

PR News

Building the bridge between PR and the bottom line.

March 3, 2014

prnewsonline.com

Issue 9 Vol. 70

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Switching Channels: Social Media First Model Starting to Accelerate

The social network fever that's gripping PR and marketing pros isn't likely to subside anytime soon. As social media platforms move to the epicenter of marketing communications, brands and organizations of all stripes are starting to ramp up the amount of content and messaging catering to social channels.

(DID YOU KNOW?)

Seven Things You Will Learn In This Week's Issue of PR News

1. HLN's move to a social media first model could be a wake-up call for PR professionals. (p. 1)
2. When you have clients dealing with a natural disaster, you have to make sure to support anyone who has experienced a personal loss. (p. 1)
3. If you are writing content for a general audience, try to humanize your leads. (p. 2)
4. About 25% of business professionals said their brands' reputations have been tarnished as a result of negative social media, per a new study. (p. 3)
5. Developing a "brand essence model" can help to focus your brand on a single idea most relevant to your audience(s). (p. 4)
6. When rebranding, be prepared to lose some or all of your core audience. (p. 6)
7. Matching your story length and type to the most appropriate media channel spikes readership. (p. 8)

HLN, which is part of CNN Worldwide and reaches more than 100 million households, is now taking the trend to a new level. In early February the cable news outlet rebranded itself as "the first TV home for the social media generation." Some of the new shows HLN is developing include "Keywords," a game show of search and tag trivia; "#What'sYourFOMO," an app enabling users to personalize and share their list of

FOMOs (fear of missing out) and "Videocracy," a countdown of the most talked about stories culled from social media.

HLN's move underscores several questions that PR pros need to contend with: How do brands and organizations develop and distribute social media programming and make sure they don't throw out the baby with the bath water? And by going with a social media first model, do

brands risk alienating their traditional customers?

HLN (an acronym for its former name, "Headline News") launched in 1982 as a 30-minute newscast delivering the top stories of the day.

But since the mid 2000s, the station has trafficked in tabloid- and entertainment-related fare. Now it's rolling out a new incarnation rooted in social media. HLN was

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► Crisis Communications

By Agatha Capacchione

Managing PR for Tourism Clients When Natural Disasters Strike



Effective weather-related PR begins long before a storm threatens a client and continues well after the storm has passed. The Cayman Islands is located in the Caribbean's hurricane belt. For 13 years, **Mfa, Ltd. Marketing & Public Relations** has handled U.S. public relations for the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism (CIDOT), including management of communications during severe weather. In September 2004, Hurricane Ivan struck the Cayman Islands with sustained winds exceeding 100 mph during a period of seven hours, as the eye of the storm passed 21 miles south-

west of the main island, Grand Cayman. Residents of the island felt the effects of wind gusts exceeding 220 mph, a 10-foot storm surge and 12 inches of rain.

Client contacts faced the daunting tasks of protecting their homes and families and simultaneously being responsible for regular outbound tourism communications.

Following the storm, extensive damage to infrastructure, major resorts, beaches and private homes on the three Cayman Islands was estimated at more than \$1 billion. The country had to rebuild not only its infrastructure, but also one

of its key industries: tourism.

A critical piece of post-storm public relations for CIDOT included pitching and securing island recovery stories in major newspapers, helping convince potential visitors that the island was restored and that many hotels and attractions had improved their facilities. Simultaneously, the agency was supporting clients who had undergone serious personal losses.

The process begins with overall strategic planning well before the June 1 start of hurricane season. This includes identifying client point people,

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Published weekly by Access Intelligence, LLC
4 Choke Cherry Road, Rockville, MD 20850

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▶ How To...

Media Relations

Writing

By Reg Rowe

Write Press Releases That Get Read



With a hat tip to Grey Group and DirectTV... When your company has news, you write a boring news release. When you write a boring news release, reporters delete the news release. When reporters delete the news release, people don't benefit from the news. When people don't benefit from the news, they can't buy your products. When people can't buy your products, revenue goes down the drain. When revenue goes down the drain, you lose your cushy corporate job. When you lose your cushy corporate job, you have to sleep on a dog bed in your kid sister's basement. Don't sleep on a dog bed in your kid sister's basement.

