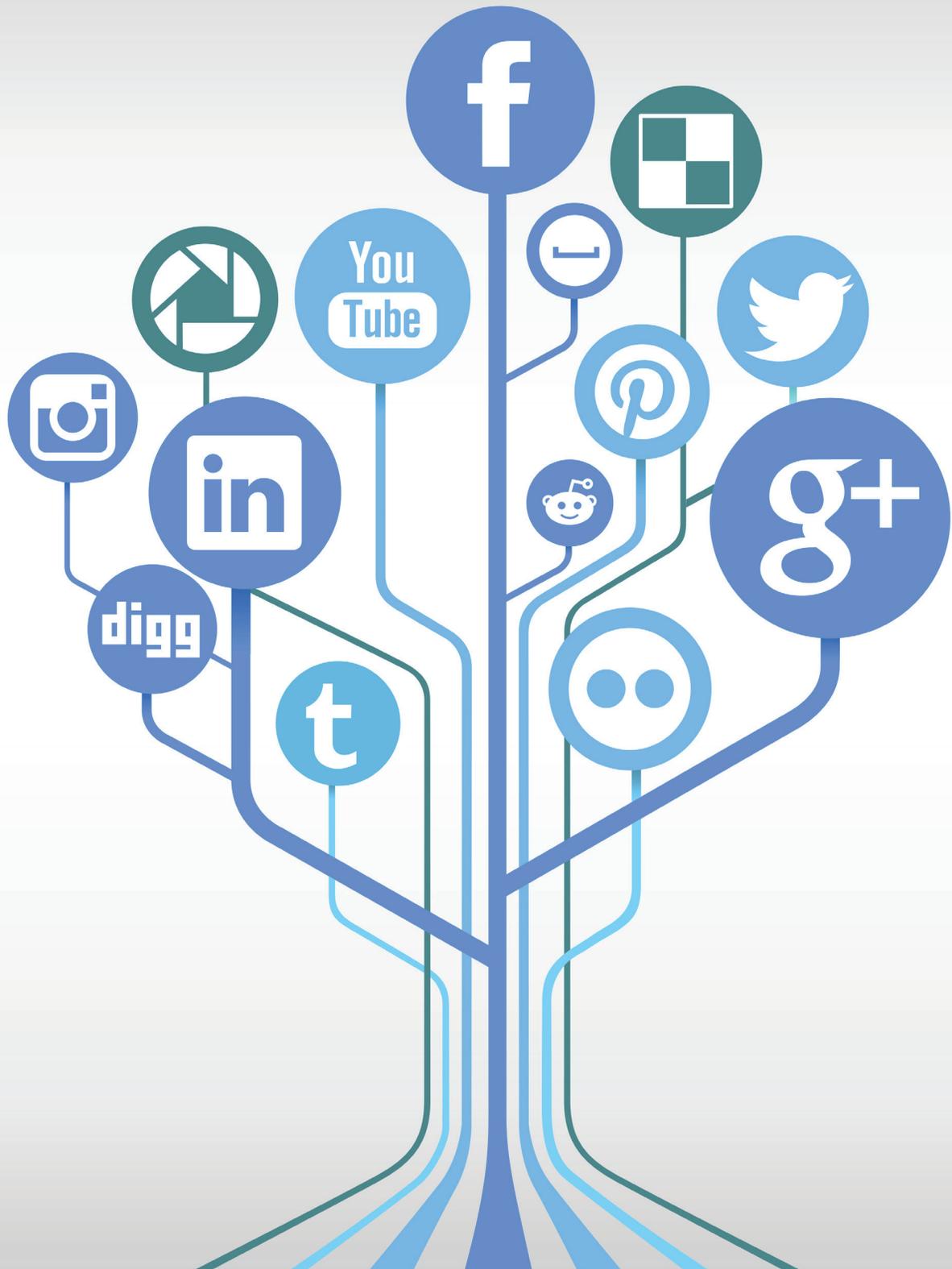


# PR News

# Social Media

# Special Report



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# Introduction

## Foreword

I'm in a tight spot. Anyone would be. In truth, there is little that can be written today about the particulars of social media platforms that will remain relevant just weeks from now.

From Facebook's changing algorithm to Twitter's Moments feature, Snapchat's accommodations to commerce and Instagram's longer video limits and commerce-friendly adaptations, change has become an Internet constant.

Social media platforms are not evolving in a vacuum. Best practices that communicators and PR pros use on those platforms are changing as a result. These structural and intellectual evolutions make the task of offering advice that much more difficult.

Putting the above aside, however, there is plenty that can be relayed about social media and web tools that will benefit PR pros and communicators. That's what you'll be reading in the following pages.

Some thoughts: The social media conversation is occurring about your brand whether you participate in it or not. While participation in the conversation is voluntary, in most cases it's recommended mightily, lest you allow others to tell your brand's story, perhaps inaccurately. We use the term social conversation purposefully, to emphasize that both contributing and listening are important.

As with any action your brand takes, it's critical to know in advance what your business goals and objectives are before undertaking the activity. The same applies to social media.

And make sure to measure. With the plethora of tools available, some of them free, there's no excuse not to measure.

While many things about social media seem informal and loose, and plenty of advice givers will urge you to experiment, it's best to do so on your personal account before trying anything radical with a valued brand.

With that, read on.

Seth Arenstein  
Editor, PR News  
Twitter: @skarenstein



# 12 Social Media Tips to Stay Ahead of the Pack in 2016

By PR News Editors

Just because it's here today—be it an algorithm, platform or even a successful strategy—doesn't mean it'll be of any use tomorrow in the whirlwind that is the social media space.

Communicators know this all too well. It seems like just as the secret to succeeding with organic content is discovered, Facebook changes its algorithm. Or when a brand finally has a complete presence across the major social networks, this Snapchat thing comes out of nowhere and everything's up in the air.

But this is all part of the game in PR, which as a discipline has thrived thanks to a Darwinian embracement of technological advances, while at the same time sticking to the tried and true.

But the breakneck pace at which social media changes can be a lot for even the most plugged-in PR pro to stay on top of.

That's why Brandi Friel, SVP of digital & creative integration with FleishmanHillard, and Jordan Sinclair, communications manager with Tweed, took a look at what's on the horizon for today's biggest social platforms, and how communicators can continue to succeed amidst the constant evolution.

## Facebook

Don't turn your back on Facebook. After all, you should be fishing where the fish are. The social giant will reach more than half of the online U.S. population in 2016.



Speak through video. Facebook Video is thriving and users are consuming it at a rate that's second only to YouTube.

Continue to leverage its incredible analytics and target a hyper-specific audience with clear, relevant, valuable and visually compelling content.

### **Twitter**

With a new C-suite, expect changes to Twitter's advertising options and video capabilities.

Tweet at least three times each day to optimize organic reach within the new algorithm-based timeline.

Twitter can offer great direct marketing benefits like Twitter Cards and Conversations, so don't be afraid to use it for something besides real-time news and announcements.

