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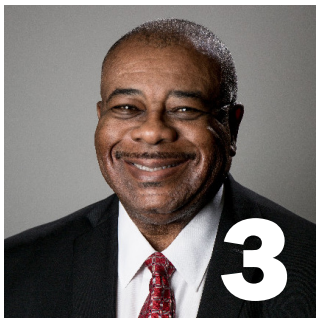

PREDICTIONS

Personalization Dominates: 25 Top Execs Look at 2020 Trends, from Tech and Crisis to Social

In last year's December edition, we argued the mood of the moment when people are making predictions influences what they see for the coming year.

Late in 2018, as we reached out to communicators to prognosticate for 2019, the headlines were blaring about a lack of trust in large tech brands. Just prior to Thanksgiving 2018, **The NY Times** published a 5,600-word exposé about **Facebook**. The article went behind the scenes, discussing all sorts of unsavory practices stemming from evidence of Russian meddling via Facebook in the U.S. 2016 presidential election. It revealed Facebook's extensive lobbying efforts to cover its guilt, as well as hiring a PR firm to find dirt on rivals. **Mark Zuckerberg** and **Sheryl Sandberg** were pilloried. Initially they denied the article's accusations. A few days later they obliquely admitted guilt in several areas.

It's little wonder then that many of the 25 people we asked to make predictions for 2019 concentrated on the importance of trust and how PR could help win it back.

While you'll see trust mentioned throughout the 2020 predictions, mostly it is viewed as an underlying value that has long been critical to effective PR.

The theme that arises more consistently in the 2020 predictions is personalization. For example, technology's ability to create personalized experiences for stakeholders. Similarly, the importance of personalizing pitches to media is noted. Our first prediction, from **Gene Grabowski** of **kGlogbal**, anticipates more personal service.

Is this personalization thrust a reaction to the creeping influence of AI on PR? Or the ability through technology to issue millions of pieces of email to media and other stakeholders with several mouse clicks? A push back against social media bots? Perhaps. Does it have anything to do with the recent impeachment inquiry hearings, which made stars of several members of the faceless bureaucracy? We'd not hazard a guess, but we encourage you to do so. Drop our editor a note and let him know your thoughts. In the meantime, we trust you will find this year's predictions is useful and interesting.

AGENCIES

Agencies and the Personal Touch

Gene Grabowski, Partner, kGlobal

Corporations are growing weary of millennial and Gen Z consultants "handling" them. They will look for more face-to-face interaction and personal service in 2020. Increasingly, even GenX and millennial clients are grousing about how little personal service and interaction they get from PR and management consultants who meet with them once, then seem to disappear as younger, less-experienced colleagues do much of the account work. Advertising and PR pros who show up for in-person meetings and provide high-end strategic counsel and first-rate work increasingly will win the lion's share of business, regardless of their firm's size.

Agencies and the Rise of In-house PR

Steve Cody, **Founder/CEO, Peppercomm**

We'll see more corporations expand in-house marketing and communications teams. This will increase pressure on agencies to become strategic counselors as opposed to mere tacticians. In addition, PR firms will be challenged to provide business results to justify their value-add.

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DEC. 12-13, 2019
WASHINGTON, DC

PR PEOPLE AWARDS LUNCHEON
DECEMBER 12, 2019
WASHINGTON, DC

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Mark Weiner, Chief Insights Officer, Cision
Chair, IPR Measurement Commission

Applications for AI in PR research and evaluation will expand while claims of AI will explode. Amidst this phenomenon, practitioners may be surprised to learn that rather than freeing them from mundane tasks, the technology requires a serious investment in human resources to train and manage the AI to deliver relevant content, accurate data and actionable insights. 2020 will be a year of discovery as the professional communicators who buy in to AI realize that reliable "insights engine" automation is overstated and that no technology replaces human expertise.

Suzanne Block, Director of Emerging Technology Group
Manager, West Coast Operations
Merritt Group

The hype of AI was "enough" to generate attention and newsworthiness. In 2019, use of the word "AI" in marketing was ubiquitous, making differentiation hard.