To ensure that you stay out of basements—and enhance what is arguably the most important PR skill—here are a few tips on how to write great news releases and get them read.

CUT THE CLUTTER

There are two reasons communicators write and distribute releases. First, to keep the media and your industry informed of your company's most recent efforts. Second, to sufficiently pique the interest of reporters so they will write about your company.

Unfortunately, there is fierce competition for eyeballs. There are some 3,000 news releases distributed each day through Business Wire, Marketwire, PrimeNewswire, PR Newswire and PR Web. So how do you differentiate your news release from the other 2,999 distributed the same day?

The secret of writing great news releases is to write great stories. It's as simple—and complex—as that. Reporters are storytellers. So help them tell the story by making your news release compelling.

Before you write the first word of a news release, put yourself into the role of a reporter and ask the following questions:

1. Is this really news?
2. Is it interesting?
3. Will my readers/listeners/viewers care?
4. Is it timely?
5. Is it unique?

If there are any negative answers to the above questions, you might want to rethink the release.

YOUR AUDIENCES

To whom are you writing? If you're writing for the general public, make sure you describe the sun, not heliocentric theory. In other words, don't get caught up in technical/scientific jargon (e.g. heliocentric theory) unless you're writing for a technical/scientific audience.

If you are writing for a general audience—everyday people—try to humanize your leads. The following is an example of a news release that humanizes a sociological study about homelessness in America:

Mary Smith and her children have become the new face of homelessness in America. After being abandoned by an abusive husband and losing her job in a company downsizing, Mary found herself homeless with three young children for whom to provide.

"I had lost my husband, my job and my home and I had three small kids to feed. I didn't know where to turn," said Mary. "I thought I had done everything the right way. But I was still homeless."

Doesn't that make you want to read on to find out how Mary and her kids are doing? Did

Mary get a new job? Was she able to afford a place to live? Why are families the new face of homelessness?

Now, take a minute and write a headline that will grab the attention of a reporter. Here's what I came up with: "Families are the New Face of Homelessness in America."

An attention-grabbing headline and real-life examples will get media reps to read the rest of the release about the study and its findings.

PUMP UP THE VOLUME

We are deep in the Visual Age. Painting pictures with your words is now rivaled in importance by visual images accompanying your news release. All media—TV, radio, print, online—want images that help tell the story.

Given their increased responsibilities brought about by the explosion of social media and across the board reductions in staff, reporters are looking for news served on a silver platter.

One great way to do so is via a digital news release. It provides all media with a story in the format they each desire: a tracked video package and B-roll for TV; audio tracks for radio; a news release; and supporting graphics and collateral for print and all of the above and links to other information for online outlets.

Video can be repurposed on your corporate website or sent to stakeholders or potential customers. The new model is publish once, distribute many, but make sure you have a compelling story to tell. PRN

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Qualities Workers Value Most Found to Be Most Lacking; Customer Complaints on Social Media Get Short Shrift

► **'Honesty' Can Be Such a Lonely Word:** Call it the yin and yang of corporate America: The qualities workers value most in their company's leaders—namely, communication and honesty—are the same qualities that they find most lacking, according to a recent ASQ survey conducted by Kelton Global.

The online survey, which was conducted earlier this year, took the pulse of 1,027 Americans aged 18 and older. According to the survey, 30% of workers surveyed said that honesty is the trait they value most in their company's leaders, while 22% cited communication skills.

Depending on how much access they have toward the C-suite, PR pros can enhance their value by counseling senior managers to be more transparent when communicating to the rank-and-file as well as other stakeholders.

Here are two key stats from the survey:

- Communicating well (20%) and honesty (16%) are the qualities that respondents believe to be leaders' biggest shortcomings.
- Critical thinking (11%) and commitment (10%) were noted as key leadership qualities.

ASQ, which focuses on quality in all fields, organizations and industries, has more than 14,000 members who are engineers.