### **Instagram**

Look at advertising across Facebook and Instagram. Both use the same audience data

system, which you can use to target more efficiently.

Partnering with brand advocates and influencers will be more important than ever. 55% of consumers trust customer photos more than slick brand or professional photos.

Use mobile apps and sites like Stocksy, Offset and Flashstock to help develop Insta-worthy content on a budget.

### **Snapchat**

If you're targeting Generation Z or Millennials, it's time to get on board. Expect to see long-awaited improvements in ad inventory, metrics and targeting.

Get comfortable with vertical video. It's the only way to do things on the platform, and 30% of all mobile video is viewed vertically.

Build Snapchat stories into your editorial calendar and use them to humanize your brand and share news.

# 3 Foolproof Steps to Manage Any Social Media Crisis

By Jamie Izaks

It's every company's worst nightmare: Your business is in the news, and not for something good. Maybe it's the departure of a high-profile executive, an accusation of racism, sexism or homophobia or simply a misunderstanding that escalated quickly. The public eye can turn on you in a flash, and it's important to have a calm, calculated approach to crises, especially when they occur on—or are gaining traction due to—social media.

You don't need to look too far to see an abundance of social media crises. Take Chipotle, for example. Allegations of everyone's favorite fast-casual burrito spot engaging in unsafe food practices that led to an outbreak of E. coli have caused a massive national PR crisis that picked up remarkable steam on social media. Now the brand is attempting to rectify the situation by offering potentially millions of dollars of free food, and has held highly publicized food safety meetings for all staff.

Public perception is everything. The odds that your business will face a massively publicized social media firestorm are slim, but crisis management skills are essential for problems big and small that can affect you in the short term or even permanently. With clients across dozens of industries, we've dealt with social media crisis situations all across the board.

In these situations, it's important to prepare both proactively and reactively. In more detail, a reactive response is what you might use if someone of influence engages

with your brand on social media regarding your less-than-perfect health inspection score. At this point, you should decide the reach of the news. You may want to prepare a reactive social media comment, and decide the length to which you want to go to remediate the situation offline. Remember, in these very public times, the customer is always right, but your best move is to take this communication offline. You should also prepare statements for people within the business themselves, such as servers, cashiers and other hourly employees who might face abrupt, in-person questions from customers and the media. Nobody within the organization should be commenting on social media, except for the appointed "speaker of the house."

Proactive measures are also essential to social media crisis planning, but may not be necessary to use. You might use a proactive response if you're facing or anticipate facing a barrage of social media comments. For instance, post and maintain at the top of social media pages statements that clarify, show compassion, and educate or inform.



Both proactive and reactive responses give you the opportunity to control the story and the message. Except in cases of an extreme offense, it may not be necessary to take the message outside of the channel on which the interaction first took place. For example, if a Facebook post is igniting commentary, there's no need to blast out reactionary tweets.

Here are three guidelines to crafting social media crisis statements worth sharing. Staying relatively neutral without igniting further social media discussion is the key.

### **1. Show Sympathy**

Let your customers or audience know that you understand their frustration and disappointment. Put yourself in their shoes: They want to feel heard. However, avoid an outright apology, as it may be construed as an admission of guilt. Keeping in mind the fact that you're communicating in an informal setting, make sure the statement is conversational in tone and timely. Social media engagement happens in real time, and fast.

### **2. Assure Change**

Share with customers that change is in the works, and your company is doing anything and everything in its power to fix the problem. They are more likely to respond positively if they understand that rectifying the situation is your top priority. This means drafting messaging that implies that actual change is occurring, instead of simply "passing

along comments to the home office," which can feel like being brushed off.

### **3. Reinforce Values**

Your customers should know that your company values remain the same: You're still committed to providing excellent service and a guest experience that parallels what they have come to expect, and an isolated incident does not compromise that.

A client of ours in the children's daycare industry recently experienced a social media crisis when an incident occurred involving a teacher and a 6-year-old transgender student. Because of the sensitive nature of the issue, it was more necessary than ever to remain compassionately neutral while ensuring that the values of the company were put front and center.

At All Points Public Relations, we use this three-step process with our franchising industry clients large and small, from restaurants and retail operations to health and fitness studios, tech companies and everyone in between. Your reputation is everything—especially in franchising, where individual locations are a reflection of the parent company. Protect yourself by thinking ahead.



*Jamie Izaks,  
president and co-founder,  
All Points Public Relations*

# Five Ways Social Listening Will Become Audience Intelligence in '16

By Bob Pearson

Less than a decade ago, we experienced an explosion of new social media channels. This led to the birth of the social media listening industry. In the early days, if we could just capture what people were saying, we were thrilled. We stared at pie charts and looked at graphs and learned the basics of what our customers were really doing online.

Fast forward to 2016 and the world has changed. Social listening doesn't cut it. Audience intelligence is replacing it.

We all know in real life that listening is valuable only if you are listening to the right people. We don't treat all opinions as equal or react to every comment unless we want to drive ourselves insane. Instead, we are moving toward an ability to identify the exact audience that matters so that we can listen to what our audience cares about and we can know what content it prefers, which channels are its favorites, what time of day its members go online, what their patterns of behavior are and what they mean to our brand.

In 2016, the trend away from social listening and toward audience intelligence will be driven by five changes in how we view listening and its next-generation cousin, intelligence. They are listed here:

- **The Importance of Non-Verbal Listening:** When we are in a sales situation, we know that as much as two-thirds of what we learn is non-verbal. The non-verbal equivalent online includes search queries, downloads, retweets and likes, shares and other non-verbal communications that are critical to understanding reality. We must account for behavior in new ways in our listening approach.
- **The Ability to Build the Right Profiles:** There are many false positives in listening, ranging from spam to simply tracking the wrong information. Analysts today must be craftspeople who can build profiles that focus exactly on what you want to learn about. These profiles are highly precise and contain a range of keywords and phrases.
- **Measure the Conversation, Not the Instance:** When consumers react online they often share and talk across multiple channels over a period of time. Our ability to identify their patterns helps us build the right trail of measurement. Think of a conversation starting in Twitter, going to Instagram and ending with comments on Facebook. If you measure Twitter only, or look solely at Instagram, you have just a partial picture. Consumers follow patterns, so you can see their trails over time. As we do offline, we tend to walk the same path over and over again.
- **Compare and Contrast Audiences:** If you are tracking each audience, you can see how it differs on the same topic from another group. What are cardiologists saying vs. general practitioners? What are enterprise IT leaders in cybersecurity saying vs. your employees vs. CIOs? If you compare and contrast audiences, your ability to see new insights greatly increases.
- **Understand Your Data Sources:** We need to ensure that the data we are measuring really represents where your audience is. Know what channels you are receiving data from so you can see if it matches up with the location of your customers. And be careful to determine if you are paying twice or thrice for the same

data vs. different providers. It's time for us to engage in de-duplication of data so we don't overpay for the same data. After all, we need more resources to improve our audience intelligence.



