PR NEWS

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MEASUREMENT

Measurement's Biggest Obstacle? Getting Budget for Analytics Tools

Pick your measurement maxim: 'What gets measured, gets done,' 'Without measurement, you're just guessing,' or the popular, 'What's not measured cannot be improved.'

While measurement is showing real value in PR and communications, too often it's an afterthought. Sometimes, measurement is avoided deliberately. As **IPR** Measurement Commission chair **Mark Weiner** wrote here last month, "Measurement continues to vex our profession and stunt its potential. This is due largely to communicators who choose not to measure...."

Yet, as C-suite members continue to demand data before they make decisions, PR is hurting itself when it fails to provide it. As Weiner wrote, "In the absence of a robust calculable PR foundation, investments will continue to go to those who can and do provide the necessary data, and PR will continue to struggle."

Measurement need not be complicated. Even conducting a basic survey with your target audience can provide important insights. For example, assume conventional wisdom says your company is great at customer service. Survey your audience. You might find that its members actually think your customer service is rather poor.

Trade shows are excellent opportunities to close a deal, right? Yet in a survey your target audience tells you signing deals is not an important part of its trade show experience. Adjustments need to be made.

With the PRNEWS Measurement Boot Camp coming later this month, we and partner **Intrado Digital Media** surveyed communicators. The survey was fielded in July; nearly 500 PR pros responded.

As Intrado Digital Media president **Ben Chodor** put it, "Since data intelligence is a critical component of PR, we wanted to find out what the industry is measuring, how it's measuring and the way success is defined." In addition, "We were interested to hear the challenges PR pros are facing when it comes to measurement," Chodor added.

Measurement challenges, ROI in particular, led the survey (see chart 1). Prevailing thought is that influencer marketing is one of the most difficult areas to connect with ROI. The survey, though, indicates other things are slightly more difficult. As you see,

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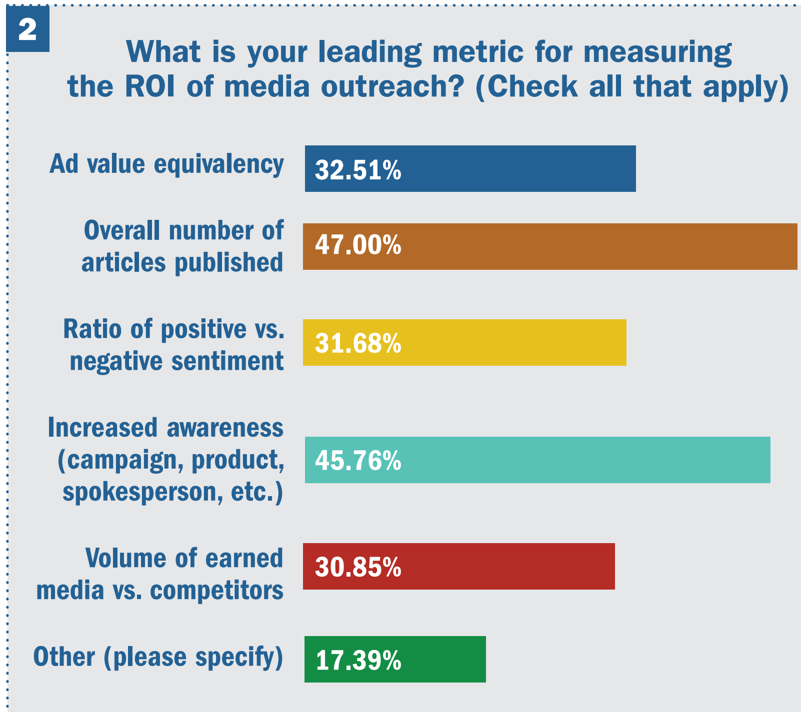
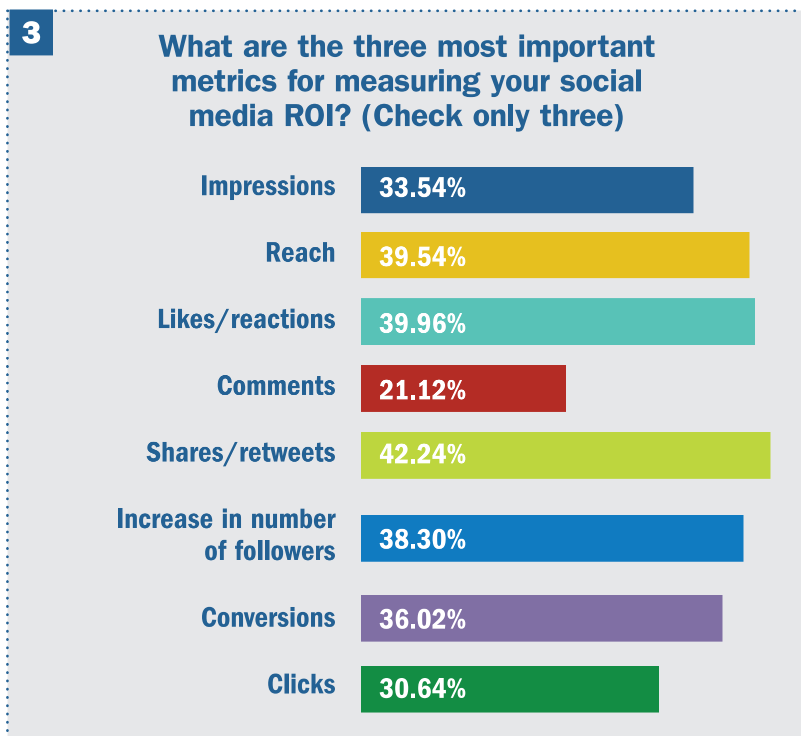
AVEs Still Find Solid Support





"brand awareness" (46 percent) presents the most difficulty, and "influencer marketing" (29 percent) the least, respondents said.

Trailing "brand awareness" was "brand health/reputation" (38 percent), which is another way to say trust. With so many organizations worried about experiencing PR crises, having a reserve of brand health is essential.

Chart 2 is somewhat alarming, though less surprising than chart 1. The alarm, of course, is the 33 percent response for Ad Value Equivalency (AVE), an outmoded metric. It's not surprising that AVEs continue to enjoy strong support in the PR community, though it's regrettable.

Also upsetting is the strong response for "overall number of articles." While there's nothing wrong with counting articles as a starting point, the question on this chart asks for "your leading metric for measuring the ROI of media outreach." The articles counted could be largely negative or devoid of the company's messaging. The next option, "ratio of positive vs. negative sentiment," considers qualitative issues.

Slightly behind the leader is "increased awareness." That's a good KPI; recall that chart 1 showed that brand awareness is a measurement pain point.

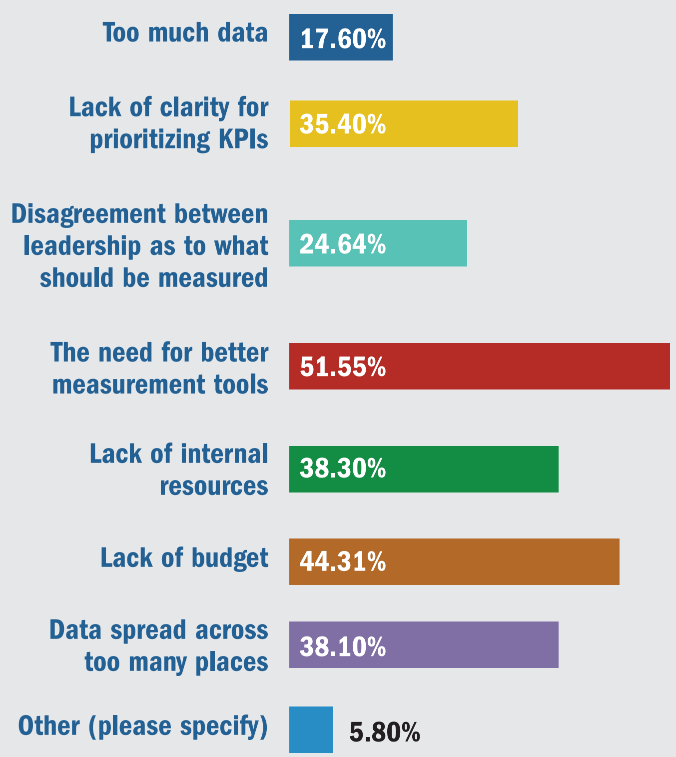
Chart 3, which asks for the top three metrics in measuring social media ROI, is more in line with accepted knowledge. "Shares/retweets" (42 percent) led the pack for ROI on social media, with "likes/reactions" (40 percent) trailing closely. That "impressions" received 34 percent is distressing, of course, as it's typically a starting point and a metric that the C-suite considers unimportant. On the other hand, there was solid response for advanced KPIs such as "conversions" (36 percent) and "increase in the number of followers" (38 percent).