In 2020, organizations that want to rise to the top of the AI news cycle will be forced to take a stance on how their AI technology not only incorporates privacy, scalability and democratization for non-data minded skillsets, but also paint a picture of how it will change the way business is done. This process will stretch us to tell stories in a more unique way.

Andrew Cross, SVP, PR, Partner
Walker Sands

AI will bring practical utility to PR roles. Solutions increasingly are automating the process of content creation, which has big implications for media relations pros as well as corporate communicators. There also are AI-backed tools for real-time crisis monitoring. Several communications-measurement vendors tout AI-embedded solutions.

In 2020, AI will move from a futuristic technology on the horizon to a component solution incorporating many of the tools PR professionals engage with every day.

CRISIS

Crisis and Employee Activism

Karen Mateo, CCO, PRSA

In 2019, we saw a spike in employee activism as workers more frequently (and with better organization) voiced complaints, expressing frustration with company policies and practices. This has resulted in an increased focus on internal communications and employee engagement to ensure a wide variety of opinions is being heard and company values are respected. Employers need to be better prepared for when a crisis like this inevitably arises.

Communicators will be required to play an even greater role in helping leadership manage through what can be a difficult situation, but one that can also result in positive outcomes and improved business practices.

Steve Cody

2020 will see a rise in agency employee activism. More agency employees will insist CEOs resign business because of ethical or moral dilemmas. Case in point: **Edelman**'s recent resignation of **The Geo Group**, the private prison operator and contractor for **ICE**.

Crisis Growth and Reputation

Esther-Mireya Tejeda, SVP, Head of Corporate, Communications & PR Entercom

Crisis communications and reputation management will become increasingly important areas of expertise, likely accompanied by more in-house roles dedicated exclusively to corporate reputation management as part of broader communications teams.

We have seen major, global brands across industries experience tremendous disruption due to events that quickly gained notoriety through social media. There is a growing cultural shift toward social media activism, also known as 'cancel culture,' with hashtag campaigns powered by the speed and influence of social media that push for boycotts of brands that have behaved in a way that is misaligned with consumer values and principles.

Increasingly, communicators will be tasked with gatekeeping and culture testing to prevent incidents like these, and keep brands true to their mission statements and consumer expectations.

Crisis and Regulation

Gene Grabowski, kGlobal

Crisis management teams are in for a sizable boost in business. Across the board, state and federal regulatory bodies will be more strictly enforcing legacy regulations and creating new ones to meet challenges. Vocal consumers and activist groups increasingly are concerned with reducing risk and exercising more control over corporations.

While some agencies that have **President Trump**'s attention – such as the **EPA** and the **Department of Education** – will be cutting back on

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regulation, the **FDA**, **USDA**, **Consumer Product Safety Commission**, the **Federal Trade Commission** and the **Department of Transportation** will be cracking down on companies whose products and services appear to be creating risk for consumers. This will be especially true for the as-yet-unregulated cannabis and CBD oil industries, children's cribs, sleepwear and toys, processed foods and meat, and drugs of all kinds.

This will mean more companies for the first time will be signing on to create crisis communications and reputation-management plans – many before the end of the first quarter.

Crisis and Organizational Structure

Kevin Elliott, Managing Director
US Risk+Crisis Communication Practice
Hill + Knowlton Strategies

There is a trend to make organizations flatter and less hierarchical. While flattening an organization makes for better collaboration and engagement of the breadth of talent easier, the same instinct will make incident response more difficult in some cases. If an organization is deepening a flattened culture to improve business processes, it will be necessary for leaders in that same organization to be counterintuitive in incident response planning. An effective incident response team is necessarily hierarchical and, to a degree, siloed. Look for the ability of flatter companies to maintain a counterintuitive structure for effective incident response.

Crisis and Gen Z

Kevin Elliott, Hill+Knowlton Strategies

I've long been anticipating the arrival of Gen Z employees in the workplace. It will create a number of interesting dynamics, not the least of which is that they reportedly are less inclined to take risks. I'm unsure whether that means they will contribute to more safety or fewer incidents. It will be interesting to have more voices in the room with different calculations about risk and reward. We could very well see this new generation of workers have a decidedly more calming influence on the conversation around incident management and mitigation.

