PRNews Social * Marketing * PR

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SOCIAL MEDIA

How Brands Can Find the Storytelling Sweet Spot With Their Podcasts and Reach New Audiences

Last week it was difficult not to see media stories about Donald Trump Jr. and the PR man, Rob Goldstone, who apparently arranged a meeting for Donald Trump Jr. with a lawyer allegedly linked to the Kremlin.

Yet at least one story excluded mention of that incident. An item in the Wall St Journal reported how "podcast nuts" find time to listen to multiple podcasts: They speed-listen using apps that accelerate podcasts. Some apps move things along at three times normal speed. Some people claim their retention increases at higher speeds.

Podcasts aren't only for nuts, though. 40% of Americans 12 and older have listened to one, a new Edison Research report says. And there's growth: 112 million Americans have listened, up 11% from 2016. Brands are finding podcasts attractive vehicles for raising awareness and engagement. It's little wonder podcasts are becoming yet another item in

Continued on page 3

IMAGE PATROL

BY KATIE PAINE. CEO. PAINE PUBLISHING

How USA Gymnastics Excelled at Handling a Harsh Investigative Report

The most surprising part of the report about sexual abuse and USA Gymnastics wasn't that the scandal was more widespread than initially expected. Or that the so-called Daniels report failed to dive deeply into specific cases, including sexual assault claims against Larry Nassar, the women's team physician, and civil litigation against USA Gymnastics in California and Michigan.

The surprise was contained in the statement accompanying the report of USA board chairman Paul Parilla: "Success in competition is important, but not at the expense of an athlete's health and safety."

While USA Gymnastics was showered in gold medals dur-

ing the Olympics of 2012 and 2016, undercurrents about sexual impropriety surrounding the sport were barely perceptible.

The issue arose somewhat when Nassar was forced to resign in 2015 from USA owing to what the organization called "athlete concerns." He had been its team doctor for two decades.

But the story didn't make headlines until the summer of 2016, when the Indianapolis Star reported about investigations into 100 instances of sexual misconduct. That's when federal agents seized Nassar's computers. He pleaded guilty



Continued on page 4



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SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Kardashians Lead Beauty Influencers in June, Carlifestyle Tops Autos

The definition of "influencer" is far from precise. Still, they have become part of communications and marketing. We asked data partner **Shareablee** to track those with the most consumer engagement in June. Consumer engagement, or actions, is defined here as the sum of reactions, likes, comments, shares and retweets. Shareability is the sum of shares and retweets.

In Automotive you'll see two kinds of influencers. Carlifestyle, BlackList and CarsWithout-Limits are sites where enthusiasts view photos of top-notch autos. Italy's Valentino Rossi is a

top motorcycle racer; Brit **Lewis Hamilton** races in **Formula One**. Carlifestyle's top post was an **Instagram** photo of a red Audi RS5 (86K likes). Engagement with Automotive was down 2.4% in June vs May, says Shareablee's **Ron Lee**.

The Beauty category's top five all are people, with the **Kardashian** clan holding the first three spots. **Huda Katan** is a beauty blogger, while **Shay Mitchell** is an actor. **Kylie Jenner**'s top post in June (see page 1) was an Instagram shot of her sitting on a **Ferrari** (3.4M likes). Engagement with Beauty was down 9% vs May.



How to Find the Sweet Spot for Your Podcast

Podcasting Takes Off

67 million Americans listen to podcasts monthly.

42 million Americans listen to podcasts weekly.

A larger percentage of 25-54 year olds listen to podcasts monthly than any other age group.

85%: Percent of listeners who hear all or most of a podcast.

Source: Edison Research, 2017

brand communicators' tool kits. We talked to Jessica Cavalero, senior account executive, **Prudential Financial**, and Monica Norton, senior director, content marketing, **Zendesk**, for tips about podcast best practices.