Chart 5 indicates few organizations expect influencers to result in "sales increases" or "conversions" (each at 8 percent). Instead, "social media engagement" seems the top goal (21 percent).

The surprise in chart 5, which seeks to discern the primary metric for determining influencer ROI, is that nearly 40 percent of respondents said, "We don't use influencers."

4

Which factors are hampering your measurement efforts? (Check all that apply)



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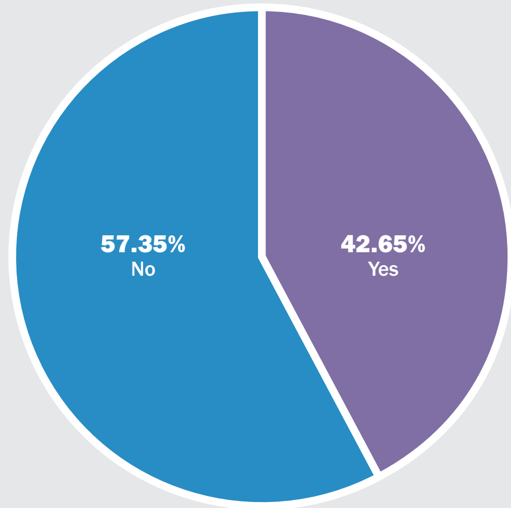
Do you use a communications or tech partner (agency/freelancers/ solutions provider) to assist with the measurement of your PR efforts?



With spending for influencer marketing expected to reach $15 billion by 2022, per **Business Insider Intelligence** estimates, based on **Mediakix** data, we thought more respondents would be deploying influencers.

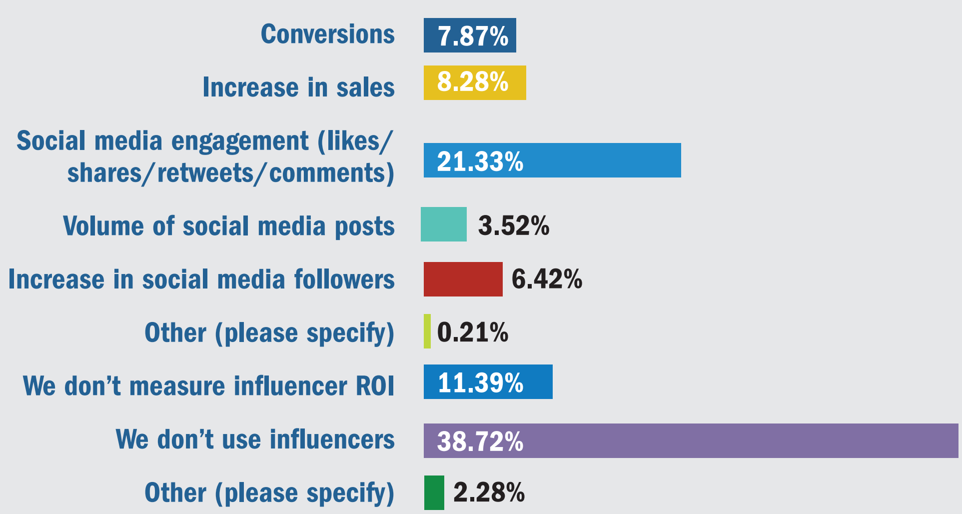
Indeed they might be, though questions surrounding definition intrude. Do the survey respondents see micro-influencers as influencers, for example? "It would be interesting to know more about how respondents are defining influencers," Chodor said. "While not every PR campaign involves a celebrity influencer, micro-influencers continue to gain popularity...and be featured more and more as part of communications strategies."

Readers might recall seeing chart 6 in the September edition of PRNEWS, which shows almost 60 percent of communicators don't pay outside sources to help with measurement. While there's nothing wrong with conducting measurement using in-house staff, the question is whether or not measurement is being taken seriously. Are in-house staffers attending to measurement regularly or does it fall through the cracks sometimes?

The responses in chart 7 indicate companies are forgoing hiring partners to help with measurement for budget reasons. Taken together, it's "too expensive" (38 percent) and we're "unclear about the value" (21 percent) provide a significant majority of budgetary reasons for failing to hire outside help for measurement. On the upside, 25 percent picked,

5

If you use influencers as a part of your PR strategy, which is your primary metric for measuring ROI?



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Ben Chodor
President
Intrado Digital Media

"We already have an internal structure" for measuring.

Chart 4 also was included in the previous edition of PRNEWS. It asks for measurement ailments and budget is represented strongly. A total of 44 percent said "budget" is hampering measurement and 38 percent pointing to a "lack of internal budget."

Several other takeaways from chart 4 include communicators overwhelmed about what to measure. A total of 38 percent said "data is spread across too many places" and 18 percent said there's "too much data." In addition, there's confusion over measurement goals. 35 percent said there was a "lack of clarity for prioritizing KPIs" and 25 percent said there was "disagreement between leadership as to what should be measured."

The largest measurement hurdle, respondents said, was "the need for better measurement tools" (52 percent). That could be true, of course, but it also may be a convenient way to explain away why many communicators choose to avoid measuring. Attention vendors: It also could be a cry for better tools or a plea for more training on existing ones. ■

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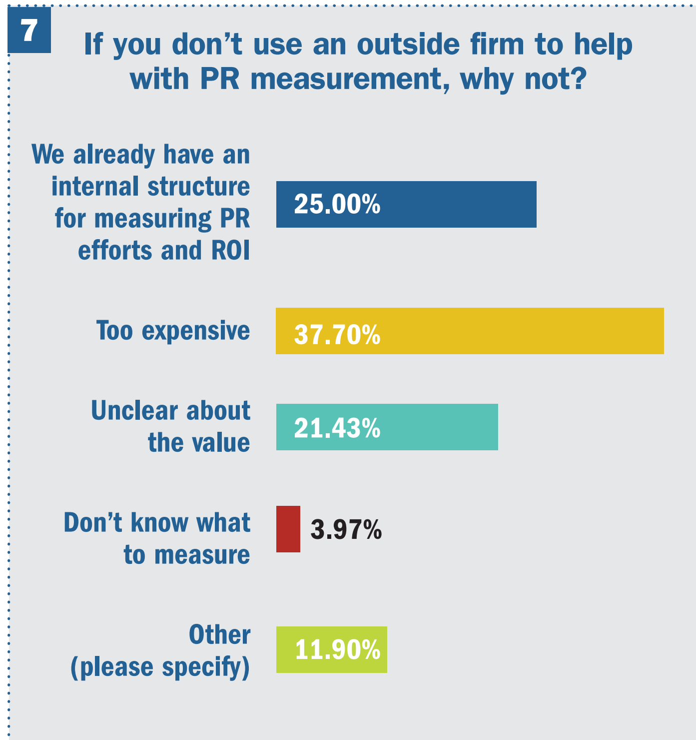
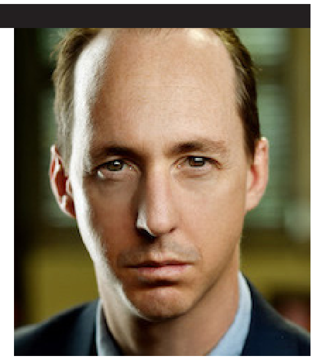


