all. It takes a lot of courage for a woman to do this.

Expert Opinion: Her decision to clarify the issue in the media was also commendable because it helped to ultimately settle the storm. When confronted with such a situation, the best strategy to adopt is one of control and mitigation. A statement explaining the apparent deceit on the part of the other person would do a lot of good. In essence you have to shift the blame onto the other person for misleading you. That would help you attract sympathy from the public. However, where it is established that you were not ignorant of the fact that the other person was already married, then this strategy would not help you. It would require a completely different strategy.

15. Amanda Afriyie Acquah's sexual gaffe

The 15th Biggest PR Blunder of the year was the loose talk by the wife of Black Stars player Afriyie Acquah.



The Blunder: Wife of Afriyie Acquah was in the news for days twice in 2015 for the wrong reasons. First she allegedly leaked a voice note of herself raining unprintable insults on the girlfriend of her former businessman husband and owner of Kenpong Group of Companies. Secondly, she was caught on tape revealing explicit details of her past sexual relationships with Afriyie Acquah's Black Stars team mate Jordan Ayew.

The Damage: The two incidents attracted wide media attention and mention, and set social media alight for days. She received serious text and tongue-lashing from the public for her perceived uncontrolled tongue and kiss-and-tell habit. It was a scandal which threatened the reputation of her young footballer husband. The biggest newspaper in the UK, the Sun published the story in its entertainment column. Also, the UK's Daily Mirror and the Daily Star, as well as Newspapers in Italy, where Acquah plays, in France, Spain and Germany were not left out of publishing the disgrace Amanda has courted for herself.

The Response: Her first response was to accuse her friend Rodney (Nana Kwame) of leaking a recording of their private conversation. She was later caught on another recorded conversation apologising to the friend of wrongly accusing him. Meanwhile, her husband maintained absolute silence in the midst of the embarrassment.

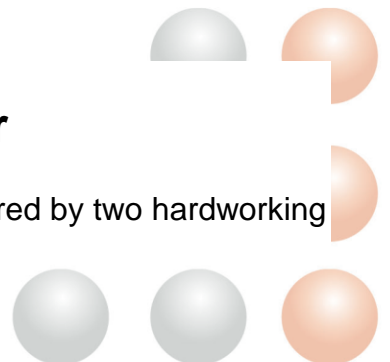
Expert Opinion: In our point of view, there was no effort whatsoever on the part of Mr. Afriyie Acquah to mitigate the impact of the scandal on his reputation as an international footballer. His strategy of silence only allowed the matter to die a natural death. However, the hurt to his reputation remains. We admit however that it is a difficult situation for a young man to find himself in. Nevertheless, he carries the tag of having been married to an alleged cheating wife. But his decision to stand firmly by his wife despite the repeated scandals is equally commendable.

Ghana's Biggest PR Spectacular of 2015

Based on our review of the list of the year's Biggest PR Scandals of the year, and how the decision makers responded to them, we conclude that the Chief Justice's handling of the Judicial Corruption Scandal qualifies to be considered as the Biggest PR Spectacular of 2015. All her actions in the wake of the scandal were apt and have so far contributed to a continuing public confidence in the judicial institution. It demonstrates an institution which is not ready to shield anyone who engages in wrongdoing.

Best Performing PR Personality of the Year

REDD Consulting's PR Personality of the Year 2015 accolade is shared by two hardworking individuals as follows:



1. **Her Ladyship the Chief Justice, Georgina Theodora Wood:** Her response to the biggest bribery and corruption scandal to the judiciary was exemplary. She showed strong and resolute leadership and determination to secure public confidence in the judiciary. So far the results appear to have been positive, making her deserving of the enviable PR accolade.
2. **Nana Yaa Gyantuah of the Public Utility Regulatory Commission (PURC):** Her institution has been in the middle of balancing the huge demand for higher tariffs by the utility service providers and the public's objection to tariff increases and demand for better services. Difficult as that was, Nana Yaa demonstrated unrivalled maturity, sound PR and communication skills in assuaging both parties and still communicating a decision that has always been accepted by both parties. An amateur PR person would have committed too many blunders under such enormous pressure from both sides. Her ability to manage the situation at a time of intense shortage in the supply of utility services makes her deserving of the recognition.