*Bob Pearson*  
*President, Chief Innovation*  
*Officer, W20 Group*

# Tips to Create Instagram Contests That Will Raise Brand Awareness

By Chris McGuire

**A**s a PR pro your job is to garner attention for a client or brand. A well-executed Instagram contest can be a great tactic to achieve increased visibility.

Though they may garner fewer entries than other types of promotions like sweepstakes and instant-win games, contests are a smart way to raise awareness of a company, cause or event.

Here are six steps for creating and running a compelling Instagram contest:

**1. An Engaging Call to Action.** What will you have contestants do to enter the contest? What picture do they need to create, and what are the criteria for entry? Remember, contests are judged based on skill. Below are some ideas to keep in mind when creating your call to action:

*Don't overcomplicate it.* If you would find it arduous to follow all of the criteria for entry, chances are your potential entrants will, too. This could include asking people to dress up in a specific outfit, like that of a mascot. The more effort a user has to put into entering, the fewer entries you will receive.

*Avoid the mundane.* Steer away from making the call to action overly prescriptive or mundane. For example, rather than having entrants take a picture of a product in their home, ask them to show how the product makes their lives better.

*Allow for creativity.* Instagram users want to be creative. An intriguing call to action allows for some interpretation, so that the entrant feels ownership over the creative process of entering the contest.

**2. Make It 'Brand' Relevant.** To further awareness, your contest should relate easily to your brand. This can apply to a product, event or a cause. Whatever the case, the contest should be an extension of the brand. For example, the holidays are full of conversations and worries about money. For that reason, financial institutions often will host contests where the prize is paying off credit card debt.

**3. Determining the Prize(s).** People are motivated to enter contests by the possibility of winning. Logically, better prizes will yield more participation. You'll get more entries for a prize of \$1,000,000 than that of \$1,000. Different types of prizes, and their corresponding values, however, come with their own set of rules, regulations and considerations. Here are a couple:

*Regulated industries.* There may be restrictions on contests and prizes for brands that are in regulated industries. Those restrictions may vary by state. Examples of regulated industries include alcohol, tobacco, firearms, pharmaceuticals and, in some cases, dairy.

*High-value prizes.* If prizes are determined to be worth more than a certain amount of money, some government regulations will apply. High-value prizes require the winners to receive IRS Form 1099 for tax purposes.

**4. Rules & Regulations.** Where most people can get into legal trouble when running a contest is with the Official Rules, or lack thereof. Think of the Official Rules as your contract with entrants. You want to make sure that the contract protects you, your client and the customers you are trying to engage with during your marketing promotion. Here are things to think about when compiling

rules and regulations for your Instagram contest:

*Beware of Online Templates.* Sometimes an amateur contest organizer will find a template of official rules online. While this is better than nothing, these templates generally will not incorporate promotion-specific variances like types of prizes. In addition, templates may lack specific language required for how your consumers are participating in the contest, such as entering via an online platform such as Instagram. Further considerations include any potential liability your company may incur based on the prize. For example, if you are giving away a trip and the winner is injured while traveling, or a car is the gift and the automobile is faulty, you want to make sure that the official rules protect you from that liability.

*Seek Legal Counsel.* Make sure an attorney with experience in promotion law reviews the official rules.

*Consider a Third-Party Administrator.* One way to be protected from potential legal liability is to engage with a third-party administrator to help run the promotion. These professionals will be well versed in the specifics of running a successful online promotion from the creative side to the compliance side. You'll have the added protection of indemnification, meaning the third-party administrator will take on the risk.

**5. Contest Management.** There is a lot of behind-the-scenes work that goes into the perfect media pitch; the same holds true for running an Instagram contest:

*Every Entry Must be Judged.* The most important thing to remember when managing an Instagram contest is that every entry must be judged based on the criteria defined in the official rules. If someone were to question the fairness of your contest, you need to be able to demonstrate how you reviewed each of the entries based on the criteria. Consider using a judging tool that insures every entry is judged with a score for each criterion. It's best to plan

for a lot of entries to make sure you can handle them, rather than be caught by surprise. One way to successfully manage a lot of entries is to put the entries to a public vote first to narrow down the field of finalists. That way, your panel of judges needs to consider the top entries only.

*Employ Necessary Technology.* If you opt for a public vote, you'll need to have a virtual gallery where people can cast their votes. This will require a certain level of technology.

*Choose a Hashtag.* Instagram photos are organized using hashtags. Use of the contest hashtag is how you will keep track of who is entering. Contests typically include two hashtags, one that is branded to the specific contest (like #HomeForTheHolidays) and another that acknowledges it is a contest entry (like #contest).

*Moderate.* Just as you monitor social media channels regularly, a moderation policy for your Instagram contest is a must. What's the plan if someone decides to post unsavory things in the form of a contest entry?

**6. Create Compelling Visuals.** The human brain processes images 60,000 times faster than words. Promotions with poor creative design can decrease participation by more than 50%. So:

*Use a Professional Designer.* Designers are trained to communicate things visually. It's worth budgeting money to work with a professional to come up with visuals for the contest. Ideally, this designer will have experience with Instagram and communicating a process (i.e. how to enter).

*Focus on the Basics.* Creative for your Instagram contest should have three priorities: be brand relevant, communicate the prizes and explain how to enter. You could have the most beautifully designed contest ever, but if it doesn't accomplish these three crucial things, your participation rate will suffer. In fact, 60% of consumers don't enter promotions because they don't know how to participate.

Instagram offers nearly endless ways to creatively engage users. A well-executed contest creates a memorable experience for entrants, while providing measureable results. Just like other social media platforms, Instagram continually evolves, changes and improves. It pays to keep a constant eye out for new offerings and opportunities to use the platform to raise awareness of your great company, cause or event.



*Chris McGuire*  
*@chrismcguire*

# Tips and Tricks to Use Facebook's New Live Video Feature to Boost Brand Engagement

By PR News Editors

It was a safe bet when pundits put the continued growth of video on their lists of predictions for 2016. It still is. Just look at Facebook. Late last month during a Q4 earnings call Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg noted his 1.59 billion monthly active users and 1.44 billion mobile monthly active users were logging 8+ billion video views daily, equating to 100 million hours of video. Not a surprise then that Zuckerberg said a bit later that Facebook is considering a dedicated spot solely for video viewing.

Soon after, on January 28, Facebook product manager Vadim Lavrusik, in a post, unveiled details of Facebook's Live video service, available for "everyone in the U.S. via iPhone." [Facebook had offered Celebrities and Verified Pages a version of Live for several months.

Akin to Periscope, Live allows users to broadcast events in real time. Unlike Periscope, whose vids expire after 24 hours, Facebook's can be saved and archived indefinitely on users' Timelines. News Feed will allow Facebook users to discover Live videos from friends and celebs they follow. "While watching a live video, you can tap the Subscribe button to get notified the next time the broadcaster goes live."