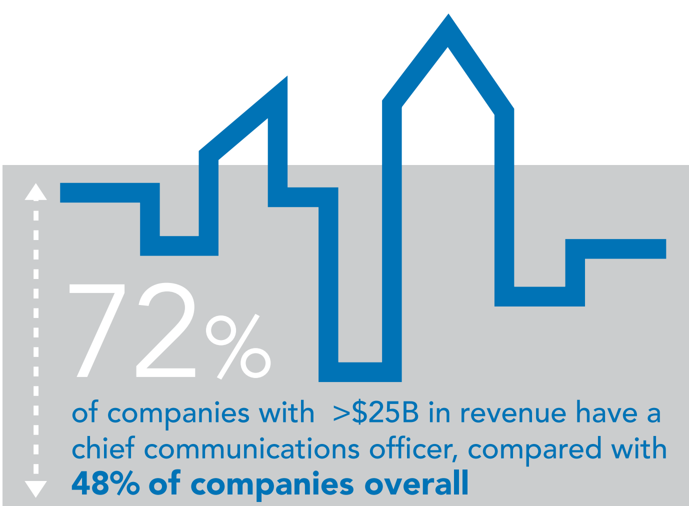
CAREERS

BY ALEX PARKINSON, CO-LEADER, COMMUNICATIONS INSTITUTE, THE CONFERENCE BOARD

PR Pros Need More Skills to Deal With Rising Corporate Reliance on Comms



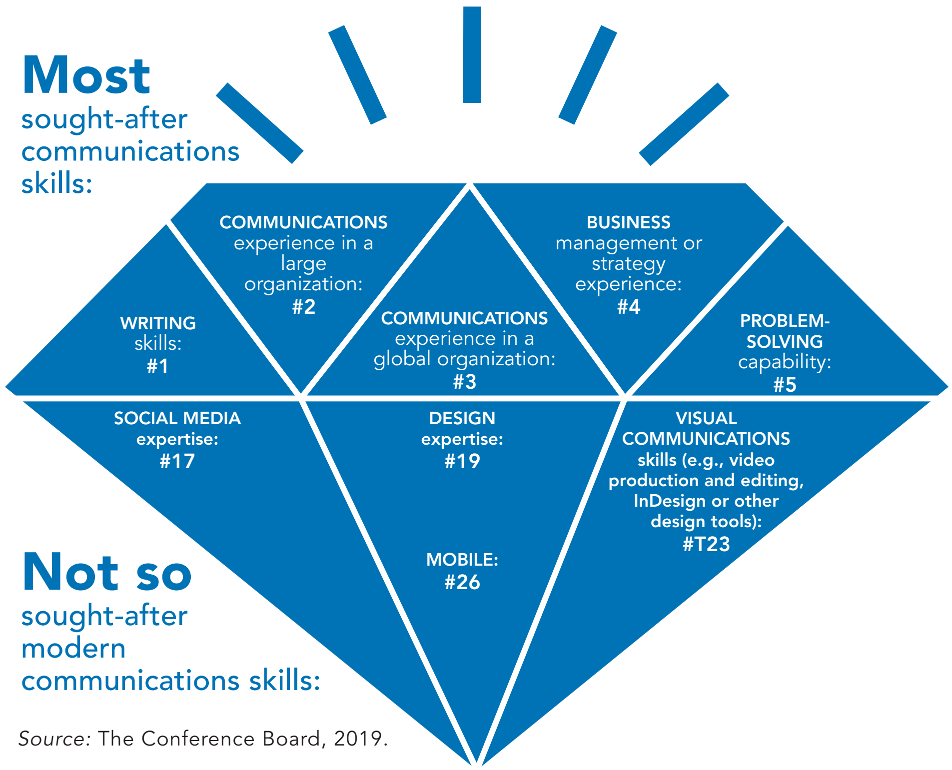
Nearly all (90 percent) employees believe it's important that the organization they work for promote social change, new research shows. Likewise, customers increasingly value personalized experiences and the sense of being treated as more than a number—at the same time they're demanding higher standards for privacy and data security, data from **Salesforce.com** says.



Whether business can meet the rising tide of new expectations remains to be seen. But one thing is certain: Communications will be in the eye of the storm.

Faced with responding to the demands of customers, employees, owners, and society, companies are turning to communicators for strategic advice. In a survey, **The Conference Board** set out to investigate the burgeoning strategic influence of corporate communications and how companies have empowered the function to capitalize on the brave new world of louder, more diverse stakeholder voices. The resulting report, *Corporate Communications Practices: 2019 Edition*, included responses from 149 public and private companies.

What emerged is a picture of sprawling global organizations awakening to the need for communications expertise at the highest levels of strategic decision-making. The very largest companies led the way. Among firms exceeding $25 billion in revenue, nearly three-quarters (72 percent) reported having a chief communications officer (CCO) — a title that ensures permanent representation in the C-suite. Among all 149 responding companies, that proportion falls to fewer than half (48 percent) [see graphic].



Source: The Conference Board, 2019.

At the same time, it found companies of all sizes continue to share blind spots—gaps that communicators will need to span as the bridge between bottom-line corporate performance and expanded stakeholder expectations shortens.

THE FUTURE PR PRO'S TOOLKIT

When identifying communications recruits, it found that large companies prefer candidates with experience at other major global organizations, the company's industry, or high-level business management. Overall, traditional communications talents like writing ability remain the most sought-after among all companies [see graphic].

This focus on building a strategy-oriented communications function could be leaving some communications teams lacking in more specific forward-facing skills. While business knowledge and writing are indispensable, other seemingly critical parts of the modern communicator's toolkit fall conspicuously low on the charts of most sought-after skills. These include expertise in social media, graphic design, visual communications, and mobile platforms.

As corporate communications builds its profile at the upper echelons of business strategy, it can't neglect growing an arsenal of frontline skills to further sharpen the function's cutting edge.

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Figure 3.3b Data collection, **by annual revenue**

How does the company collect data on the above-mentioned measures of performance of the corporate communications department?

	Under $1 billion n=24	$1 billion-9.9 billion n=39	$10 billion-24.9 billion n=21	$25 billion and over n=28
Through social media and website analytics services to assess its performance	83.3%	76.3%	85.7%	64.3%
Internal data collection in collaboration with other arms of the company (e.g., marketing, IT, legal)	58.3	47.4	42.9	50.0
The company outsources the data collection to an outside service provider	33.3	26.3	14.3	35.7
Combination of in-house measurement and outside service providers	41.7	56.4	47.6	42.9
Other	8.3	2.6	0.0	0.0
None of the above. The company does not have a formal process and data collection is left to the discretion of the department head	0.0	0.0	4.8	3.6

Source: The Conference Board, 2019.

BY KIP KNIGHT, OPERATING PARTNER, THOMVEST VENTURES AND FOUNDER/CEO, CMO COACHES

Avoiding Failure: Six Questions to Ask Before You Launch A Product

I love marketing, especially new product marketing. What is it about launching a brand that's so appealing? In a word – immortality. Other than having children, creating and launching a successful brand is a unique opportunity to work on something that will live on long after your professional career is over. If you're a marketer, there's nothing better.

Sadly, the odds of any brand you work on outlasting the time you're a marketer are long. Fewer than 3 percent of the 30,000 consumer products launched in the U.S. each year generate more than $50 million in sales, according to a recent **Harvard Business Review** article. The vast majority (95 percent) of new products fail. Despite these financial disasters, new-product teams rise from the ashes and try again and again to be one of the few new brands that survive and thrive.

Why such a dismal rate of new brand failures? There are a number of reasons, including: the product failed to meet a real consumer need, it was devoid of a meaningful benefit or its price was too high.

PRODUCT SELL THYSELF

The most unforgivable reason, and one that is totally within control, though, is a belief that the product will sell itself. This kind of blind arrogance can be seen first-hand from a number of new brands in Silicon Valley and across the United States. Companies and new-product teams are so certain their new product, app, service, website, etc. is so amazing it is going to sell itself. "Wait till this product launch goes viral – people are going to go crazy to get our new _________. There's going to be a really long waiting list."

Hate to break bad news, but that's very likely not happening. First, it's a long shot your (or any) new brand launch is going to "go viral." And even if it does, it might not be the kind of brand launch you were hoping for – anybody remember **New Coke**?

NO STRATEGY

More to the point, the main culprit with unsuccessful launches often is there's no strategy developed to ensure the product is successfully marketed to a target audience.

Imagine if before a product or service is launched, the launch team had crystal clear alignment and understanding of certain critical questions.

- Who exactly is this product designed for and why it will appeal to them (at a functional and emotional level)?
- What do we want the target audience to do based on the introductory marketing message?
- What's the primary benefit promise to the target audience and why would its members believe it?
- What will be the look and feel of the introductory brand messaging?
- What media choices are going to be made to get out this initial message to the target audience?
- How will the new product's marketing campaign be evaluated (i.e. key metrics)?

The ideas for these questions come from the ABCDE method for creating an effective communication brief, outlined in "Crafting Persuasion" (www.craftingpersuasion.com).

The "acid test" is to separate team members and then ask them these questions individually. It is essential they provide consistent answers to the questions. If you study successful product launches, their team members were able to do this, i.e., answer critical strategic questions confidently before product marketing started.