Source: ASQ, Kelton Global

► **Get a Better Grip on Complaints Made Via Social Media Channels:** More than 50% of brands don't have a strategy in place to manage the growing volume of negative posts on social channels created by customers, competitors and employees, according to a recent survey conducted by **Social Media Marketing University** (SMMU). The survey, which polled 1,036 marketers, social media strategists, C-level executives and entrepreneurs, found that 21% of the respondents rarely or never respond to customer complaints in social media.

Here are some other nuggets from the survey:

- More than half (58%) of the respondents receive customer complaints via social media "occasionally," 11% receive them "somewhat often" while 5% receive them "very often."
- About a quarter of the respondents' brands reputations have been tarnished as a result

The Measurement Myth



Mark Weiner

Myth: If my research results aren't 100% then why do research at all?

Truth: Market research may be an "inexact science" but the process can be managed to produce very useful and highly accurate results. To quote John Maynard Keynes: "it is better to be roughly right, than precisely wrong" and market research provides useful guidance and actionable insights. Different situations require different levels of certainty, budget and timing.

For example, it may surprise readers to know that presidential polling may involve interviewing only 2,000 respondents to achieve accuracy of +/- 4%. But did you know that polling for a gubernatorial race in Rhode Island still requires 2,000 interviews to achieve the same level of accuracy? And the cost to achieve an additional 1% of certainty can be extraordinarily expensive.

When conducting or sponsoring market research, insist on transparent, meticulous and rigorous analysis of available information but don't forget to factor in just how "accurate" you need to be (or how much accuracy you can afford). Data that is "roughly right" does indeed allow you to move forward with informed confidence.

Mark Weiner is the CEO of PRIME Research-Americas. If you have a PR measurement myth you'd like to dispel, please contact Mark at weiner@prime-research.com.

of negative social media posts while 15% lost customers and 11% lost revenue.

- Nearly a quarter (23%) of the respondents said they do not have a strategy in place to

manage negative social commentary, or plans to develop one. **PRN**

Source: Social Media Marketing University.



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How a Capital Campaign at Low-Profile Ohio University Became a Springboard for a Major Rebranding Effort

Organization: Ohio University
Time frame: Fall 2010 - Fall 2013

Though Ohio University was the first institution of public higher education in the Northwest Territory with a national and international sphere of influence, many of its most positive aspects were not well known and it was often confused with Ohio State University.

When Ohio University learned in March 2012 that it was a contender in the NCAA Sweet 16 basketball tournament for the first time in 50 years, there was a media frenzy in the state of Ohio.

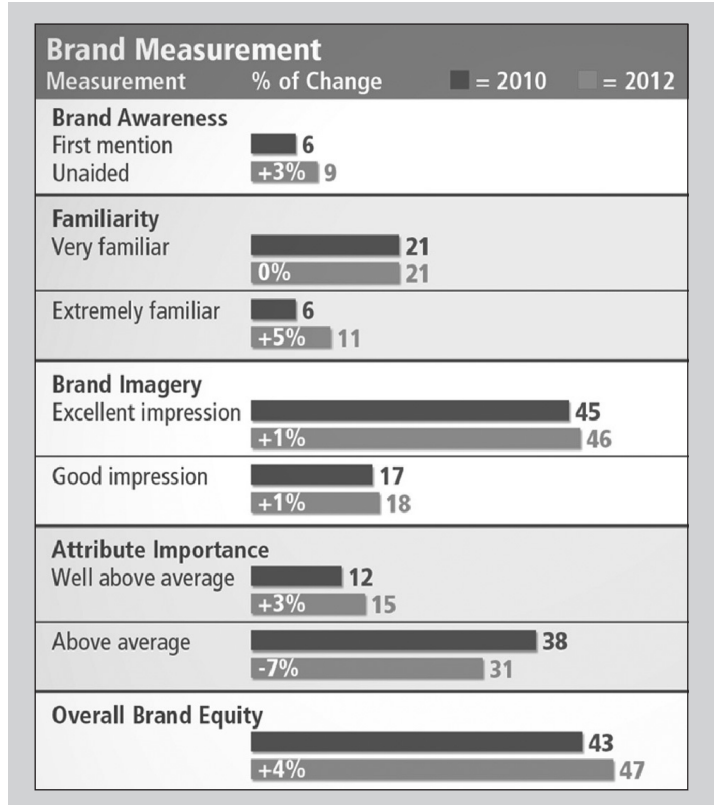
President Obama visited the state during March Madness and was photographed forming an “O” with his hands, which is often a way of showing sports pride in the Buckeye state. The caption, “Which Ohio team is he cheering for?” was a turning point in Ohio University’s