The implications of Live for PR pros seem apparent: There's a new, seemingly easy way for influencers and fans to share your brand's message via live video on the world's largest social network. And with saveable videos, Live seems to be a plus for brands, or anyone hoping to rack up large numbers of views. We asked PR pros what brands should be doing to best capitalize on Live.

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Lisa Arledge-Powell  
President, MediaSource

**1. Experiment, but Stay Flexible:** "Facebook still is finalizing details, so now is the time to get experience on Live and other platforms." YouTube and other video platforms remain "just as relevant." In fact, the competition between sites could offer big opportunities for PR pros, she says.

**2. Choose the Platform That Works Best for Your Brand:** Similar to measurement tools, there are choices in video platforms. Arledge-Powell advises choosing the one that fits your brand best. "Facebook Live is the hottest new enhancement... it's also pretty easy to use...after the success of Periscope and Meerkat, it's not surprising that Facebook would jump into the game as well... PR pros should try them all, monitor the latest advancements and choose the platform where your brand receives the highest ROI." Testing Live on your personal site is a good move, as is monitoring how other brands, public figures and news outlets are using it. She's keen on CNN's Live post last week where Dr. Sanjay Gupta fielded questions from viewers in the comment section.

**3. It's an Experience, Part I: Use video to enhance consumers' experience.** It's important to interact with viewers. "Live and other Facebook video enhancements allow your followers to feel included in private, behind-the-scenes moments. Whenever deciding the video content, create it to make sure followers know that they're a part of the experience." Arledge-Powell also favors broadcasting longer when using Facebook Live.

“The longer the broadcast, the more viewers will watch,” she says. Still, before starting a Live broadcast, plan a set amount of time to shoot.

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Jacqueline McGinnis  
Deputy Director, DoD Social Media

### **Defense Media Activity**

**4. It’s an Experience, Part II:** For McGinnis, Live is yet another step in the evolution of social media and a chance to “give people a more personal connection...you want them to feel like they’re right there [at a live event] in real time.”

She also agrees with Arledge-Powell about picking a video platform. “Know your brand’s objectives and what you want to do with video,” she says. Brands also must “weigh the pros and cons” regarding privacy when deciding on video.

**5. Be Choosy:** The proliferation and ease of video means, though, PR strategists should pick “exclusive moments” to deploy video using

Facebook, Vine or Periscope. Look for events that most people won’t experience, she says. Even with events open to the public, there are moments that the general public won’t be privy to. An example, McGinnis says, is when Pearl Harbor memorial activities were streamed live to a defense site, yet her unit did a Periscope session from a part of the 74th annual ceremonies that was open only to select people. Closed events, with permission, of course, are prime targets for live video, she says.

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Melissa Wisehart  
Director, Social, Digital Strategy  
Moore Communications Group

**6. The Future?** Wisehart agrees with Arledge-Powell about experimenting first with your personal iPhone and then on various platforms, although she wonders about Periscope’s financial viability without archiving videos. Live’s “archiving is huge,” she says.

# How Call of Duty Used Snapchat to Ignite Its Community

By Mark Renfree

To reveal the latest Call of Duty game—Black Ops 3—Activision teamed up with Edelman to target the millions of gamers still playing Black Ops 2 in a way that was both native to the game and attention grabbing.

Snapchat's explosive growth with the game's core demographic of 18-34 year-olds and its ephemeral nature made it an ideal platform for clandestine tease content that would align with the secretive nature of the Black Ops series.

By working with Treyarch, the developer behind the Call of Duty: Black Ops games, the partners decided to hack into the game itself. Together they created and executed the first ever in-game integration with Snapchat by creating the appearance of a "hack" in the Black Ops 2 online multiplayer maps.

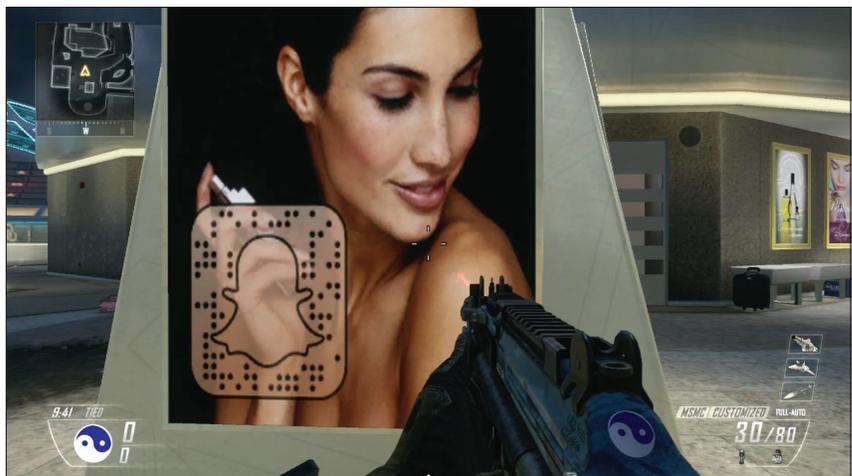
Disguised as part of a standard game update, Snapchat Snapcodes were embedded into various locations on the game's multiplayer maps. They were not accompanied by an announcement from the company or publicized in anyway. Players who found the Snapcodes and scanned them were taken directly to the Call of Duty Snapchat account where the first cryptic clues about Black Ops 3 were waiting to be decoded.

Within hours of the Snapcodes being deployed in the game, players from around the globe began discovering them and flocked to Call of Duty's Snapchat account. In no time at all the entire Call of Duty community was buzzing about the discovery and what it could mean.

Practically overnight, Call of Duty's Snapchat account became one of the most active on the platform, where it acquired hundreds of thousands of new fans through the exciting tease content. The series culminated in the official reveal of Black Ops 3 on Snapchat, driving mass discussion, including multiple global Twitter trends.

Hundreds of thousands of fans followed Call of Duty's Snapchat account, generating 6 million engagements with the tease content. An additional 50 million views took place on YouTube, driven by Call of Duty fans voraciously picking apart every frame of the teaser content. In just five days, the partners generated more than 1.3 billion earned impressions and 700,000 social mentions, making it the biggest Call of Duty game announcement ever. The partners also received a 2015 PR News Digital PR Award for their innovation and success in digital marketing.

Follow Mark: @MarkRenfree



# 5 Hashtag Tips to Help You Promote Your Brand Without Stumbling Into Dreaded Inauthenticity

By Seth Arenstein

**B**rands and organizations from Lifetime Movie Network (LMN) to the member unions of the AFL-CIO last week hopped on one of the week's trending hashtags #EqualPayDay, celebrating a holiday that brings attention to the disparity between the pay of men and women in some sectors.

For LMN and other media brands that target women, tweets and Instagram posts with the #EqualPayDay hashtag seemed authentic. For brands in sectors seen as perpetuators of unequal pay, however, social conversations with #EqualPayDay affixed to them were problematic. Most stayed away from the relatively new holiday, which started in 1996.