I offer the following examples:

CROWN MAPLE

Robb Turner, whose daytime job is running an energy hedge fund, had a passion for doing something with the mountainous property he had purchased in upstate New York. Robb's request was simple but daunting: He wanted to create the world's greatest maple syrup brand.

There were a number of key challenges and questions to deal with in creating the brand he envisioned, but eventually Turner and I launched Crown Maple (www.crownmaple.com). The brand has won awards and is about to celebrate its first decade of business.

Crown Maple was marketed as "quite possibly the purest maple syrup on Earth." Initially it had a limited distribution to premium restaurants, bars (it's used as a mixer) and grocery chains. It also promoted itself as a branded ingredient in a number of premium products (such as chocolate).

Crown Maple launched with a clear vision of its target audience. It aimed at foodies who wanted the very best in whatever comestible they loved. The pricing, packaging and marketing were consistent with this objective.

Once Crown Maple established its premium image, the company increased distribution. It also inceased the number and variety of products made under the brand's name.

PLANNING BEFORE LAUNCH

We'll never know if Crown Maple is "the world's greatest maple syrup." Still, it has won accolades from the food world and has a large enough following that one can make the argument that it is among the premier brands in its category.

The planning done before the launch of Crown Maple demonstrated the importance and power of being very clear about whom you are going after and what you want the brand to be before you ship the first bottle. I'm confident it is one of those brands that will be around long after I've turned in my marketing license.

EBAY EXPRESS

The first half-dozen years of the 2000s was a heady time for those working at **eBay**. The company was one of the darlings of the internet. Yet, even then you could sense that the thrill of bidding on an auction item was starting to fade.

The company needed something to keep it growing in line with the explosive expansion of the e-commerce category. **Amazon** was eating ebay's lunch. eBay made the decision it needed to diversify from the auction format and start offering fixed price listings.

An incredible amount of work went into developing the fixed price listing platform that become **eBay Express**. There was extensive in-depth research with buyers and sellers as well as eBay's development partners. This was a going to be a separate site from eBay.com and would be a real bonus for sellers since their listings would appear on both sites (eBay.com and eBayExpress.com) without additional fees. In April 2006, the site was finally ready to go live.

WHAT'S IN A NAME? PLENTY

Despite the work that went into the launch of this brand, it failed. One issue stemmed from the name. Since eBay was used in the brand name, it ended up confusing users (who loved auctions) and didn't attract many new customers, who preferred fixed-price listings.

eBay Express was counting on the awareness and popularity of the eBay brand to get it the trial it needed, so there wasn't nearly enough resources devoted to marketing.

Another issue was that consumer research focused too much on existing buyers and sellers and not nearly enough on online buyers. These were the people who were flocking to Amazon and raving about something called **Amazon Prime**, which launched in 2005.

By early 2008, the painful decision was made to shut eBay Express. Many of its features reside on eBay.com, where buyers can select between a variety of formats (such as fixed price or auction, new or used, etc.). Perhaps if eBay Express had launched as a new brand, instead of a spin-off from eBay, it would have had more success.

To note, in 2005 eBay launched a site in Canada called **Kijiji** (www.kijiji.ca) that was an online classified business. It is still doing well today.

STRATEGY BEFORE EXECUTION

A favorite business mantra is "Strategy Before Execution." Launching a business that features a new product or service is challenging enough under the best circumstances. The evidence is the sobering rate of new product failures. Creating a brand is not for the faint of heart (or for a lot of VCs).

Give yourself and your team a competitive advantage by taking the time to do some in-depth critical strategic thinking about how you want to market your new product or service before you launch it. Doing that level of strategic planning and work can dramatically increase your odds of success. ■

Editor's Note: The ideas in this article are adapted from "Crafting Persuasion," co-authored with Ed Tazzia and Bob Pearson.

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KEEPING PACE WITH SOCIAL MEDIA'S BOOM

Social media has revolutionized organizations' ability to engage with all manner of stakeholders. The benefits are obvious in C-suites and boardrooms, and both public and private companies are ramping up the use of social media data to measure the performance of their communications function.

The problem? Too many are still relying on the easy-to-reach vanity metrics that social media platforms make readily available.

BANE OF CONTEST ENTRIES: VANITY METRICS

Conversations with executives in The Conference Board's Councils — as well as submissions to The Conference Board's annual Excellence in Marketing & Communications Awards — confirm the need for more sophisticated data analytics to truly demonstrate and track social media's strategic contribution.

As firms such as **Hootsuite** and others recommend, companies need to begin taking advantage of deeper and more rigorous data around awareness, engagement, conversion, and customer demographics.

RESPONSIBILITY TO STAY AHEAD OF THE CURVE

The work of corporate communications unfolds faster than ever. Often, companies have mere minutes to react to events. This pace will only accelerate as technologies like AI continue to come online and permeate the culture.

Communications teams need to be proactive in anticipating the additional qualifications all but certain to arise in the years ahead.

One obvious area is legal expertise, as governments around the world move to regulate how companies collect and use personal data.

Indeed, corporate communications can't rest on the laurels of its newfound influence. The function needs to be multifaceted, adaptable, and collaborative to help companies manage heightened stakeholder expectations and capitalize on the opportunities of the modern business world. ■

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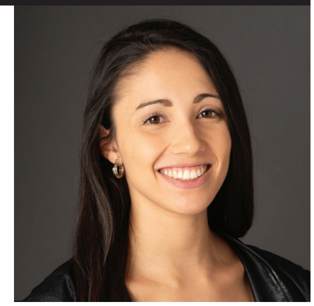
BY DOMINQUE SCOTT, APCO WORLDWIDE



How Senior Executives Can Establish Thought Leadership on Social Media

Executives frequently ask, "How can I strengthen my thought leadership through social channels?" Communicators often receive this question from C-suite executives looking to establish a social presence from scratch or business leaders seeking to raise a global profile via establishing authority and credibility through existing social channels.

Before beginning to help these executives, we must ensure they understand what "thought leadership" means. Executive thought leadership is when C-suite members use their voices, visibility, stature and decisions to enact change inside the companies they manage, within the industries they lead and across society and culture at-large.

To start, encourage executives to make a list of ways they have influenced business operations, decisions, and large-scale outcomes within their companies. From there begin story mining for ways to promote these successes through thought leadership articles, engagements and social posts.

KEY FACTORS

An approach to establishing thought leadership through social channels should have roots in four key factors:

- **360-Degrees:** It's important to be clear that social media is not the only path to success. Social media is only one part of a thought leadership strategy. On the other hand, social is a useful tool to leverage alternative modes of content in a regular posting cadence. Content remains king on social platforms and it's important to have a presence. Creating meaningful content means providing value to consumers through unique and thoughtful insights and relevant announcements. Through social media, business leaders can link to original content and share relevant news stories that inspire and influence their colleagues and industry peers. That said, it is recommended to use 60 percent original content and 40 percent repurposed material (e.g., reshared, retweeted, used previously, etc.). In addition, social content should:

* **Use links to encourage engagement:** Users are more likely to repurpose content containing links.

* **Use hashtags:** Hashtags streamline conversations from different users, increase a post's reach, and give users the opportunity to connect with a global audience. Users with related interests frequently search and monitor hashtags. Including relevant phrases or keywords will help the user connect with an audience. A note: use hashtags on **Facebook** only when a hashtag is associated with an event. Otherwise a hashtag distracts users from content.

* **Leverage earned media:** Before resorting to self-publishing, look for opportunities to submit op-eds to industry trade publications and/or pitch publications. Choose outlets that will generate discussions online and increase user and company presence in the news. Also be aware that many publications prefer content that's exclusive to them. It is worth your time to know which ones do, and offer your content to them exclusively.

* **Include external events:** Delivering presentations or speaking on panels at industry or industry adjacent events should be part of the executive's thought-leadership outreach. Events present a great way to increase name recognition and enable the executive to be seen as an industry leader. It's also a prime way to engage with other pros.

- **Transparency:** Impactful executives are carefully transparent in public aspects of their businesses. This means finding ways to offer followers a unique perspective without exposing areas of potential risk. For example, the executive can do more than reiterate the company's corporate messaging. She should avoid seeming overly scripted. The executive, if possible, should create the content. When a PR pro creates material, she should keep the executive's voice in mind. It's important for audiences to hear the executive's voice in real-time. Live social broadcasts are a great vehicle for this. As noted above, all this exposure needs to be done while also protecting the company's financial specifics and intellectual property.

