**Life after journalism: enjoying the ride**

That the digital age has seriously disrupted traditional media is beyond question. Over the last decade there have been endless rounds of retrenchments from flagship Australian media organisations.

But what becomes of ex-journos and all that accumulated skill and knowledge?

Some have used their personal brand to run their own sites and blogs. Others - like ex-ABC, SBS and Channel 10 reporter, Tony Nicholls - have moved sideways into the sphere of Public Relations.

‘I never felt like I quite fit in the news world,’ says Tony. ‘News is a brutal, task-focused environment which can start to get wearing after a while.

‘It’s not only what you're covering – homicides terror attacks, scandals, bush fires – it’s the relentless, pressurised nature of it; ten day rosters, 5am shift starts, now deadlines.

‘Not to mention hot tempers, instructions screamed, not requested, low staff numbers. Just endless pressure.’

Five years ago, Tony set up a public relations and media training agency, Good Talent Media, giving a range of clients (from Not-for-Profits, to government agencies, to businesses) an inside look at how a newsroom functions, what to anticipate from journos, how the news cycle works, and how to craft and manage their messages.

As the father of a young family, the long hours Tony was working and the relentless nature of constantly breaking, and often negative, news stories started to become too much.

‘When you're in it, you don't realize it, but from a normal corporate culture perspective newsrooms are constantly in high adrenaline crisis mode – a state most companies may be in once or twice a year,’ said Tony.

‘And ironically, a lot of people that work in news aren't good under pressure and spend most of their time screaming at each other.

‘Another small problem with the job is that for all of the above, it pays terribly. So, yes I got to live my boyhood dream and do live TV and live radio and cover big stories. And I did always stand in the press pack knowing that it was a privilege to be there. But was it a happy, healthy, and contented time in my life?  I'd have to say no.’

With his knowledge of how to spin a yarn and how to deliver messages in the media, Tony decided that rather than being a conduit to any story that came across a producer or editor's desk, he wanted to choose what organisations to help and what news he would help create.

Since making the move to PR, Tony has never been happier.

‘As my kids got older I decided I wanted to be a Dad who was home occasionally. As I assessed my options, media training was a natural next step.

‘I love helping good people tell good stories – and occasionally get them out of thorny situations – and with a lot of hard work I've managed to build a full service PR agency,’ said Tony.

The list of organisations and individuals Tony’s agency helps includes not-for-profits in the disability and mental health space, local government, the construction industry, and even a catwalk model with a chronic medical condition.

'There are a lot of people getting spat out of the media system but their skills are highly sought after. PR for me has been a great way to stay involved in the news cycle, but helping make the stories rather than reacting to them,' said Tony.

‘And that for me has equalled unmeasured job satisfaction, great work life balance and enough financial freedom to put my kids into good schools and to take my family to New York.’

Since starting out as a media training, crisis media and publicity specialist; Good Talent Media has expanded and now employs journalists, digital specialists and more recently government relations.

'It's been a wild but great ride. And I'd recommend it to anyone in the media who still wants the excitement of making the news, but deciding what type of stories you want to work on.'

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