While brands with a strong presence in social media have been hopping on hashtags linked to news events and even creating hashtags, it seems clear from what we hear on the circuit that while many PR pros use hashtags and know about them generally, plenty of us sheepishly admit that hashtags are mysterious in their power. Questions we receive and have heard at PR News events include "What happens to a hashtag after I use it on a post?" "How does it get counted?" "How many hashtags should I put on a post?" "How will people know about my hashtag?" "How can I use hashtags without turning people off from my brand?" With these questions and more in mind, we asked hashtag specialists to assist in explaining these conundrums and offering best practices.

**1. From the Beginning:** Hashtags came into use in 2007, although Twitter accepted them reluctantly. Now when you use the pound or hash sign on Twitter, it turns a word or word group that follows it into a searchable link. This allows a brand to organize content and track discussion topics based on those keywords. And capitalization doesn't matter in terms of analytics, so #EqualPayDay is #equalpayday. Yes, there's Twitter Analytics [see sidebar]. Click on a hashtag and you will see all the posts mentioning that subject in real time.

**2. Hashtags as Buckets:** Kelley McLees, senior digital account manager, Everywhere Agency, says the easiest way to think about a hashtag is as a bucket of information. "Hashtags are a way to organize information, especially regarding live events," she says. Adds Margaret Case Little, senior director, communications & brand strategy, National Retail Federation, "Hashtags are essential for audience discovery and conversation engagement."

**3. Promote It Everywhere:** When a brand decides to create a hashtag "you need to promote it everywhere," McLees says. Adds Little, "Promotion of a brand hashtag must be baked into every tactic of a campaign." Although creating hashtags can assist branding, it's not essential that brands create their own; however, "it is absolutely pivotal to leverage existing hashtags," Little says.



# 5 Ways to Use Social Data to Build a Winning PR Campaign

By John Donnelly

**A**s a PR professional this might sound familiar: You're launching a new service or product, and despite doing the legwork and research to assemble your PR and marketing campaign, you missed your target audience in the end. Consumer and market reactions went through a volatile shift overnight, and though the reason was out of your control, you're now expected to adjust and make up for lost time. Successful PR campaigns require a detailed understanding of an industry and careful listening and analytical skills to anticipate consumers' reactions to any announcement, and to develop the strategies needed to reach the right audiences. Still, we've all had a moment where we thought, "I wish I knew then what I know now."

Fortunately, today's consumers are already sharing exactly what they want and how they feel about different products and services in a public space. Social media isn't just a place where millennials complain about public transportation delays. On various social platforms, consumers of all age groups constantly offer their thoughts, opinions and feelings about brands, products, services and experiences with each. By weaving detailed social media data into your campaign planning and PR measurement tactics, you can remain in tune with your audience, anticipate rapid shifts in trends and achieve a greater amount of return on investment (ROI) for your efforts. Below are a few ways to get started:

## 1. Get to know your audience.

PR pros need to understand exactly what prospective customers want. With the release of any news, your outreach, supporting content and overall messaging will have a tough time resonating with targets if you're not listening to their individual preferences – not only in relation to your brand, but on a greater scale. Who do your customers aspire to be? What are some common preferences among your target audience? Only then should you begin thinking about how your brand fits into this mold.

Begin by sampling a portion of your target audience's social media affinities, sentiment and conversations about a certain topic, and cull that data for any relevant information that can power your campaigns. Your product or service needs to fit into the ideal of a certain lifestyle or mindset of the consumer. Whether you're selling him a pair of jeans or marketing automation software, social media data can unlock the way he prefers to receive your brand's message.



## **2. Become a fortune teller.**

Social media data combines historical data analysis with real-time conversations to offer a wide look into consumers' habits and preferences. Tracking the way those sentiments and opinions evolve over time can help you create predictions that keep your campaigns ahead of the curve. Social data is a natural extension of the role big data has played in the enterprise for most of the last decade – companies want more information to help improve products and streamline operations. As a PR pro, you can use the same approach and analyze customers' social data to accomplish the same goals.

## **3. Measure the value of your work, and pivot as needed.**

If social data is a critical part of PR measurement, you can avoid sinking time and money into strategies that aren't helping your business. As your PR campaigns evolve, you need to remain relevant and maximize your reach. Social media can help track the way your target market's brand awareness is growing, how overall sentiments may be shifting over time, and whether you're reaching new audiences that display new interests or preferences.

For example, if you find your campaign resonating among a large network of baseball fans, you might create a downloadable "playbook" that uses baseball imagery and themes to extend your message. After all, the more you know about the people you need to reach, the more you can pivot your PR efforts and hit a home run.

## **4. Encourage your audience to share.**

Since social data is accessible in real time, you can track your PR campaign's results as they're rolling in. Don't wait to analyze a monthly report; encourage your customers to share thoughts about your marketing content, products, messaging and more. By gathering customer reactions, you can improve the results and impact of your campaign.

## **5. Dig deep into historical data.**

The value of social media data isn't entirely rooted in real time. Networks have been around for nearly a decade, meaning there's a wealth of historical data about your target audiences just waiting for you to uncover. These insights can help your team identify new customers to target, anticipate and predict market shifts, and react accordingly based on the tactics that have proven successful in the past.

Social media is more than a platform for promoting your products and services – it can inform, improve and help measure your PR campaigns. By actively using social channels to understand your audiences, you can avoid those painful moments where you wish you had been more prepared to lead a campaign to success from the start. Instead, you can leverage the world's largest focus group, identify your perfect audience and market directly to its members.

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# How to Find and Work With the Right Influencers for Your Brand

By PR News Editors

**S**ome brands continue to resist social media. Fair enough, although conversations about those brands are occurring online without the brands' participation.

It's similar with influencers. Your brand can avoid engaging with them, yet it's a decent bet that audience members, some of whom are your customers, are listening to influencers.

We asked Mary Grady, managing director, media and public relations, Los Angeles World Airports—who will be speaking about successful campaigns she's run with influencers later this month at PR News' Social Media Summit in Huntington Beach, CA—about finding and working with influencers without spending a lot of money.

## **PR News: Can you give us three tips for finding and reaching out to influencers without spending a lot of money?**

Mary Grady: With nearly 75 million passengers using LAX Airport in 2015, it's not hard to find LA-based influencers who use the airport. But the key for us was finding those who can speak to the areas of food, travel and beauty. Three tips we used for picking the right influencers for LAX:

- Identify the organic tone and authentic voice of the respective influencer, and match them to your brand identity.
- Find influencers who will stay true to your campaign strategy.
- Leverage the influencer's personality and knowledge of your brand.



## **PR News: Once you've found influencers and bloggers, how do you cultivate a relationship with them? What are they looking for most from brand communicators?**

Grady: Since some of the best-known travel influencers use LAX, to them we have become a known commodity. We have invested \$8.5 billion to improve the airport, with billions more to come. We choose influencers that not only see, but who actually are experiencing the transformation. We follow them on their social media sites, engage in conversation, provide them with insider tips and shortcuts to navigate the airport while it's under construction and invite them to become more familiar with the new food and retail offerings that reflect L.A.'s culture, cuisine and lifestyle during hosted events.