- **Authenticity:** Related to the above, authenticity is social media currency that can be exchanged for opportunities to engage in conversations outside of a company's wheelhouse. It also can open the door to corporate advocacy. Leaders should create original content that links back to priorities, amplifies ideas related to corporate mission, vision and values and connects to offline activities. Adding unique perspectives to online conversations can bolster authenticity online. Additional tactics include replying to @ mentions and sharing relevant content via retweets.

- **Timeliness:** When communities are discussing something that relates to the company or its interests, executives seeking to become thought leaders should engage in those conversations. Do so in a timely manner and with a personal touch. While executive views should track with their employer's, they also should not parrot corporate talking points. Post content and monitor relevant accounts, hashtags and topics to stay on top of germane online conversations. Posting and monitoring will facilitate timely engagement.

The link between corporate reputation and C-suite engagement is at its peak. This is due to increasing public focus on corporate leadership, demand for transparency and the rise of social media and digital channels. Out of fear of alienating or angering customers, brands have historically avoided taking stances on issues. This same practice once extended to a company's leadership team, creating a delicate and apolitical ecosystem with relatively quiet executives.

Research from APCO and others, though, shows stakeholders expect companies to take stands on issues. Elements of the public see executives are representatives of corporate values. They are supposed to be the faces of their organizations and engage with key stakeholders.

As a result, it is increasingly important to create a meaningful, tailored plan that works for the executive's desired engagement, strengthens reputation and allows them to reach stakeholders in a genuine manner.

They will not be able to accomplish their goals alone, even with the best of plans. To build an impactful thought leadership program on social, the plan must strategically leverage tools tailored for each channel to build a public presence, connect directly with stakeholders, and share company news and information in an authentic, human way.■

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DATA SECURITY

PR Pros Urged to Act Quickly on Data Privacy and Integrity, Get Organized and Innovate Ethically

It is the rare day that lacks data-related news: a data breach, a data privacy issue or concerns about data integrity. Studies show that healthcare firms are the chief targets of data hackers. As such, **Dan Linton**, the newly minted lead of the global data privacy unit at **W20 Group**, has a big job. W20 serves healthcare companies. We asked Linton what PR pros should be doing on data protection and data privacy. In addition, we asked about GDPR, the European data-protection regime that U.S. regulators might tap for a future data framework.

Dan Linton
Lead, Global Data Privacy
W20 Group

PRNEWS: What do PR firms and PR pros typically fail to think about regarding data privacy and data ethics?

Dan Linton: Most PR firms haven't been thinking about privacy and data ethics at all. If they have, it has been left to legal teams as a compliance exercise. Even when totally compliant, the risk of harm from data misuse is very real.

As we saw with the recent incident involving **Bayer,** where detailed influencer lists in the E.U. for **Monsanto** were leaked, PR firms and PR pros need to think more deeply about what they do with data. With the rise of privacy awareness comes additional public scrutiny. Firms, practitioners and clients need to consider the far-reaching implications of their data usage.

PRNEWS: So what can PR pros and firms do now to bolster their data ethics and data privacy efforts?

Linton: First, don't wait and see what happens – embrace data protection and privacy now. GDPR has been in effect since 2018 and the California Consumer Privacy Act comes into force in just a few months. Privacy now is seen as a key differentiator. Those who are ahead of their competitors will win trust, engagement and market share.

Second, get organized. Many large organizations lack a data governance program, and have no clue what data they have, how it's being used, who's collecting it or why. In an age where anyone can demand that an organization delete their personally identifiable data, the need to have a data privacy program...is critical in order to comply. It's not a small job, but it's a long overdue and necessary step that will lead to that most valuable of commodities, trust of the audience.

Third, we all need to innovate, but we can do that intelligently and ethically with privacy as a foundation. There is a huge potential in using AI as part of non-personal communications programs. In addition, there are all kinds of opportunities to use first-party data with consent in new ways as part of fair-value exchanges with audiences.

PRNEWS: Is GDPR working in Europe? Has it changed the relationship and trust between brands and consumers?

Linton: Privacy is a fundamental right in the EU, and people are definitely exercising those rights. GDPR, along with multiple high-profile data breaches, has caused people to become hyperaware. As a result, hundreds of thousands of complaints have been registered. At the same time, several surveys and studies have shown that organizations that are fully compliant or ahead of regulations have experienced increased trust and engagement with audiences. It's clear that consumers expect and demand data privacy and protection, and are willing to reward organizations that offer it. They will also act against them if they don't receive it. GDPR is bringing these issues into stark relief. ■

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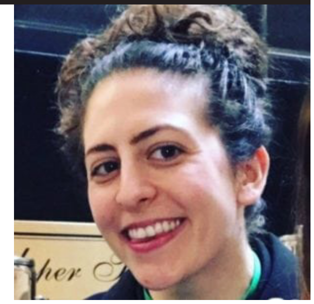
BY SOPHIE MAEROWITZ, SENIOR CONTENT MANAGER, PRNEWS

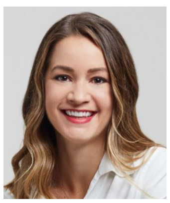


After the Flood: A Clever Newsletter Keeps NY Commuters Informed

AN E-LETTER LIKE NO OTHER

A hot pink color scheme. Unique photographs of never-before-seen underground tunnels. No, it's not Berlin's hottest dance club. It's…a newsletter about an urban construction project.

"The L Project" at the **Metropolitan Transit Authority/ New York City Transit** (MTA) is not your run-of-the-mill newsletter operation. Launched as an information vehicle for a post-Hurricane Sandy construction project impacting more than 200,000 New York City subway commuters, the weekly e-letter, published every Saturday, informs, entertains and offers a behind-the-scenes look at one of the MTA's largest construction projects to date.



Kaitlyn McCready
Director, Special Projects, Strategy and Customer Experience
NYC Transit

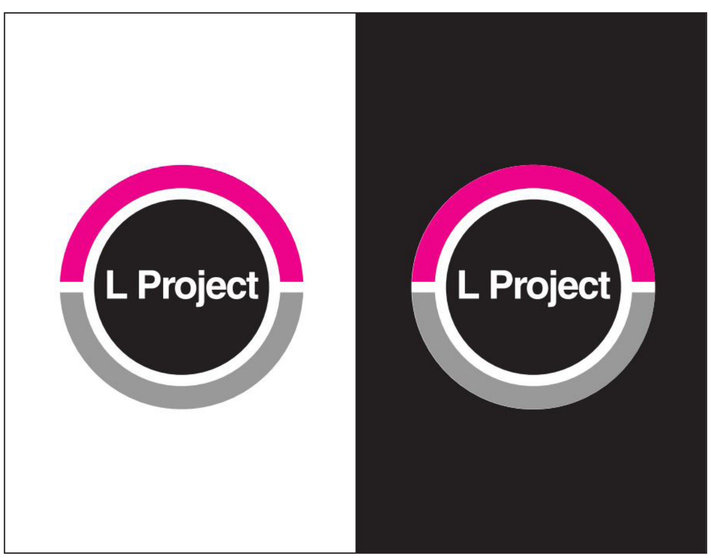
PRNEWS readers have seen the following question addressed previously: How does one make communication about infrastructure interesting and accessible? Oh, and while you're at it, how about boosting the reputation of the brand, the largest transit agency in North America?

Kaitlyn McCready, director of special projects, strategy and customer experience at New York City Transit, was tasked with answering those questions.

BACKGROUND: RE-BUILDING THE L-TRAIN

In 2016, hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers living along the L train line discovered their primary transport hub would be out of commission while the MTA made repairs. As a result of Hurricane Sandy in 2012, the tunnel through which the L train runs from Canarsie, Brooklyn, to the West Side of Manhattan, was flooded with 7 million gallons of water.

The MTA held months of in-person workshops and hearings with commuters and residents along the L train line to receive customer feedback and offer updates.



L of a Design: The L Project's logo was a collaborative effort.

At the time the L Project launched, McCready realized that the MTA was very "service" communications-oriented. Rather than simply notifying customers of service changes in real-time, McCready wanted to create "a proactive communications channel."

TACTICS: A DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY

At workshops and hearings, McCready found her primary audience for L Project updates: in-person workshop attendees and other public transit riders who were not in attendance, but who had submitted comments and concerns online.

McCready's team started using digital tools to reel in readers, bringing an **Apple** iPad to public hearings so those interested could sign up for the mailing list.

McCready's team chose **Mailchimp** as the newsletter vehicle: "It's really accessible, and helped us meet our goal of keeping people engaged," she notes. But easy distribution was only the beginning. A project on this scale required true people power.