brand transformation. Ohio University had been noticed and recognized as separate and distinct from the other university in the center of the state, which quite often had been the center of attention.

In comparison to the same time a year earlier, Ohio University’s home page saw a 61% increase in new views and the athletics website saw a 102.3% bump in unique browsers.

IN THE GAME

In 2009, three years before March Madness, the university developed a brand message platform. The next year, the university conducted a perception study to obtain an objective assessment of its brand awareness and equity among its primary target audience—college-bound high school



Courtesy: Ohio University

Ohio University gained 3 percentage points in unaided brand awareness in 2012 compared with 2010, according to the second wave of a brand perception study initiated in 2010. The increase represented the biggest increase among other large Ohio universities, Ohio University said.

7 Steps to an Effective Brand Strategy

- 1. Identify your need.** Do you need to revitalize your brand or identity? What are the common complaints or comments you hear at your organization about marketing?
- 2. Build a message framework.** What do you want your audience to know about your organization? Establish three key messages and supporting proof points for each. This platform will help guide your description about the organization.
- 3. Gauge perception.** Do your homework and your research. Data is the great delineator. It’s OK to have an educated guess, but don’t rely solely on anecdotal evidence to support your decisions.
- 4. Discover your essence.** Every organization has a brand. If you spend the time honing in on the distinguishable factors that persuade your key audiences to rely on you, they will undoubtedly

be tied to your values and organizational culture. Your core essence should have your competition in mind, too.



Renea Morris

- 5. Develop creative concepts.** How will you display your brand visually? What kind of emotional bond will you forge with your audiences? What are the most compelling ways to express your brand creatively, concretely and concisely?
- 6. Refine them.** There are many ways to express the same message. Keep refining your creative “palette” until you have a concept that will work on multiple platforms for an extended period of time.
- 7. Express them.** Now it is time to engage your customers. What media will you use? How often will you use it? What are the best ways to reach your intended audience over and over?

This article was written by Renea Morris, executive director of university communications and marketing at Ohio University.

students—as compared to its major competitors in Ohio.

The intent of the study was to establish a benchmark to track the progress of branding efforts. Key measures were awareness, familiarity, overall brand impression and brand imagery.

The key finding was that, though the most important attributes among high school students lined up with the main points of the newly developed message platform, there was an opportunity to move away from the pack of second-tier universities in the state by owning a single attribute that only Ohio University could deliver.

A second study in fall 2012 revealed that the university gained 3 percentage points in

unaided brand awareness, representing the largest increase among Ohio's largest universities. One of the implications of the change was that because the brand was on the minds of more college-bound students, the university might reasonably expect these target audiences to be more receptive to future marketing efforts.

BRAND ESSENCE

The university president appointed a Marketing Advisory Council to help guide the rebranding effort. Using a tool called the "brand essence model," developed by an agency partner, the university was able to articulate its personality, key audience needs and value proposition.

Four concepts were developed, but when they were presented none of them were fully accepted. Additionally, the marketing department favored one and the admissions department liked another. All of this was unexpected and threw a monkey wrench in the timeline.