**PR News: Not all brands work with influencers. What would you tell them to encourage them to do so?**

Grady: I would say not all brands have fully integrated the use of paid or non-paid influencers into their public relations and marketing disciplines, nor are they using performance metrics to understand the value they add to a brand. As well, not all brands trust that influencers and or bloggers can be your best brand ambassadors. While their content is organic, authentic, real and real honest, it's the honesty that brands fear. Remember, consumers trust word of mouth and peer recommendations. They see influencers as credible opinion leaders with engaging content.



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# What Instagram's 60-Second Video Format Means for Communicators and Brand Marketers

By Seth Arenstein

**P**R pros and anyone involved in the social media space would need to live underneath a rock to miss the fact that video is and has been exploding on desktop and mobile devices. Facebook doesn't reside under a rock.

During a Q4 earnings call earlier this year, Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg reported that his 1.59 billion monthly active users and 1.44 billion mobile monthly active users were logging 8+ billion video views daily, equating to 100 million hours of video. Not a surprise then that Zuckerberg, a bit later during that call, said Facebook was considering a dedicated spot solely for video viewing. [In a BuzzFeed interview last week Zuckerberg said he'd not be surprised to find the majority of Facebook content within five years to be video.]

Not long after the earnings call Facebook made its Facebook Live video service available to everyone in the U.S. via iPhone. Differentiating Live from real-time broadcaster Periscope, whose vids expire after 24 hours, Facebook touted its product's ability to save and archive video indefinitely on users' Timelines, an obvious boost for brand communicators or anyone seeking to rack up large numbers of views. Recently Facebook adjusted its algorithm to show live videos higher in people's news feeds.

Additional proof of Facebook's full-court press for live video came last week, as it tweaked



Live, giving worldwide users access, and adding Android devices to the mix. In addition it augmented Live with features, including the ability to react to videos in real time with its Reactions emoji suite and the ability to invite friends to a Live broadcast.

## Minute Waltz

Perhaps a less-noticed corollary to this story is what's going on videowise at Facebook-owned Instagram. Late in March Instagram said it was adding 45 seconds to its platform's 15-second video time limit for all users. The 60-second limit will be rolled out for everyone during "the coming months," Instagram said. Very much in the Facebook style of rollouts, some brands had been provided the additional 45 seconds months earlier, allowing them to preview their Super Bowl ads on the platform and compete for television's ad dollars.

Although video might seem an afterthought on photo-dominated Instagram, Shareablee

data, provided exclusively to PR News, argues otherwise. Consumer engagement with U.S. brands' videos on Instagram was up 90% (January 1-March 15), according to Shareable ( PR News March 21). Engagement is defined as the sum of consumer likes and comments. Indeed video posts from brands rose 68% in that period. These kinds of statistics prompted parent Facebook to boost Instagram's video capability on the backend. Instagram videos now will load through the Facebook video portal, which is supposed to negate buffering. A nifty move by Facebook, considering the amount of competition for the video pie from brands like Snapchat and others.

All this led us to ask a pair of PR pros what the additional time on Instagram means for others in the profession.

**1. That's the Story:** While Bianca Prade, SVP, SKD Knickerbocker, and Michael Lamp, VP, social & digital media, Hunter Public Relations, agree communicators were harried in the 15-second format and should welcome the additional seconds for the creative room it provides, both caution against becoming obsessed with it. "Concentrate on your brand's goals and its story... not the 60 seconds," Prade says.

Adds Lamp, "Don't think you have to post on Instagram immediately just to take advantage of the 60-second accessibility." This is not the time to "get too excited...and start sharing longer videos just because it's available."

The reality is with the 60-second format eventually available to everyone, "there will be more competition...and people will be judging (videos) more critically," he says. Prade agrees. "On a platform that innately appeals to our short attention spans, brands will need to work to create videos...that will keep viewers engaged," she says. "From professionally shot videos to interesting animation, brands will need to incorporate whatever elements are necessary to encourage Instagram users to tune in for the full 60 seconds and prevent them from scrolling right past the video."

**2. Low-Cost Is Fine, Too:** Prade quickly adds, though, that while professional video looks great, "the most important thing is content and the story...we're all on our mobile phones" and

shooting video with them, when necessary, is acceptable. In addition, budgets need not be sky high to get a near-professional-looking video today, she says.

**3. Do Your Research:** Lamp advocates a measured approach to using the additional time. The first thing he advises is for brands to look seriously at their existing creative on Instagram's "big brother platform Facebook" which has allowed longer video for a while "and see what's worked best there." Find out what the appetite of your consumers is and the types of messages they are willing to receive from you, "what's the best way to attract them."

**4. Mind the Gap:** While you're investigating that content, Lamp says, take particular note of the drop-off rate (please see sidebar below). "Both Facebook and YouTube give really nice analytics about where people stop watching. So if you're looking at 60-second video (on Facebook or YouTube) and people stop watching after 25 seconds, you might want to consider whether or not you want to put it on Instagram at the full 60 seconds or edit it to 30 seconds," Lamp says.

**5. Decision Time:** Until now, Instagram has been "a peg" in a longer story for brands, Lamp says. Brands previously used short videos on Instagram or Twitter to get consumers to move to another site, possibly Facebook or a corporate website, to see a longer version of the story. With the 60-second limit, however, "Instagram could become a brand's one-stop shop," so consumers don't have to be directed to other sites to hear a brand's full message, Lamp says.

**6. The Fun Stuff:** The immediate payoff of 60 seconds for communicators will be a larger window to allow consumers to look inside brands as well as behind the scenes. "From rallies to panels and speeches," brands "partake in a wide range of events," Prade says. "60 seconds of footage will give organizations the opportunity to provide meaningful coverage of these events on Instagram."

She also sees political candidates on the campaign trail taking advantage of augmented time limit. "Similar to the way candidates are now using Snapchat to document their behind-the-scenes lives on the campaign trail, politicians can

now provide meaningful insight into their day-to-day, which we wouldn't necessarily see on the news." In addition, long-form Instagram video may help voters feel a more personal connection to candidates. "It will play a part in the quickly changing campaign landscape that has been a result of social media."

### **Live Events, PR and 60 seconds**

Lamp believes 60-second video will allow brand PR pros to "leverage live events much better...you couldn't do that in 15 seconds...at most you could show a quick clip of the room and say "Wish you were here," he says. Now you can "do a legitimate sit-down" during an event with an executive or a celebrity. These videos could be shared with consumers and editors, he says.

The one-minute length also allows for more fully realized episodic content. "I see brands as publishers, possibly creating webisodes and sequential experiences with episodes" on Instagram. "How about a new episode every Monday night?" he muses. Importantly, if communicators paired that creative with the sequential targeting of Facebook you could make sure people were aware of each episode, he says, noting Facebook and Instagram "are united on the backend from a targeting and media perspective."