A NEWSLETTER TEAM IS BORN

Since Nov. 2018, McCready has been in charge of creating and executing on The L Project newsletter strategy, all while guiding her group, which she affectionately refers to as "a team of doers." She edits the newsletter and writes much of the content. "Even leadership is willing to step in and get the work done," she says.

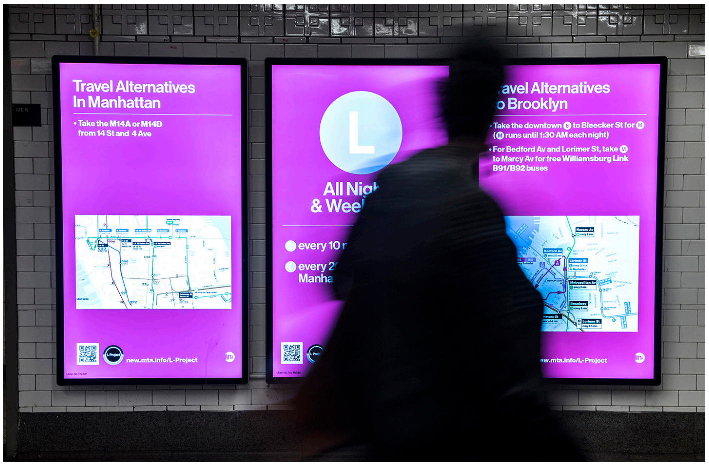
McCready loops in a marketing project manager, graphic designer and members of the MTA's service information staff to "create a strategy and empower people to do what they're best at. We have a lot of smart people working here, and it's my job to give them strategy and context."

McCready also scouted newsletter-worthy talent across departments, including an in-house photographer already tasked with capturing the MTA's other major construction projects and a staffer who had worked at a local newspaper.

IN-HOUSE NEWSROOM

"One of our photographers goes out every other week with a schedule from me of what moments in time to...capture," McCready says. The goals of the imagery are to show the "before" and "after" of construction, as well as what it looks like in the course of the work. "Unfortunately, we can't have [consumers] walk the tracks, so the best thing we can do is to show people what was happening progress-wise."

When McCready needs an image on the fly, she gives her field team brief guidelines on how to capture images and hold their phones correctly. "Creating a mini-marketing team out of everyone" helps the MTA produce visuals cheaply.



Pavlovian Response: Using a consistent purple and black color scheme helped create an L-Project brand that makes it easier for commuters to find service changes due to construction.

COLOR CODING

McCready's collaborative style led to the decision to make hot pink the L Project's color theme. New York City's subway system uses colors, numbers and letters to denote subway lines. Unlike other cities, however, "We do not describe the lines by color. You don't call the L the grey line; we needed a dedicated brand." Colors, says McCready, help commuters navigate and know what train lines connect. They also help customers associate service changes on other train and bus lines with the L Project.

The pink color scheme also proved useful when other train lines started increasing frequency and length over the weekend, standing in for L train service.

"We wanted to connect the dots; to communicate with people in a way that was connected to the project. So, we did a campaign using pink [text] about using [M train] service instead. It's not a color used in our system anywhere else, which made it easy, and our design experts know pink and grey go nicely," says McCready.

Before signage was printed and graphics went live, there was a feedback loop: "We came up with the [visual] brand internally. I worked with a graphic designer, got feedback from our chief customer officer and worked with our design team. They asked questions and came back with different options," she says. Offering this level of buy-in helps her cross-departmental team stay motivated and engaged in the project.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The team had begun building a visual brand, but landing on a name proved tricky. Why "The L Project," and not "L Construction," "L Tunnel Rehab," or something to that effect? The decision came down to some smart media monitoring by McCready.

Unfortunately for the MTA, the local news media had preemptively begun reporting the project as the "L Shutdown," (or in some cases, the "LPocalypse"). Tasked with creating clarity for worried commuters, McCready took to **Google Trends** to see how often the search term "L train shutdown" was being used as compared to "L Train construction," "L Train rehabilitation" and other variants. "The 'L Train Shutdown' got glommed onto very early, which was unfortunate because only part of it was shutting sown, and a lot of people thought they were losing their train," McCready recalls.

Her research suggested that the previous title of the project, "L Tunnel Reconstruction," wasn't sticking. "I knew we had to dramatically change the name to create more clarity. That's why we changed and shortened it," she says. Her efforts were successful: The move successfully increased "L Project" search volumes compared with "L train shutdown."

> **"Rather than being service oriented only, McCready wanted a full communications channel"**

EDITORI-'L' CALENDAR

McCready makes heavy use of an editorial calendar in long-term L Project planning, useful for looking ahead to construction changes and service-disrupting holidays. For instance, she knew that both the 4th of July and Pride Month would bring service changes that impacted L train riders; those events were plugged into the calendar far in advance.

The editorial calendar is also McCready's North Star when it comes to the day-to-day. "It's my go-to item. I check it daily to see what coming up, make additions and edit." On Mondays, McCready meets with a second writer to chat informally about the e-letter, brainstorming and discussing what's coming up in the week's coverage.

In terms of translating content across channels, "it always starts with the newsletter, which I have to write the most text for," she says. That content is then replicated across social media and on the MTA website.

OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CLIMATE-CRISIS ERA

As of this writing, the L Project continues, with most of the construction, er, on track and ahead of schedule. Like so many PR pros on deadline, McCready's team always seems to be racing the clock.

"We have to be timely and relevant and on top of everything going on in the system." This means taking an unflinching, all-encompassing look at the entire run of the 475,000-commuter train line. "If you don't mention something, it seems weird; so you want to include everything."

McCready relishes the challenge. As extreme weather continues to strike New York City's century-plus-old subway system, she finds new ways to insert the L Project's wins into the MTA's daily communications.

"Recently there was a major rainstorm. We were going to do a different, evergreen story; instead, we talked about how we manage water drainage, looking at the L tunnel."

As climate change brings on extreme weather events with increasing frequency, communicators in the public sector and beyond would do well to follow McCready's example with waterproof communications plans of their own. ■

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BY MARK WEINER, CHAIR, IPR COMMISSION ON MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION, CHIEF INSIGHTS OFFICER, CISION, INC.

Attribution Analysis: Why This Approach Could Help Revolutionize PR

[Editor's Note: Part II of II. Part I of this series appeared in the September 2019 edition of PRNEWS.]

Tracking reach, frequency, message penetration and sentiment with existing methods provide meaningful guidance for planning and continuous improvement. Yet, new, supplemental approaches promise to revolutionize PR. The spark for this uprising is *attribution analysis*.

For years, marketers have applied attribution analysis to assess the impact of their digital campaigns. They have assigned credit for every successful marketing interaction from awareness, engagement, lead acquisition to, ultimately, a successful sale. Understanding how one's PR activities move a prospect down the funnel is critical in today's multi-faceted business-accountability environment.

Attribution analysis applies an invisible watermark to every digital news item covering your company, brand and product. The watermark is indelible, so the technology follows an individual reader from the news page to your website, or that of your competitors.

Once on your website, the technology identifies every level of interaction: the reader focused on the "About Us" section, or downloaded an order form or application. For e-commerce sites, one can attribute a sale to an individual news or feature item.

Besides delivering a highly accurate, validated number of individuals that clicked on your news or feature story and engaged with your website, the underlying technology allows for another layer of demographic and firmographic information based on a robust relationship with Ad-Tech networks. As such, the communicator can describe the interested party by age, gender, annual income, net worth, education level and more.