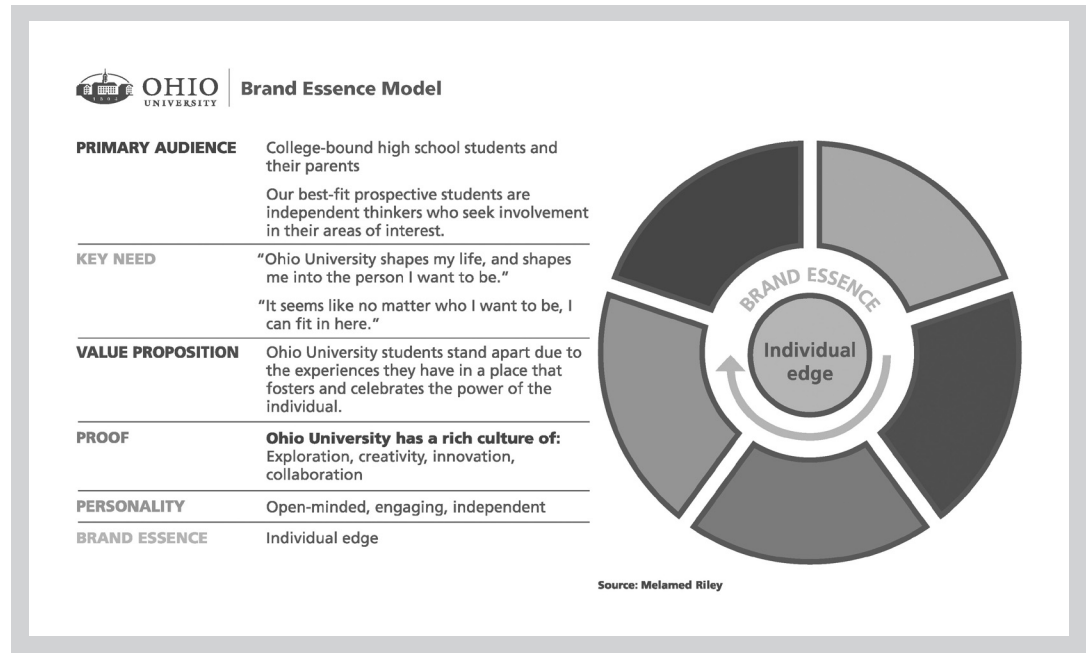
With the stalemate, it would be difficult to share a finalized concept with senior leaders by the end of the academic year, which was less than six weeks away.

Though not originally budgeted, in order to mitigate this issue the decision was made to test the concepts with prospective students as well as present them to the entire university body to gather feedback.

It was agreed upon beforehand that the process would move forward in whichever direction the pulse of prospective students and the campus community would lead.

The results yielded a clear frontrunner, which would enable the team to work on refining the creative direction during the summer. This step helped get the project back on track to meet a fall 2013 launch.

To increase transparency and help ensure certain stakeholders were kept informed as



The brand essence model, developed by an agency partner of Ohio University, is a strategic tool designed to focus your brand on a single, differentiating idea that is most relevant to your audience.

the creative process unfolded, a password-protected website was developed. When a significant update or change was initiated, the "OHIO Insiders" group received a message, alerting them to review the site and provide feedback, if desired. This method of providing "inside" information to a select group was well received and appreciated.

Once the research was complete and the creative direction established, six members of the marketing staff worked more than 12 months on more than 35 projects associated with the development of the creative assets, planning events and planning the official debut of the new brand.

Besides \$50,000 set aside from another department's budget for the new creative—which included the production of television commercials and radio ads and \$75,000 for the two research studies—there was not an established budget for the initiative.

The remaining projects were completed as a result of budget savings. Creative concept testing with prospective

students in spring 2012 was \$9,250 and about \$25,000 was incurred in 2013 for printing and the development of a student-designed mobile app. In three years, not including media buys, \$159,250 was spent on the rebranding initiative.

STAY ON BUDGET

One of the major creative outputs was the development of four television commercials. To ensure that the concepts would be authentic and inexpensive to produce, students and alumni heavily supported the project.

Four new commercials were developed using a crew of 13 students and 12 alumni. Themes emerged from interviews with 31 students, 17 of whom were featured in one or more of the 30-second spots.

Students, alumni and staff put in more than 3,500 hours developing the commercials.

