



THE NEW PAPER, JAN 22

Media experts: **Atone sincerely, Anton**

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Apologise sincerely, lie low and move on.

That was what social media experts advised Mr Anton Casey to do after he riled Singaporeans with his Facebook comments about poor people and public transport earlier this week.

Yesterday, Law Minister K. Shanmugam said on Facebook that he was "terribly upset and offended" by the remarks made by the British expatriate.

This further sends a signal that Mr Casey should give a genuine apology that meets the expectations of the local community, said Dr Michael Netzley, Singapore Management University's academic director of executive development.

Dr Netzley was one of three social media experts The New Paper spoke to yesterday on Mr Casey's best course of action to atone for his offensive remarks.

Mr Casey had hired a public relations (PR) firm to issue a statement of apology on his behalf, a move that was heavily criticised.

Dr Netzley said: "Should a genuine and sincere apology emerge, this would be a good time to demonstrate to Mr Casey or anyone similar just how warm and understanding the people of Singapore can be."

"I think this is an opportunity to shine. Responding to foolishness with grace, in my view, would be a great response."

This sentiment was shared by Mr James Keng Lim, creative director of business solutions company Nomads.

He said: "It's quite a serious matter now given there's an intervention by

a minister.

"I think what he can do is to come out and issue an apology personally. Perhaps run an apology in the newspapers."

Mr Lim said the proliferation of social media means that nothing online is "100 per cent safe any more".

"On hindsight, he probably knows he should not have been so naive or ignorant to post those photos, especially that of his son. Now his whole family is involved."

"Once you post something online, there's no way you can retract or retrieve it. The best way is to apologise sincerely, bury your head into the ground like an ostrich and lie low," he said.

LOSE-LOSE FOR CASEY

Mr Lars Voedisch, who founded social media and public relations consultancy PRicious Communications and has worked in Singapore for more than 10 years, said that it is a lose-lose situation for Mr Casey.

"There's no way he can undo what he's done. He should just keep away from social media, wait for this to blow over until the Internet finds a new target."

Mr Voedisch felt that Mr Casey made the right move in hiring a PR firm.

"It's about getting the right channel and the right format. He did that with the PR firm which would handle the situation in a professional manner," he said.

"If he had come out on his own, he might have accidentally said something that would get him drawn deeper into trouble."

"After all, it's not about making people like you again. It's about trying to make yourself less hated."

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