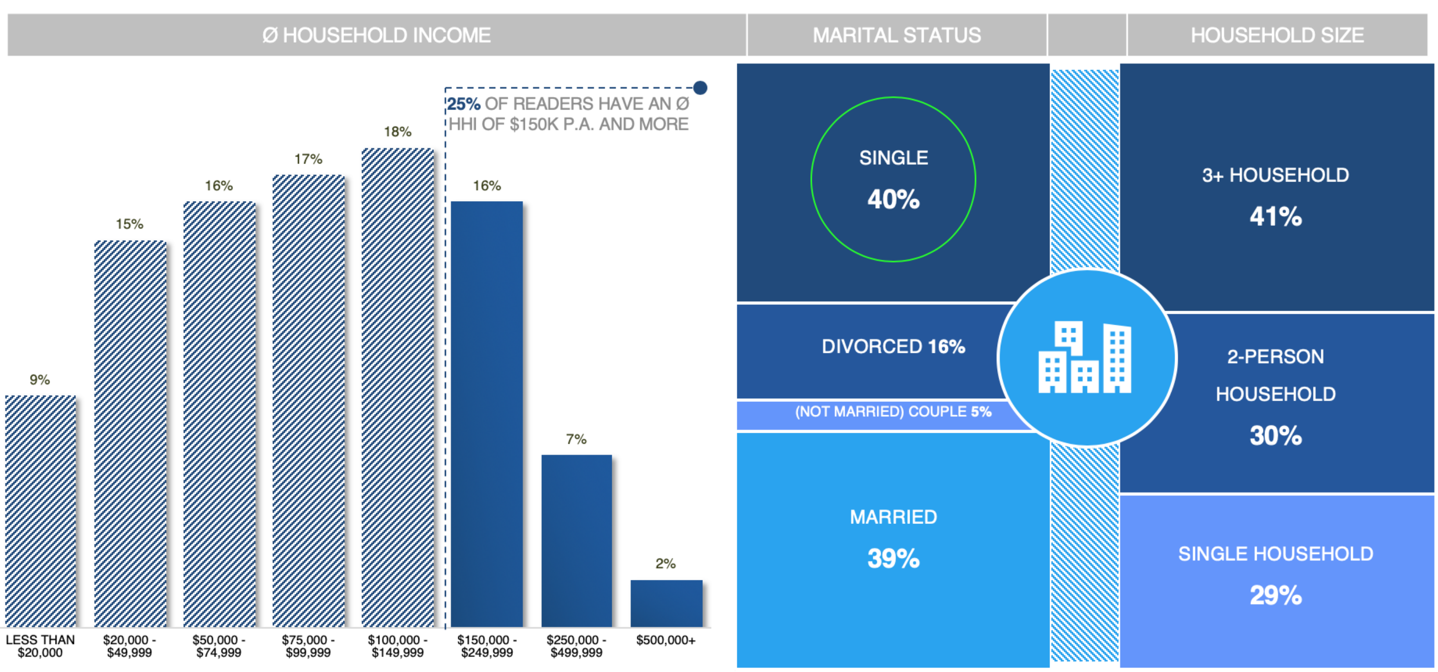
And for B2B communicators, there's a layer of firmographic data to help you categorize the type of company employing the individual. Criteria include the industry (food services, manufacturing, telecom, etc.), size and role within the company (C-suite, SVP, manager, etc.).

APPLICATIONS FOR BETTER DECISION-MAKING

Rather than making traditional approaches to media analysis and evaluation obsolete, the new technology builds upon an existing foundation. A complete earned media analysis program now looks like this:

- **Quantitative Measures:** Frequency (number of news stories and social posts) and Reach (circulation/audience/followers/likes, etc.).
- **Qualitative Measures:** Sentiment/tone, intended/unintended corporate and brand reputation messaging, spokes-

TARGET AUDIENCE? **25% OF THE READERS HAVE AN AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME (HHI) OF >$150K**



In this example, 25% of readers earn $150,000+ annually. If the company sells luxury cars, this is an opportunity for better targeting and messaging. If it sells modest cars, 64% of readers match the target, which affirms that the targeting and messaging worked.

people, influencers, issues, etc.

• **Comparative Measures:** Performance over time against objectives and versus competitors/peers.

• **Attribution Measures:** The new essential element: digital earned media clicks and click-throughs, image views, video plays, document opens and downloads, audience demographic/firmographic profiling and segmentation, and conversion from reading a news item or post to downstream activity, including shopping cart/revenue and lead generation.

INSIGHTS TO NAVIGATE AND WIN

These four data sources provide the basis for expert analysts to uncover insights and strategic guidance that communicators need to navigate and win. This combination of technology and talent provides communicators with the facts they need to relay PR performance to executives. The objective, of course, is to show generation of a positive return on PR investment by connecting PR results to the sales funnel.

The most common applications for research and data in PR are to assess program performance after-the-fact: The campaign is completed, and a performance report is how most communicators represent the success of their initiative. While attribution analysis represents a significant advancement for earned media evaluation, it provides invaluable guidance throughout the communications cycle:

- **Landscape Analysis:** Begin your campaign by assessing your brand's position within its competitive and regulatory environment by exploring demographics and media penetration among target audiences.
- **Objectives Setting:** Set more meaningful goals by including specific audience segmentation targets. Beyond quantitative, qualitative and competitive, identify PR contribution goals for every stage in the sales funnel.
- **Strategy Development:** Use attribution to specify which media and messages generate the most interaction among target audiences. Apply this data in creating a framework based on "what works," rather than conventional wisdom.
- **Tactics/Campaign Design and Execution:** Attribution analysis indicates the events and themes that drive bursts of measurable response within the sales funnel.
- **Evaluation:** Assess your contribution to revenue generation after each campaign or as part of the monthly or quarterly review. Align your performance with marketing and sales to demonstrate PR's ability to elevate the enterprise.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Apply what one learns to refine programs over time, compared to objectives, competitors and what drives the most meaningful response.

ATTRIBUTION CASE STUDY

A luxury car brand recently launched a high-performance vehicle to much media fanfare. The content analysis of traditional and social media quantified the degree to which the media viewed the new car in a positive light. Media coverage was positive across all channels but – more important – the attribution analysis confirmed that the number of people who clicked on the article and then proceeded to search the automaker's website was three times more effective than **Google** display ads.

It also was slightly more than twice as effective when compared to **Facebook** ads. In addition, the people who clicked through matched the intended demographic.

In this way, PR generated better results than digital advertising at a small fraction of the cost. What is more, the new car reviews reside on the internet for interested parties to review when considering their next car purchase.

Finally, the PR team shared its attribution data with marketing to enable a more holistic view of which marketing and communications elements had a particular effect on a specific audience. In this way, PR data was integrated into the company's big data analysis to properly quantify PR's unique contribution to sales.

CONCLUSION

Today, it seems everyone in PR has a real-time tool, and everyone has data … too much data. What PR pros need is a better way to think about data, a more efficient way to manage tools and the flexibility to assemble the right data at the right time.

The combination of advanced technology and the talent to optimize these tools with category expertise and statistical acumen achieves the outcomes communicators need: useful insights and integrated data to quantify PR's ability to align with other business data streams and isolate communicators' unique contribution to business success. ■

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Unilever's DePalma McCartney: Think Holistically, Long Term About Influencer Fraud Issues

Some statistics are mentioned so often in PR circles they rise to the level of ubiquity, at least for a time. One figure that's making the rounds at the moment is the estimated $1.3 billion in fraud linked to influencer marketing. Part of that figure's popularity is linked to the inaugural **Influencer Fraudnomics Summit**, held last month in NYC. One of the Summit's goals was to "dismantle the $1.3 billion fraud problem facing the influencer marketing field." A heady accomplishment, much less for a one-day event.

Among the key participants during the dayl-long Summit was **Casey DePalma McCartney**, director, PR and digital engagement, **Unilever North America**. In an interview with PRNEWS, we asked her about Unilever's commitment to eradicate fraud in influencer marketing and how it plans to carry out that task.

Incidentally, the Summit will be on the road next year, with day-long sessions in London and Los Angeles in January, its organizers, **Sylo**, told PRNEWs.

PRNEWS: What should PR professionals be doing to enhance influencer authenticity and verification?

Casey DePalma McCartney: Think holistically and long term. Social influencers are just one piece of the influencer ecosystem. It's important for brands to think about all their partners, advocates, etc., that have "influence" and how they work together as a strong and ongoing network of ambassadors for a brand.

PRNEWS: What do you hope attendees took from your fireside session during the Summit?

DePalma McCartney: With any new-media channel, there are opportunities and challenges. It's important for all brands to push for greater transparency to combat fraud in the digital ecosystem and create better experiences for consumers.

I think one of the most important things we learned, is that there is no silver bullet. There is no single solution that can ensure an influencer campaign will be free of any level of bot/fraudulent activity.

PRNEWS: Everyone wants to know what's next. What does the influencer space look like in five years with regard to fraud and authenticity?

DePalma McCartney: Third-party verification and authentication are and likely will be extremely important for the long-term viability of influencer marketing. Five years ago we were talking about how difficult it would be to get to agreed viewability terms and vendors. We've made tremendous progress in that space and we need to get on a similar path in the influencer space.

PRNEWS: Last June, Keith Weed (the former chief marketing and communications officer of Unilever) said the key to improving the situation with influencers has 3 parts:

Casey DePalma chats with David Beebe during Fraudnomics Summit last month.