Graphic design students created the letterforms used in a variety of promotional items, such as the admissions viewbooks for undergraduate recruiting, a microsite featuring 10 students sharing their university experi-

ences, pole banners hanging throughout the campus and T-shirts used as giveaways for a semester-long "brand sighting" contest.

During the launch of the campaign in the fall of 2013, there was great appeal for the approach, creative design and brand messages.

Positive feedback from faculty, students and staff helped confirm what was suspected all along: that a disciplined process of qualitative and quantitative research, critical and comprehensive review, as well as methodical and meaningful refinement can reignite an organization with a brand focus that is relevant and well received by its most important audiences. **PRN**

(This article is an excerpt from PR News' Top Case Studies in PR, Vol. 6. To order a copy, please go to www.prnewsonline.com/pr-press/.)

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Social Marketing

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unavailable for comment.

“It looks like they are trying a reverse Jimmy Fallon,” said Jay Hamilton, senior director of digital public relations, **Marriott International**. “Whereas Fallon is driving people from TV to **YouTube**, maybe the plan here is to drive people from YouTube (and other social channels) to TV.”

NOT TOO CUTESY

HLN is betting it can tap into a younger demo with social media programming “as long as it doesn’t get too cutesy,” Hamilton added.

“As the gatekeeper of the brand, my job is to make sure that what we’re putting out there is in the brand voice,” he said. Hamilton stressed that PR pros need to maintain brand integrity, but also design their content for different audiences.

For example, last summer Marriott recruited singer-songwriter CeeLo Green to help plug Discover Doors, an online video game promoted by the **Renaissance Hotels**, a

Marriott brand targeting the Gen X and Gen Y crowds.

By going with a social media first model, HLN could be the canary in the coal mine for other consumer-oriented brands.

“The danger for HLN is that it just does what the audience tells it rather than cultivate what HLN can bring to the table,” said Tim Marklein, founder and CEO of **Big Valley Marketing**.

He added: “How do you balance customer service with customer leadership? Customers want something from brands, and in some cases they tell you exactly what they want and can express it—and in other cases they don’t.”

Marklein said that it’s important for communicators to project where their audiences may want to go, in terms of content, but not get too far ahead of them.

“What behaviors does your audience exhibit and what behaviors do you want to encourage your audiences to engage in?” he said. “Too often companies push out content



Photo Courtesy: hotelclatter.com

Singer-songwriter CeeLo Green last summer was featured in a PR campaign for Discovery Doors, an online video game on the Renaissance Hotels’ website, where gamers compete for 500 prizes. The Renaissance Hotels brand is owned by Marriott International.

from their perspective and what they want to promote, as opposed to thinking about what behaviors their audiences are exhibiting.”

WAKE-UP CALL

However, things shake out, HLN is probably onto something, as traditional media

becomes subordinate to social channels. With any significant change in the brand, the role of PR managers is to provide counsel for senior management and the context for consumers.

“They wouldn’t make the change unless they had the data,” said Helene Solomon, CEO of **Solomon McCown & Co**. “PR’s job is to interpret and explain what the value proposition is for audiences, and that could include social advertising as well.”

Solomon added that HLN’s move could provide a “wake-up call” for brands and organizations trying to position their communications for the future.

“Instead of the networks and cable stations being the first channel that people go to and social second,” she said, “social media is becoming what the networks were at the dawn of broadcast journalism.” **PRN**

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3 PR Tips to Maintain Brand Integrity

When an organization undergoes a massive rebranding it risks alienating its core audience and eroding brand equity. In today’s hyperconnected world, PR professionals must help clients navigate the complex relationship a brand holds with its stakeholders, looking to both engage and inform.

Following are a few tips on how to successfully navigate the potentially choppy waters when a brand changes its stripes:

- **Be mindful of your core audience** and make sure you communicate with them early and directly using both traditional and social channels. Explain the changes you are making and why. Clearly demonstrate how these changes benefit them. Better yet, allow them to engage in the process, ensuring the revamped brand feels like it’s theirs.
- **Be transparent about what you are doing** and be clear about whether it’s an update to your

brand or a radical overhaul. If you are rebranding, explain why. If you are fundamentally changing your offering and whom it is being targeted to (as in the case of HLN), in essence you are introducing a new brand. Weigh the pros and cons of treating this as a rebranding initiative versus something bigger. Remember, if you don’t call a spade a spade, someone else will do it for you.