It will be interesting in 6 to 8 months to see what brands' average video length on Instagram is, Lamp says. "Remember, the 15-second video of a sizzling hamburger will still be valuable to

some brands...not every video should be 60 seconds." The 15-second limit allowed brands to dimensionalize a product; 60 seconds will let them dimensionalize a brand's story, he says.

### **Why Drop-off rates matter with video**

Fools Rush In: Don't rush to post a 60-second video just to show that "we get it."

Decide What Works Best for Your Brand: Some brands can tell their stories in 30 seconds, others need 60 seconds or longer. Look to previous videos for insight.

**3-Second Violation:** Be careful when looking at drop-off rates. On Facebook, there are two metrics used to calculate video ROI. The default metric is on a 3-second threshold, which can mislead. Lamp notes that in the Facebook environment video autoplays, is muted and activates "whenever you hover over it on your mobile device." So you could in theory be thumbing through posts on your mobile and something in the real world attracts your attention. You pause your thumbing and look away from your phone. Meanwhile the video is playing for several seconds and Facebook is going to report that as a view. "In reality there's been no impactful branding there." The other metric is 98% Completion-View, where the viewer has watched most of the video. It's best to report both metrics, as together they'll provide a better assessment of response to video content.

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# How Arby's Found Its Voice Under Pharrell's Hat

By Christopher Fuller and Brendan Streich

**A**t the end of 2015, Arby's same-store sales increased 8.1%, outpacing a comparable set of Quick-service restaurants (QSR) by an estimated 5.5% during the same period. While it might seem that this happened overnight, several elements were in place that helped prompt the brand find its voice.

A spirit of reinvigoration permeated the halls of Arby's global support center as 2013 turned to 2014 and a new leadership team looked to sustain an aggressive turnaround strategy for a brand that had faded from national relevance and consumer consideration.

While long-term business, operational and marketing plans were being created, leadership knew that a spark was needed to catapult the brand off the back burner and into the cultural spotlight. Enter 2014's most prolific artist—Pharrell Williams—and his now-famous “Arby's-like” Vivienne Westwood mountaineer hat.

No doubt, Arby's caught a lucky break with Pharrell's headgear choice, but several things had changed at the brand that allowed it to make its own luck. In addition, the Arby's social media and communications teams, including agency partner Edelman, used skill and strategy to fan that spark into a firestorm.

We believe it was a hunger that drove the team to turn a real-time marketing “moment”—similar to Oreo's at the Super Bowl in February 2013—into an actual, sustained campaign. And while arguably fortuitous, an exceptional organizational willingness to take calculated and authentic

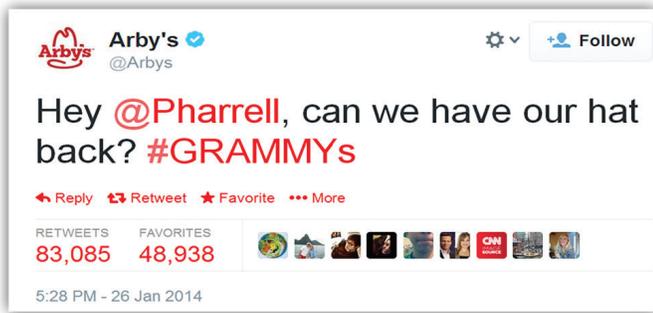


risks fed this big, bold idea that became much more than a one-time dunk in the dark. In the following case study, we'll demonstrate how a brand with limited cultural relevance suddenly inserted itself into the year's most talked-about pop-culture moment without feeling contrived, and how the lessons learned from this campaign were leveraged for continued activations over the following years.

## Clear Purpose and Vision

Arby's brand purpose is “Inspiring Smiles Through Delicious Experiences.” Everything the brand does—marketing, operations, guest service, menu development—is done with the goal of inspiring smiles for guests. This is Arby's “North Star,” if you will. But this hasn't always been the case.

Prior to 2014, Arby's was, as often is said in business, a brand with opportunity. Sales were declining and not only were consumers beginning to give up on the brand, but the media was, too. And who could blame them? Arby's wasn't exactly the model for “on-brand” consistency, having



*Hat Trick: While this tweet was lucky, Arby's also made its luck with corporate culture changes.*

jumped from tagline to tagline in the years prior to 2014.

Further, Arby's was known for one thing and one thing only: roast beef. Although Arby's was and is proud of its roast beef, it accounts for less than 3% of all QSR dining occasions. Arby's had other proteins outside of roast beef, it's just that no one knew about them. That was soon about to change.

### Primed to Capitalize

No one can plan a "Pharrell moment" and it certainly isn't included on a marketing calendar. So how did Arby's, a brand with little cultural relevance, seize this moment?

1. The internal structure at Arby's was primed to capitalize on the Pharrell episode. A culture of risk taking and entrepreneurship had started to wash over the brand. As often is the case with such changes, the impetus flowed from the top.

After new leadership was introduced (CEO Paul Brown in April 2013 and CMO Rob Lynch in September 2013), there was a new tone at Arby's. Things began to be done differently. An important change was that tweets no longer had to endure rounds and rounds of review. For the first time, the social media manager could tweet on behalf of the brand within reason, whenever it was deemed appropriate.

2. At the same time there also was an evolution of the brand's expression and personality. It was decided that Arby's would just "be ourselves." Arby's serves delicious sandwiches stacked high with quality proteins. So why not embrace "the meats" and the often witty, sometimes raucous

culture of carnivores? This pivot opened up a smorgasbord of new ways to engage guests.

### Real-Time Marketing is Nothing New

After Arby's' famous Grammys tweet, "Hey @Pharrell can we have our hat back?" an avalanche of coverage poured in across the social and earned media spectrum. But honestly, real-time marketing is nothing new. By this time, the industry was familiar with and trying to replicate "The Oreo Moment" during Super Bowl XLVII. The hat tweet could have easily turned into "The Arby's Moment": buzzed about for a few days and forgotten by the end of the week.

As the team was coming down from the Grammys high, however, it collectively came together to figure out how to extend that moment into a campaign.

So, the million dollar question: How did Arby's manage to capture lightning in a bottle and not let it go? As we've admitted, part of it was luck. The brand was fortunate in that Pharrell was in good spirits over it all, and actually tweeted back at Arby's, "Y'all tryna start a roast beef?"

But the biggest part was nuance and skill. The team knew that if it was going to continue engaging around the Pharrell hat, it had to be authentic in its approach and not come off as overly opportunistic or overbearing.

### An Authentic Engagement Strategy

3. The single most important decision we made was not to associate the hat with a product or sales push. There were no walk-in discounts given to Pharrell look-alikes or "send us your Pharrell hat photos!" Facebook contests to win free curly fries or a Jamocha shake. We knew consumers would see right through that and tune us out immediately.

Arby's took a more authentic and altruistic approach, essentially "giving back" the good fortune bestowed upon the brand by this lucky happenstance, and taking our guests along for the ride.