***Cleaning up the influencer ecosystem by removing misleading engagement;**

*** Making brands and influencers more aware of the use of dishonest practices; and**

*** Improving transparency from social platforms to help brands measure impact.**

Please tell us what progress has been made on these three fronts and what Unilever has done to facilitate it? Of the three areas above, which one is/are in the best shape, which is/are in the worst shape?

DePalma McCartney: In Cannes, we committed to three areas:

- Transparency from influencers: we want to make sure we're working with influencers and creators who are committed to delivering authentic activity
- Transparency from brands: we of course do not want our brands to engage in inauthentic activity, and
- Transparency from platforms, which is consistent in our efforts to work with partners committed to improving the digital ecosystem

This activity all ladders up to our Responsibility Framework that we launched last year to help clean up the digital ecosystem through responsible platforms, responsible content and responsible infrastructure. The work we are doing to progress transparency in influencer marketing is a natural extension of this work.

We knew we started a conversation that was necessary to have and, as evidenced by everyone at the Summit, need to continue having.

We've developed a tiered approach to help us mitigate fraud. It's a mix of external and internal tools that we use pre-campaign and then ongoing throughout the duration of a campaign.

We're also working with our platform partners who are making progress in this space – we know that more than a billion fake accounts have been removed since we made our announcements last year – and there is still much work to be done. The influencer space continues to mature and with it, transparency and ability to show impact need to improve.■

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BY PETER ZANDAN, PHD, GLOBAL VICE CHAIRMAN, HILL+KNOWLTON STRATEGIES

What Happened in Elections Will Happen to Brands Unless We Prevent It

A frightening thought occurred while watching *The Great Hack*, the **Netflix** documentary about **Cambridge Analytica**. If you can interfere with an election by weaponizing communications, what could communications companies do with the same data capabilities?

It's inevitable that communications firms will gain access to the ability to weaponize data in a way companies have never had. This makes a new ethical approach critical to preventing the disaster that could occur if we adopt an "anything goes" attitude. Of course, using information to guide messaging is nothing new. Processing data, such as magazine subscriptions and hunting licenses, to profile consumers has been going on for decades, as has targeting messages at people profiled to be receptive by the data collected on them.

CAMPAIGNS AND COMMERCE

Also not new is sharing techniques between political campaigns and commerce. In fact, innovation in communication has always cycled from the business world to politics and back again. In the 1960s, journalists seemed shocked that politicians were hiring ad firms to sell them "like soap," and the "I'm a Mac"/"I'm a PC" campaign was just a clever execution of political attack ads.

And influence operations, or "the collection of tactical information about an adversary as well as the dissemination of propaganda in pursuit of a competitive advantage over an opponent," has long been a staple of state warcraft, according to Senate testimony offered in 2017 by **Rand Waltzman** of the **RAND Corporation**. It's hardly unusual, though generally unwelcome if not illegal, for one country to covertly influence another country's elections.

MORE ABILITY TO DISRUPT

What is new isn't just that Russia and others have used technology to weaponize these methods in an effort to destabilize western democracies — it's that now all of these tools are also available to communications companies.

Psychologically profiling consumers to get them to buy products is child's play. The data is more nuanced and easier to obtain. Now, thanks to state actors' weaponization of communications, communicators conceivably could destabilize a competitor or do so on behalf of a brand or a client.

THE NEW REALITY

This is not speculative, futuristic talk about jetpacks (though they're real now, too). Russian-style information operations have crossed over into marketing communications.

In a recent exposé, **Quartz** reported how **IDEIA**, a communications company weaponizing data as Cambridge Analytica did, isn't only helping political parties on several continents but also three multinational banks.

For those who know how to collect data and deploy it in communications, this isn't just inevitable, but easy.

A NEW ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

That's why it is time for an ethical approach to psychological profiling in strategic communications. This technology gives our industry the ability to act amorally and with dark purposes. Without a strong and explicit ethics code, the communications industry would fail society at the exact moment we are expected to help brands engage with the vital issues of the day.

This would be a radical departure from the current paradigm in which western democracies and markets are unable to restrict the bad actors, which have been foreign states.

Now, when we talk about stopping the deliberate spread of disinformation, we focus on the platforms where it is shared or concerned partiess discuss attempts to increase the media literacy of the public that is unknowingly sharing the misinformation.

HOLISTIC APPROACH

Recently, leaders of some 200 publicly held companies signed an agreement pledging to be more holistic in the way they conduct business [see PRNEWS, September 2019, p. 9]. This pledge increases the need to protect ourselves from new methods for mass defamation. Adopting a mindset that takes into account the well-being of customers, workers, suppliers, and the environment is a new ethical framework all on its own. Preventing the weaponization of communications fits easily onto that framework.

To be sure, prior restraint of speech is forbidden in many western democracies, and weaponized communication enjoys greater latitude in politics than in commerce, where libel and slander laws still apply. Those laws should be updated to account for these new technological realities, and whistleblower protections should be strengthened.

REGULATION AND PENALTIES

Smart regulations should be considered, and penalties should be scaled to the size of the potential damage. But regardless of what others do, we need to regulate ourselves because we best know the value we bring to companies and clients and what must be preserved.

Like any weapon, the new capabilities that metadata offers marketing communications are formidable and potentially useful, but they also are certainly dangerous. With greater power comes greater responsibility, as the saying goes. It is up to us to meet this moment with a new ethical framework to prevent bad actors from doing damage with weaponized communications. ■

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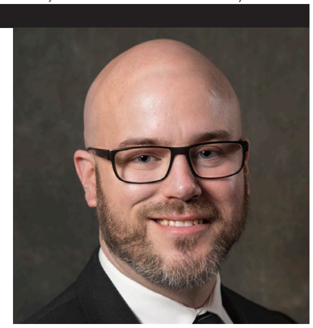
HISTORY

BY JARED MEADE, MUSEUM OF PR/PRESIDENT, NW OH CHAPTER, PRSA



A Quick Journey into PR's History Holds More Than a Few Surprises

[**Editor's Note:** This is the second in a series of articles about the history of PR. The series is a joint effort with the Museum of PR. It celebrates the 75th anniversary of PRNEWS.]

I stood outside the glass door in inquisitive anticipation. It slid open with a barely audible whoosh. As I stepped inside, the familiar scent of old books overcame me. I was in the world's only museum dedicated to PR; it was paradise.

Since 1997, the **Museum of Public Relations** has served as the primary repository for papers, artifacts, photos and oral histories documenting PR's development. The original works of **Ivy Lee**, **Edward Bernays**, **Doris Fleischman**, **Arthur W. Page** and others fill its archives. It also hosts events.

KID IN A CANDY STORE

I didn't know where to begin.

The first artifact to catch my attention was a handwritten note from former **President Ronald Reagan** to **Harold Burson**. Just that morning I had been reading Burson's memoirs, *The Business of Persuasion*, where he describes receiving that very letter.

Immediately, the life and work of a PR icon had become more than a story on a page – for me, it was real. This would not be the last time history would come to life during my visit.

Shelley Spector, co-founder of the museum, started the tour with the inbox of Bernays, still full of the papers left when he passed in 1995, aged 103.

The thrill of going through those papers, after donning white archival gloves, is something I can't quite put into words. You know you'll never forget it and it will become a story you'll tell over and over again.

As a friend of Bernays,' Spector offered valuable insight. "Bernays – a double nephew of **Freud** – was so influenced by psychology that he developed PR as an 'applied social science,'" she said. "Bernays was doing qualitative research on the public a century ago and designed campaigns that dealt with people's inner desires and motivations. For the early 20th century that was sophisticated stuff."

We moved on to a prize that Spector and her husband, **Barry**, also a Museum co-founder, discovered while going through the papers of Lee, the founder of modern PR.

They found her only known full-length, unpublished manuscript. Written in the mid-1920s, it is a guide for practitioners and the public about how to cope with the relentless flow of information. It also contains advice about how to separate truth from reality. That guidance remains relevant, of course. Thankfully, the Museum has published Lee's manuscript.

A ROCKY SURPRISE

I noticed something next to the manuscript. As I carefully unwrapped the artifact, I realized it was Ivy Lee's address book. After the initial shock had worn off, I knew there was one page I had to see. And I found it – a page with the home addresses of each of the **Rockefellers**, who were contacts.

As PR pros know, your contact list is crucial. Holding one that includes the Rockefellers was awe-inspiring.

Having a storehouse for PR's history is a necessity that we must support. Without history, we have no future. ■

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