Best Performing PR Department of the Year

- 1 Public Utility Regulatory Commission

Worst Performing PR Personality of the Year

1. **Stan Dogbe, Presidential Staffer, Office of the President:** 2015 has been a bad PR year for this young, energetic, enterprising and hardworking appointee of the President. His dexterity in media management and communication strategy is unparalleled. However, it appears he was too focused on managing the image of the President at the peril of his own image. In some respect, this show of unquestionable loyalty must be commended and celebrated. However, in another respect, it has inadvertently contributed to doing greater damage to the image of the President and the government. Mr. Dogbe has been perhaps the only government appointee whose name has received the greatest negative publicity during the year under review. His perceived confrontational stance towards media personnel gave him lots of bad PR in print, on air and on social media. The tape smashing saga brought with it its own damage. His post of some of the details of the alleged outrageous demands by the Ghana Medical Association on social media gave him several days of bashing both in mainstream and social media. His angry tweeter response calling a BBC Africa tweet about the bus branding scandal '*useless story possibly coming from a useless journalist*', probably crowned what has been a turbulent PR year for Mr. Dogbe. This negative image of Mr. Dogbe in the media ultimately affects the person and office of the president; justifying his nomination for the Worst Performing PR Personality of the Year.
2. **Hon. Kwabena Donkor, Minister of Power:** The Minister's reputation as a notoriously blunt person with the penchant of saying it as it is has caused him a great deal of

negative media reportage during the year. These did not only affect him personally, but they contributed to hurting the image of the government as a whole. This has earned him the nomination as the second Worst Performing PR Personality of the Year.

Worst Performing PR Department of the Year

1. **Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG):** Being the direct provider of electricity services to the consumers, it would be expected that where there is shortage or irregularity in the supply of that service, the Electricity Company of Ghana would have been proactive in communicating with its consumers. Unfortunately, the ECG's communication department has been exceptionally poor and lackluster in discharging its duties. It failed to follow its own power rationing schedules; failed to communicate system breakdowns resulting in prolonged outages; and failed to communicate negligible improvements in its power supply. On many occasions, some assertive consumers only got told of faults in their area after they called the ECG's customer service line. For those who couldn't call, they were kept in the electricity and information darkness until the lights finally got restored. For the whole year under review, there was no noticeable improvement in the ECG's communication with the consumer. This makes its Public Affairs department deserving of the unenviable award as the

Worst Performing PR Department of the Year

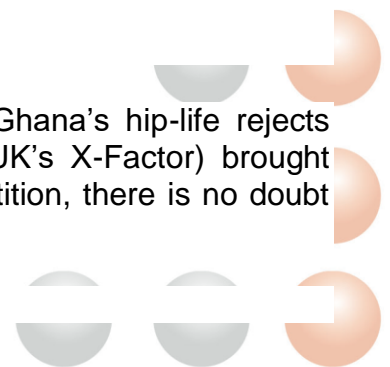
1. **Ministry of Power:** The Power Ministry is main political agency of the government with the direct responsibility for managing the protracted power shortage and its accompanying 'dumsor' as well as resolving the problem. However, its PR Department has not exhibited much communications leadership during the year under review. Not only has the Minister's 'no nonsense' personality and perceived 'quick-tempered nature' landed him in too many communications challenges, his team has been unable to satisfactorily manage the PR implications of his actions. Additionally, the communications surrounding the power problems, the efforts at dealing with it left much to be desired. This makes the Ministry's PR Department deserving of the **Worst Performing PR Department of the Year** award.

Rising Small-Business Brand of the Year

1. **CookHouse WaakyeonWheels**

Special Mentions

1. **X-Factor's Reggie and Bollie:** The spectacular success of Ghana's hip-life rejects Reggie n Bollie on music's biggest talent reality show (the UK's X-Factor) brought Ghana some global shine. Having placed second in the competition, there is no doubt the duo will put Ghana's stake in the global music ground.



2. **Grammy Award Nomination:** Another bright moment for Ghana was Rocky Dawuni Grammy Awards Nomination. It is the first time ever a Ghanaian act has received such global recognition.

Global PR Blunders of the Year

1. **VW's emission test cheating scandal:** It brought global embarrassment to the hugely popular vehicle brand, resulting in loss of hundreds of millions in stock value decline; recall of over 800million vehicles; removal of its CEO, and many more embarrassing fallouts.
2. **Steve Harvey's Miss Universe gaffe:** It was a career shattering mistake for the hugely popular MC Steve Harvey when he announced the wrong person as the winner of the Miss Universe competition. His instantaneous apology and correction of the error as well as subsequent admission of responsibility and apologies have helped to salvage the embarrassment. Although the error will be difficult to forget, his response has made his followers and fans more accepting of his apology as a genuine human mistake. This means he is likely to bounce back as the MC for the next edition of the competition.