- **Be prepared to lose some or all of your core audience** and face criticism from those who loved the old brand (think back to the backlash when Gap changed its logo). Make sure you’ve thought through and developed an extensive Q+A, and that your spokespeople are prepped to address the questions that are sure to follow from the media, investors, customers and employees. And expect that everything you say or do will be amplified socially.

This article was written by Lisa Rosenberg, chief creative officer at Allison+Partners. She can be reached at lisa@allisonpr.com.



Lisa Rosenberg

Crisis Communications

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their responsibilities within the client organization during the crisis, emergency contact information and the roles of agency partners coordinating emergency preparation and response. Media contact lists (including social media handles) must be up-to-date and relationships developed with key media contacts, particularly at the weather and news desks.

During the initial contact with media prior to each season, query reporters to confirm exactly what information they'll want in the event of a storm. Gather the most up-to-date government storm preparation documents. Have a social media strategy and assigned roles for posting, responding, engaging and clarifying inaccuracies throughout the crisis.

PRE-STORM

When a severe storm is forecast, focus on keeping the media constantly informed. External PR should first meet to review systems and strategy, media lists and team assignments, and then alert client as to whom the point person will be for the upcoming days. Prepare for 24/7 staffing.

To ensure these strategies and tactics are successfully implemented, make clear to the client and media contacts that the PR agency is available as much as necessary to handle media requests throughout the preparations, the storm and recovery periods. Set up hurricane email news alerts. Communicate with media as often as possible using official preparedness documents that have been released for residents and visitors.

THE RESPONSE

The PR agency should track weather systems regularly. U.S. media relations/social media monitoring and engagement

begins once official storm communications are released from national weather services.

The PR agency then alerts key U.S. weather, travel and news media on the status of preparedness and airport accessibility. It also verifies who at the media outlets will be the point person for reporting news throughout the coming days and if the contact person changes for weekend coverage.

At this point, social media monitoring is focused on knowing what, if anything, media are posting, especially on **Twitter**.

When a hurricane is within hours of landfall, the PR agency needs to receive official statements on preparedness.

The agency team goes on 24/7 alert to secure accurate storm information, facilitate interviews with official spokespeople, monitor traditional and social media exposure and update media and social channels with current and relevant news.

Ongoing communications continues throughout the duration of the storm, until the "all clear" is given and PR can alert U.S. media that the area is back in business for visitors.

Provide details of said preparations, showcase sunny images if possible (contingent upon circumstance and storm severity) and offer client spokespeople for key media outlets.

Remember accurate and newsworthy information is key. Maintain focus on safety, travelers and visitation. Disseminate identical messaging through the destination's official social channels. Track all storm-related articles and social mentions involving the client's region.

In the event of overly sensational reporting among traditional media, reach out directly

Keys for Successful Public Relations in Natural Disasters

Initial media contact:

- Contact must begin prior to potential crises. Update weather contact/newsdesk media lists and build a good rapport with key contacts.
- Ensure media lists include: national broadcast, travel trade publications, wire services, national print (weather and travel reporters/desks), regional (daily newspapers/online counterparts) and local weather contacts/meteorologists.
- Build a separate list of important social media handles, including both specific reporters and media outlet contact information.
- Assign key agency team members as point people for media inquiries, to facilitate interviews with client spokespeople and to handle social media dialogue.

In-storm communications:

- Distribute press releases and/or newsblasts with the latest information, as warranted.
- Ensure a back-up client contact is in place if the direct link to the client is compromised.
- Follow up and uphold dialogue with key media outlets.
- Disseminate all media communications via official social channels.

—A.C.

to the journalist and immediately/professionally/politely reiterate the facts. When faced with inaccuracies on social media, post corrections directly with both the specific journalist and the media outlet.