Jessica Cavalero
Senior Account
Executive
Prudential
Financial

You Can't Force People to Listen: One of the first things Cavalero and Norton emphasize is that a podcast should be about your brand without mentioning your brand. Huh? Brands make a mistake when they shoehorn their CEO and other thought leaders into a podcast. "Nobody will make an appointment [or subscribe] to listen [to a podcast about] your sales pitch," says Norton of Zendesk, which makes customerservice software. The best practice is for brands to take a "light touch...with pod-

casts you're a storyteller, not a salesperson," she adds. A podcast isn't about your brand, it's about the audience. Podcasts that provide value and entertain will gain subscribers, Norton says. "The lighter the brand touch, the greater the brand impact." That's the sweet spot for brand podcasts.

Prudential's podcast series, *Everyday Bravery*, looks at examples of courage, even though its business is in insurance and investments. It feels bravery is a Prudential brand value. It also underlies a person's choices when he or she makes insurance and financial decisions, Cavalero says. Playing in this emotional space, but not making a sales pitch, ultimately will benefit Prudential by humanizing the brand and making it more relatable, she adds. Since Zendesk's software is in the customer relationship space, it decided to produce a podcast series about certain types of relationships, Norton says.



Monica Norton Senior Director of Content Marketing Zendesk

Topic Ideas, Zoom Out: How does a brand move outside its sales pitch to find the right podcast topic? Norton recommends a three-step method called Zooming Out. Answering three questions helped Zendesk settle on relationships as its podcast topic. Question 1: What does your brand do? 2: What is your brand's broader category? 3: What high-level topic has your brand earned the right to discuss? After that, do a gut check, she recommends. Will your customers be confused if they hear a podcast

about the topic you've chosen? Another point about avoiding using your sales pitch as your podcast topic, Norton says, is the topic likely will appeal to a larger universe than just your customers.

Do Your Homework: Similar to nearly every communications endeavor, Norton and Cavalero recommend conducting extensive research about your audience prior to launching a podcast. Social listening or surveys will work, they say. Besides asking about topics that interest them, find out how long their commute is (many subscribers listen to podcasts on the way to/from work); what other sources of media they consume and in what formats. A tip: Include your employees in the research, as they likely will be part of your audience. When Prudential used social to gauge the potential of bravery as a podcast topic, it received many stories about the subject. It has used some for the podcast, Cavalero says. ■

Next Time: Resources, marketing and measurement.

CONTACT: Jessica.Cavalero@prudential.com @monicalnorton

Takeaways

- 1. Nobody is forced to listen to your podcast. Your job is to make people want to listen.
- 2. Podcasts that offer value and entertain audiences gain subscribers. Tell stories don't make sales pitches.
- 3. Zoom out to find a topic for your podcast.



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Questions? Contact Mary-Lou French at mfrench@accessintel.com.

The Hazards of Taking on Controversial Clients

last week to three federal child pornography charges. Nassar faces a prison sentence of 22-27 years.

Now back to late last month, when USA chairman Parilla's statement accompanying the Daniels report was issued.

The statement was crafted to reassure hundreds of thousands of parents, the report's key audience. Parilla's key message was that the ends do not justify the means, no matter what Machiavelli preached.

His statement and a letter that followed amounted to an abject apology, complete with 70 recommended changes contained in the report that USA has made or will make. In other words, if you're announcing the results of an investigation into your organization's wrongdoing, these guys did it right.

PR FIRM, HEAL THYSELF

Contrast USA's relatively neat exercise in reputation management with PR firm **Bell Pottinger**'s response to revelations that it used unethical tactics to undermine racial harmony in South Africa.

PR counselors long have argued that ethics are critical and apologies, honesty and transparency are the best cures in a crisis. It's a bit mind-boggling when one of the world's leading PR firms ignores its own advice.

Bell Pottinger bills itself as a leading "internal reputation management agency," but somehow forgot to manage its own rep. It's hard to know whether the root cause was sheer greed or an absence of ethics.

Not a stranger to controversial clients, Bell Pottinger has represented everyone from Oscar Pistorius to the wife of Bashar al-Assad. Still the **Oakbay** company account was sufficiently "smelly," according to Lord Timothy Bell, the firm's founder and former communications director for Margaret Thatcher.

Owing to the foul smell emanating from Oakbay, Lord Bell claims that he urged Bell Pottinger to avoid it. Lord Bell based his advice on knowing that the Gupta brothers, close allies of South African President Jacob Zuma and business partners with Zuma's son, ran Oakbay.