We bought the hat "back" during Pharrell's Oscar auction through a \$44,000 donation from the Arby's Foundation to Pharrell's From One

Hand to AnOTHER youth empowerment charity. We partnered with the Newseum in Washington, D.C., to make the hat part of a temporary exhibit on the power of social media. We loaned the hat to the Grammys Museum in 2015 to bookend the year-long story. Each activation generated significant, positive media coverage and online sentiment because the brand didn't expressly use the hat to drive sales. Instead, we communicated based on core values between the celebrity and the brand, and we didn't take ourselves—and our good fortune—too seriously.

### Learning from the Past

What did this moment-turned-campaign do for Arby's? It earned us the right to play in the pop-culture space and gave the brand confidence to be itself. That's exactly what we did.

Since the Pharrell moment, we've introduced the We Have the Meats advertising campaign and several consumer activations that have further solidified the Arby's brand voice, including an Apology to Pepsi, a 13-hour commercial to tout our 13-hour smoking of meats (the commercial, which makes the yule log seem exciting, features 13 hours of footage of a brisket sitting in a smoker). And for those who missed it or wanted to re-live this 13-hour "extravaganza," we offered a commercial commemorative DVD set.

The 2015 launch of Brown Sugar Bacon epitomized what Pharrell taught us: following the brand voice and leading our marketing and communications with authentic, audience-centric ideas. The result: the Vegetarian Support program, complete with a toll-free hotline and soothing messages and advice for vegetarians. This was a risky play, but again we succeeded by trusting our core instincts on how to engage meat lovers, even if it means having some good-natured fun at the expense of our anti-audience (non-meat lovers).

### Coming Full Circle

We believe Arby's owned the biggest pop-culture moment of 2014 with Pharrell, and frankly, no one expected that kind of opportunity to present itself again, let alone the following year. But it did, thanks to our best "frenemy" Jon Stewart.

If you used to watch The Daily Show with Stewart, you might be very familiar his "beef" with Arby's. He made fun of the brand, relentlessly, and some of the jokes weren't the nicest (some were quite disgusting, actually).

But, instead of complaining or sending cease-and-desist letters after some of Stewart's comments, the team decided not to freak out; we knew that all was going to be OK and that eventually, this "ribbing" actually could present an opportunity for the brand.

We leveraged lessons learned from Pharrell: 1) Know your audience and how it will engage with you; 2) Make sure to stick to your brand voice and style, but give yourself permission to be fluid enough to adapt to the conversation in real time; and 3) Don't look too defensive or opportunistic.

So, Arby's played nice. Stewart's team received lunch from when he announced his retirement. We also sent out a tweet offering him a job. During Stewart's second-to-last show as host, Arby's ran two commercials—including one that thanked him for being a "friend"—borrowing the theme song from The Golden Girls. Many considered the handling of the Jon Stewart situation smart marketing and how a brand should act in the face of adversity. For us, it was just a real response in our authentic brand voice.

### Brand Results

Arby's has experienced same-store sales growth for 21 consecutive quarters. The brand has a lot of momentum and shows no signs of slowing; while PR can't take all the credit, one has to agree we had a meaningful part in the brand's success and rise to pop-culture prominence.



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# How to Use Social and Traditional Media to Promote Your White Paper

By Ned Barnett

Using white papers as promotion tools is all about using someone else's rigorous academic, medical or scientific research to help make a case for your client's technology-based products or services.

Creating a white paper is the first essential step. On its own, though, a white paper will do little to help promote a brand, its product or service. The white paper must exist where people will find it; its existence has to be made public before media or other potential targets will uncover it.

There are several steps involved: Publish the white paper; promote it on social media; promote it with the news media; and directly promote it.

**Publishing:** While the white papers referenced in Part One lived on the client's website, they were able to do that because the named author—an adjunct professor and published author—added credibility and gave the appearance of a third-party source. In other cases, it may make more sense to publish the white paper on a stand-alone website or blog-site, with links back to the brand's website.

I've seen both used with significant success. Generally, the choice of publishing format was based on the brand's needs and status in the marketplace. Some prefer a white paper that appears totally divorced from the brand; others prefer credit for white papers.

## Promoting the White Paper

**Initial Promotion:** Two approaches work. It's best when both are used, complementing one another. These involve promotion on social media, and via the news media.

**Social Media Promotion:** There are several approaches to promoting a white paper on social media.

- Optimize the white paper's SEO value, especially if it's posted to a WordPress -driven website or a free-standing blog site such as Blogger.
- Directly promote the link to the white paper on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other social networks as well as on the brand's social pages. This involves a sizzle pitch and a link.
- Indirectly promote it by writing and publishing blogs based on (and linked back to) the white paper. This has the benefit of explaining the conclusions in a more conversational fashion and at shorter length. A good white paper can provide information that can be transformed into three to ten blogs, each with a different focus but all related.
- Indirectly promote the white paper by recording and posting vlogs based on (and linked back to) the white paper. This enhances access among those who prefer to watch and listen, rather than read. Again, three to ten vlogs can result.

**News Media Promotion:** When reaching out to the news media, once again, there are two approaches that work, and again, these work best when both are used, complementing one another. First, send out a press advisory with an attached press release to your targeted media list. I find two paragraphs of sizzle above the sig-file, with the full press release included below the sig-file, generates the best results.

Then, publish that press release via one of the news media distribution services. There are

dozens of such services. In each case, you're balancing cost vs. reach and impact; all of the strong ones have networks of dozens to hundreds of news aggregator websites that contractually publish all the press releases they're provided by the distribution service. In addition, some focus on publicly-traded companies—ideal for white papers that are targeting potential investors. Other distribution services focus on topically or geographically related distributions. Choose the distribution service that best works with your brand's market space and message.

**Direct Promotion:** This is for brands with strong email contact lists, targeting their own clients and prospects, as well as decision makers and decision influencers. Such direct promotion can be used to push the white paper link, as well as to push links to each of the blogs and video blogs. This kind of outreach also can distribute links to favorable press coverage about, or based on, the white paper.

**Follow-On Promotion:** All of the social media and direct-promotion approaches noted above should be used to promote media and social-media coverage that leads back to the white paper. If, for instance, the white paper is covered in a trade publication, or cited in a well-read blog, this fact should be aggressively promoted on social media.

Going a step further, if the white paper is picked up by a major mainstream media outlet, this often is worth additional press outreach. For example, when a start-up website landed favorable coverage in Newsweek —being named as one of the top five healthcare sites on the Internet (and the only one of the five focusing on natural and alternative healthcare)—a press release announcing this led to dozens of favorable articles published, each citing the Newsweek recognition.

**Conclusion:** To take your white paper to the next level, or the next several levels, maximize social media promotion, direct promotion and news media promotion efforts. The goal is to maximize the opportunity for prospects, or others for whom this information is going to be positively influential, to find the white paper, and to do so in a favorable context.

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