Remember, the media may be reporting on the impact of the storm beyond your client destination, so alert the outlets that they can always contact you for current, specific details.

RECOVER PR

Recovery communications portrays an honest, but optimistic outlook once the official "all clear" is provided. Take the official "all clear" and adapt it to reflect what the media need to know, emphasizing that the destination is back in business.

The media statement or press release should be distributed directly to key news/weather/travel media and newsdesks via the newswire and on the official destination

and government social media channels and website.

Following the "all clear," the agency should compile a comprehensive crisis communications report. Keep in mind that crisis communications does not end for the PR agency until the client destination is reported as recovered in the media. **PRN**

(This article is an excerpt from PR News' Crisis Management Guidebook, Vol. 7. To order a copy, please go to www.prnewsonline.com/crisis-management-guidebook-vol7.)

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The Role of Storytelling in a Digital Age



Companies spend an inordinate amount of time and money on creating exhaustive and fancy messaging matrices that often times sit on a shelf. But messaging is just the starting point. The corporate narrative is where the magic happens and for companies that get this right it can mean the difference between obscurity and breakthrough market leadership.

When former longtime *Barron's* reporter Mark Veverka and I first discussed collaborating on a new marketing practice built on the power of digital storytelling, we struggled with the word “content” because it has become so ubiquitous and lost some of its value as a descriptor.

One mistake that companies’ make is to embark on content development without a narrative strategy in place.

Why is a narrative so important for companies to develop? The main reason is to capture your desired audience’s attention.

People are drawn in by stories; they remember stories more than just facts and they are more likely to share a story, and thereby amplify your reach, via the most effective way possible: word of mouth.

The explosion of communications channels has created more storytelling opportuni-

ties, but it’s also created some challenges. Not all story formats work through all channels, so matching your story length and type to the best channel improves readership.

Photographic stories work well on **Twitter**, short stories on blogs, longer features in print, etc.

A few more key tips to keep in mind:

1. **It takes a combination** of good journalistic skills and creative writing to build compelling narratives.

2. **Think visually.** The old adage of a picture telling a thousand words really does ring true. And with today’s information overload, visuals can often breakthrough the noise better than the written word.

3. **Follow the journalistic practices** of drawing from compelling story arcs that match your own story; the phoenix rising from the ashes, David vs. Goliath, the “can they make it,” story or the ones with unexpected consequences. These are storylines that contain drama, and drama entertains.

4. **Take a page from your creative writing class** (or from Nancy Duarte’s highly regarded book, “Resonate”) and leverage the power of “the hero’s journey.” Based on the psychology of Carl Jung and

the mythology research of Joseph Campbell, the hero’s journey reveals the basic structure of numerous stories, myths and movies.

5. **Think about breaking your “story” into separate chapters.** Avoid the need to tell everyone everything all at once.

I mentioned the brilliant work of visual storyteller Nancy Duarte and her organization above. She just released her newest book, titled “Slidedocs.” It covers the new paradigm of “shorter is better” business communications.

A “slidedoc” is a document created using presentation software, where visuals and words unite to illustrate one clear point per page.

One point Duarte makes early on in her book is that the Web and mobile communications have reconditioned people to prefer consuming information in small chunks.

And, not surprising considering her body of work, she underscores the importance of visuals. According to Duarte, the benefits of consuming clear and concise prose, combined with helpful visuals, include:

▶ Space limitations force a slidedoc’s author to boil down the material to its essence. Done correctly, this makes the material clearer to the reader.

▶ Visualized ideas help the audience “see” what you’re saying. When critical business decisions need to be made quickly, visually articulated concepts reduce the time to reach consensus.

▶ Time savings are achieved by allowing the audience to read the material instead of listening to it be presented.

▶ Consensus building is accomplished when people have time to discuss the material. After reading a slidedoc, people can gather to have conversations about it that create movement toward objectives.

▶ Shorter time to understanding happens with material that’s been parsed, structured, and visualized.

While storytelling has been around for thousands of years, new rules are starting to emerge.

Since these are still early days for many of the newer storytelling disciplines, don’t be afraid to experiment. **PRN**

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