Lord Bell's assessment also was based on the fact that the Guptas and president Zuma were, at the time the Oakbay account was up for bid, embroiled in corruption scandals.

The agency CEO, James Henderson, allgedly disagreed with Lord Bell. Accordingly Bell Pottinger pitched for the business and won the \$170,000/month account.

Lord Bell later left the agency, citing the Oakbay account as a factor.

USA Gymnastics

| Criteria | Grade | Comments | Advice |
|---------------------------------|-------|---|--|
| Extent of coverage | A | The goal for the announcement of a report on an investigation should be that as many people see the response as saw the initial allegations. Given the nature of the report and the fact that there are 174,000 members of USA Gymnastics, it made all the usual outlets. Mission accomplished. | The only way to change a bad impression of your brand is to make sure there is just as much opportunity to see your response as there was to see the initial accusations. Frame announcements with that goal in mind. |
| Effectiveness of spokespeople | A | Paul Parilla, the USA Gymnastics board chair, provided the perfect quote—a statement that was just surprising enough to be a sound bite, and abject enough to sound authentic. | In the wake of a crisis, the key to a spokesperson's effectiveness is his or her ability to announce changes and reforms, actions that the organization is taking to rectify whatever it was that initiated the crisis in the first place. |
| Communication of key messages | А- | Parilla's quote was buried in most stories, generally in the last paragraph or two. But the letter that followed helped get out the message. | If you want to get your message out, make sure it comes in many forms: letters on your Facebook page, links in a tweet, as well as statements to CNN. |
| Management of negative messages | В | There was no getting around the cause of the investigation and the fact that USA Gymnastics still faces lawsuits over the issue, which was repeated in much of the coverage. That Larry Nassar, the doctor accused of committing many of the sexual crimes, received a plea deal undermined some of the good messaging. | If there are legal actions going on around your crisis, they will invariably eclipse whatever carefully crafted messages you are trying to get out. You can't do much about the timing, just be prepared. |
| Impact on athletes and sponsors | В | It's too soon to tell whether the report and subsequent changes will defuse the crisis and be enough to allay fears of gymnasts' parents and sponsors. The letter to the community should help. | After the dust of a crisis settles, the investigations are completed and reports are released, it's critical to survey key stakeholders to gauge the lasting damage. Repairing a reputation takes time and you need data to get it right. |
| Overall score | A - | Given the nature of the scandal, the depth and breadth of the abuse that the report detailed and level of interest in the sport, USA Gymnastics performed as well as can be expected. | How you handle the aftermath of a crisis has as much if not more impact on the lasting ramifications for your brand as did the initial event. |

It was the execution of the assignment that caused much of the furor. In its quest to enhance the reputation of the Guptas, and discredit foes of President Zuma, the tactics allegedly included creating fictitious social media accounts to spread rumors about Gupta enemies, generating fake news stories about the opposition and doctoring Wikipedia entries.

Sleazy strategies were probably to be expected given that the objectives included increasing racial discord and discrediting foes of the Guptas and opponents of Zuma's agenda. But of course, someone got hold of the emails full of all the slimy details, and the rest is crisis history.

The firm took all the usual moves: blaming the client ("We were misled"), firing staff, starting an investigation and issuing an apology. It's not working well.

The opposition has called on the **Public Relations and Communications Association** of the United Kingdom to investigate, and there is no sign of the furor dying down. ■

CONTACT: kdpaine@painepublishing.com

Bell Pottinger

| Criteria | Grade | Comments | Advice |
|--------------------------------------|-------|--|---|
| Extent of coverage | D | If Bell Pottinger is measuring its PR, there will be a big spike around this issue, especially given ongoing corruption investigations. That the campaign happened in South Africa meant that it wasn't front-page news globally. It certainly made headlines in the U.K. and Canada, and every PR journal is debating it. | If you take on a controversial client, expect some of that controversy to land in your lap and your brand to land on the front page. |
| Effectiveness of spokespeople | F | The people of South Africa and PR pros whacked the apology of Bell Pottinger CEO Henderson. Beginning a tit-for-tat spat with Lord Bell didn't help. | There is a well-studied art to making an apology. Be sure your CEO has studied it and knows when to talk and when to keep his or her mouth shut. |
| Communication of key messages | D | If the key message was that Bell Pottinger is one of the richest and most powerful international PR firms, that came across loud and clear in the first paragraph of most of the coverage. It was generally followed by the words "offensive" and "unethical." | Your key messages need to be appropriate to the crisis at hand. When you have launched a campaign designed to damage the social fabric of a society, something more than mere words is needed to get across your message. |
| Management of negative messages | F | When an organization that claims to manage reputations gets called "unethical" in most of the coverage about it, chances are pretty good that it has undermined its own reputation. | The messages you DON'T want to see in print will invariably end up in the headlines if you don't take decisive action to ameliorate the crisis. Words are seldom enough. |
| Impact on customers | C | One can't imagine being a Bell Pottinger client walking through a phalanx of protestors to get to a meeting in its London office. Sadly, there are still many unethical organizations that will hire it to create fake news. With luck, more ethical clients will walk away and they'll learn a lesson. | When your business depends on people trusting you, make sure you consider the impact your decisions have on that trust before you decide that the ends justify the means. |
| Impact on employees and future hires | F | Recruitment may become tough for the firm. Demonstrations outside its offices won't help. Today's top talent has too many opportunities to waste time working for a company that might damage their reputations. | Most companies today are working hard to attract and keep the best and brightest. You might want to make sure they are a target audience when you are making your next decision about ethics. |
| Overall score | F | It's unclear whether the client's lack of ethics influenced Bell Pottinger's Machiavellian actions. The result was the same: a campaign to be ashamed of. | In an era of Wikileaks, cell phone videos and an endless selection of opponents, don't think for an instant that you can keep your dirty tricks away from prying eyes. |

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How The CFA Institute Used Social Media to Humanize its Brand

While many brands and individuals are well versed at integrating social media into their organizations and strategic communications plans, there is still plenty of confusion.

Among the things I love about social media is the opportunity it provides for brands to converse with consumers and its ability to help communicators reach new audiences.

Your audience will tell you what it likes, either explicitly or through back-end analytics. Social media provides the perfect forum to engage with influencers on various platforms and develop and engage an interactive audience. If you're like me, you've found that some members of your community may be easier to reach on social media than in person.

GETTING VISUAL

With social media success comes the integration of a visual social media-marketing plan. It's not a surprise that visual social platforms such as **Instagram** are on fire with brands and consumers. The human brain processes images 60,000 times faster than text, according to **3M Corporation**; and 90% of information transmitted to the brain is visually based, says **Zabisco**.

Visual social marketing is the new standard for driving a deeper engagement within social media. Marketers who are embracing visual content are seeing huge returns in terms of more readers, leads and customers. The statistics below should help make the case for championing visual content into your marketing mix.

- ▶ 40% of people will respond better to visual information than plain text. (Source: Zabisco)
- ▶ 59% of Executives would rather watch video than read text (Source: Forbes)
- Photos and images on Facebook generate 53% more 'likes' than the average post. (Source: HubSpot)
- Posts with Visuals Receive 94% More Page Visits and Engagement Than Those Without (Source: Wishpond)
- More than 300 hours of videos are uploaded each minute on YouTube.com. (Source: YouTube)

CASE STUDY 1

Below I share several small cases from the **CFA Institute** where we identified clear campaign objectives and were able to measure success and share it internally, helping us incorporate visual storytelling into our marketing mix.

CFA Institute is a global association of investment professionals that sets standards for professional excellence through credentialing exams. The organization also champions ethical behavior in investment markets. CFA Institute has more than 142K members in 159 countries and territories.

Several years back, CFA Institute's social media strategy focused on driving engagement by leveraging visual images into its social media marketing mix.

It incorporated the rich history of the CFA Institute from its archive, mixing visual images into social media posts. We saw

very quickly a boost in the response across social media platforms; engagement (likes, comments and shares) rose markedly.

To boost awareness of CFA's June exam, we created a post with this throwback image. The image below shows graders in action from the mid-1960s grading credential exams at CFA headquarters in Virginia. It resulted in an instant boost in engagement over the normal metric for CFA posts. We now have incorporated visual images into our exam communications plans to help drive a deeper engagement with our candidates and members.



Making The Grade: The CFA Institute used this archival image of test graders from the 1960s to have fun and generate buzz for an exam it was offering. Source: The CFA Institute

CASE STUDY 2

CFA Institute wanted to take its visual social media marketing strategy to the next level and evoke emotions in its community through inspirational quotes.

Using Pablo by **Buffer** CFA quickly developed branded images it could use across its social media platforms. It created a one-month campaign and give it a unique hashtag and ran a different Quote of the Day each day (see photo on page 7).

The results were impressive. Within our **Twitter** account we generated 419K impressions, gained 8,200+ total engagements, gained 1,200+ retweets and saw more than 900 favorites of our posts.



Words Worth: The CFA Institute ran Quote of the Day messages to inspire its community and raise awareness of its brand. Source: The CFA Institute

With the success of the pilot CFA now has incorporated motivational quotes into the social media strategy and matured the design of the posts working with an internal team to ensure it's on brand and effective for our audience.

CASE STUDY 3

The third case study aimed to test the use of video in CFA Institute's social media strategy with some paid budget allocation.

Posts with video attract three times as many inbound links as plain-text posts, says **NewsCred**. Social video generates 1200% more shares than text and images combined, according to **ResponsiveInboundMarketing**.

CFA Institute didn't want to miss an opportunity to be ahead of the curve on video. We decided to deploy on **Twitter.** An example of one of the videos is above, right. It's a message from CFA Institute president/CEO Paul Smith congratulating candidates who took one of our tests.

CFA Institute tested 19 tweets within a paid campaign and had a hefty return, seeing a cost-per-view of \$.02 and a view rate increase of 20-30%, depending on content.

As a result, the social team began working with the video team to cut and produce shorter videos that could be incorporated into the Institute's paid strategy to help elevate content within our campaigns.

CFA Institute found its sweet spot for video at 20-30 seconds and continued to see impressive engagement rates far above Twitter's benchmarks with very low cost per view.

A TWO-WAY CONVERSATION

Social media has revolutionized the way companies are able to communicate with their customers, making room for a two-way conversation instead of a one-way monologue.



Face Time: A video message on Twitter from The CFA Institute's president/ CEO Paul Smith to recent test takers adds a human touch to the brand. Source: The CFA Institute

And hopefully you can take away from the mini-case studies above that one of the ways the successful companies are taking advantage of social media is through visual storytelling. When done correctly it has the ability to drive increased engagement, increase interactions and drive a deeper connection between your brand and customers.

Bridging the gap between social media and visual story-telling can have a serious impact, and in closing, I'll leave you with my three simple rules to help you stand out on social media channels.

Note: To hear more from Marissa Pick register for *PR News'* Facebook Boot Camp, July 20, 2017, in New York City. For information: http://bit.ly/2tXUKjU

CONTACT: marissa.pick@cfainstitute.org

Takeaways

- 1) Be Interesting: It's not going to work otherwise. Tell a story through your social media channels and personal and professional brand.
- 2) Be Interested: Look around and find others who are sharing things you like, and then interact with them. Remember, engagement is key for long-term social media success.
- 3) Be Experimental: Have fun within reason and try things. There is little cause for conservatism. You may encounter failures along the way. Use them to learn and help you build a success story
- Engage: Respond to comments from your audience promptly and with a human voice. Social media is a conversation not a monologue.



News Bits: Attention marketers. the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is pushing back against robocalls, the leading source of consumer complaints

the commission, the Wall St Journal reports. The FCC July 13 opened a proceeding expected to lead to a system where telecommunications carriers will be able to authenticate a call's origin before completing it. That's intended to halt spoofing, the practice where a robocall generates a fake phone number so it appears the call is coming from a local number, which increases chances that the call will be answered. More than 2 billion robocalls are made monthly in the U.S., says YouMail. -The stench from Wells Fargo's bogus credit card scandal lingers. During a Senate Banking Committee hearing July 13. Federal Reserve chair Janet Yellen said behavior that allowed more than 2 million bogus credit card accounts to be established "was egregious and unacceptable." While Yellen said the Fed had taken "actions" and continues to investigate Wells Fargo, she provided no details. During the hearing the bank's biggest critic, Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), urged Yellen to remove all 12 Wells Fargo board members in place when the scandal unfurled. Yellen reserved the right to do so "if it proves appropriate." In a statement, the bank said it's taken "many actions in response" to its previously "unacceptable sales practices." Wells Fargo shares are up less than 1% this year, "vastly underperforming" stocks of its peers, CNBC says. - A Washington state high school student spotted a Washington Post photo that when enlarged revealed the phone number of press-averse Defense Secretary James Mattis. The student, Teddy Fischer, called the SecDef seeking an interview for his school newspaper. Mattis said ves. The result was a wide-ranging 45-minute dialogue. PR lesson 1: You : have to ask. PR lesson 2: Tailor vour approach. Fischer, his journalism classmates and a teacher spent two weeks shaping questions for Mattis that would appeal to fellow students. - Savvy PR pros and journalists know to proofread everything. That's getting tougher with heavier workloads and 24/7 news cycles, even at the Wall St Journal. As part of its WSJ2020 reorg, WSJ will "revamp the editing process to publish stories more quickly, by reducing the number of hands a story passes through" and the number of stories published, it says. APCO Worldwide reaffirmed its commitment to independence by acquiring new capital through buyouts of minority shareholders with the support of Citibank and Monroe Capital, founder/ exec chair Margery Kraus said July 12. The arrangement also provides potential for additional capital, which APCO can use for growth, acquisition and innovation, it added.



PR in Plane Sight: Another day. another airline PR flub. Until recently, Spanish the airline Iberia was requiring women who applied for cabin-crew

jobs to submit to a pregnancy test. Once the practice was discovered, lberia accepted its punishment: a fine of \$28,000, El Pais reports. The airline also apologized, a good PR move. Unfortunately, its apology attempted to justify the pregnancy tests. The apology noted the airline recently had hired five pregnant women, so, it claimed, Iberia had not discriminated against pregnant applicants. The apology also said Iberia was merely trying to shield pregnant candidates from "facing any risks." Pregnancy tests for job applicants are standard in Spain, the airline added. Not so, Spain's minister of health says. Is it a surprise social media whacked Iberia hard for all this? - Pardon us for piling on the airlines, but these are teachable moments. A pair of wheelchair-bound passengers traveling separately was denied access to a July 8 flight bound for Singapore from Australia. The airline, Scoot of Singapore, a budget-priced carrier, refused carriage because the two lacked ablebodied caregivers to accompany them. Both passengers had phoned the airline earlier and were told they could board the flight unaccompanied. (OK, that's an integration issue—get ground operations to coordinate with the customer service center.) There's more: Besides being shunted aside, the two were livid since Scoot ground personnel refused to address them. (Seems like a bad PR move there.) Instead, airport personnel relayed Scoot's refusal: Its planes lack aisle chairs, which are used to accommodate wheelchair passengers. Scoot later issued an apology in the correct tone. (Good PR.) Yet it stood by its policy of refusing carriage to an unaccompanied passenger in a wheelchair. (Not-so-good PR.) "As part of Scoot's commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of our guests, we have...policies for guests who require special assistance...we will also be reviewing our process to avoid a recurrence of such incidents," the apology says. Sounds good, except News. com.au reports Australian law prohibits airlines from discriminating against passengers with disabilities.

3. People: Congrats to recent *PR*News interviewee/MillerCoors CCO
Pete Marino (*PRN*, June 26 and July
10) on adding president, Tenth &
Blake, the company's craft and import
unit, to his role. – Dix & Eaton named
Brady Cohen chief digital officer. Previously he led digital customer marketing
at Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. ■





PR News' Big 4 Social Media Conference will teach social media, marketing and communications professionals how to make their messages stand out and build a larger following on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat through the new rules of SEO and influencer marketing. The All-Access Pass includes the Big 4 Social Media Summit and Google for Communicators Boot Camp on day one at the Grand Hyatt San Francisco August 9-10. Experts from Macy's, Google, Taco Bell, TED Conferences, Drive West Communications and more will lead sessions on:

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