DIVERSITY, INCLUSION & EQUITY

Charlene Wheeless, Principal VP,
Global Corporate Affairs, Bechtel Corporation

Employees will hold their companies more accountable for real, visible, and sustainable change when it comes to diversity, inclusion and equity. Employees will begin to vote with their feet in companies and industries that just don't get it. We are in an era of belonging. Inclusion is no longer enough. People will begin to demand the freedom to bring their authentic selves to work each day.

Steve Cody, Peppercomm

More clients will demand agencies provide full transparency about their diversity and inclusiveness programs. And they will be held far more accountable. Thankfully and, at long last, D&I finally will become table stakes for agencies. And I'd like to believe the PR world will pay more attention to better representing our increasingly diverse country.

ETHICS AND THE ELECTIONS

Michael Lewellen, VP, Marketing & Communications, University of Portland

During the 2020 presidential election year there will be a hot market for academically credentialed, media-trained, thoughtful experts on critical topics. And what better place to find that expertise than at our institutions of higher learning? Leading the list of frequent topics will be ethics. Pointed analysis of ethics, honesty and moral formation will be needed in nearly all election coverage. The highest demand will be in the home markets of colleges and universities.

Neil Foote, President, Natl Black PR Society

As **Bette Davis** said in *All About Eve*, "Fasten your seatbelts. It's going to be a bumpy night." Well, 2020 is going to have many bumpy nights. Corporations, brands and influencers will find themselves in the midst of a contentious, divisive period...where they will be struggling to get their messages heard above the cacophony of headlines rooted in political strife. PR veterans might look back at the tumultuous times of the late 1960s when politics, race and an anxious mood reigned over the country like a thick morning fog. In 2020, PR pros will have to develop strategies that finetune messaging to reach their targeted audiences in creative and engaging ways. Adding a smart, fun, powerful social media strategy where stills and videos combine to create a compelling story on **Instagram**, **Twitter**, **Facebook** and **YouTube** must become essential components to get above the noise – and engage customers who will be looking for relief from the political rhetoric.

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FINANCE

Rick Gould, CPA, J.D., Managing Partner, Gould+Partners

The PR M&A field shows no sign of slowing in 2020. Expect a surge in new deals…PR firm owners should consider selling sooner rather than later…as it takes up to a year to identify a buyer and facilitate a quality transaction. Buyers are angling for strategic acquisitions ($3mill-$10 mill) as well as bolt-on deals ($1mill-$3mill). Bolt-on acquisitions increasingly are attractive to buyers because they fill a specific and immediate need — such as online analytics and influencer marketing — and can be completed relatively quickly. PR firms specializing in healthcare, financial services, consumer and tech will hold special appeal for buyers, due to their high-growth potential. Ditto for public affairs firms, in light of what's expected to be a furious election. Demand for valuations will grow. PR firms still suffer from too much over-servicing. Look for a much sharper focus on utilization and human capital.

HEALTHCARE

Gil Bashe, Managing Partner, Global Health Finn Parters

In the 2020 presidential election candidates will find common ground in attacking the drug-development sector on medication costs. Don't expect one of this nation's great innovators to take continued policy blows lying down. Pundits always seek easy answers to complex healthcare cost issues. Biopharma is an easy mark; however, if healthcare costs are a whopping 18 percent of GDP, drugs make up only 14 percent of that. What's wrong with this picture?

Along with political campaign sound bites, expect biopharma and medical device trade associations…to be front-and-center in telling how they benefit society and contribute to cost containment. Can we afford Alzheimer's? How about epidemic-level diabetes? Just as patients with unmet medical needs won't be silent, the industry will find its voice.

INFLUENCERS

Michael Lamp, SVP, Digital, Hunter

The saturation point for influencer marketing is somewhere in our collective rear-view mirror. But that doesn't mean the tactic is any less valuable; it just means we've got to be a lot smarter about how we do it. Selfies with overly nebulas '#brandpartner' hash tags are proving less and less effective (not to mention in violation of **FTC** guidelines on disclosure). We mustn't settle for inauthentic, transactional efforts with influencers and creators. Just like the 'old school' practice of managing relationships with editors, influencer partnerships should be groomed. At the executional level, we need to look for unexpected ways to integrate influencers into brand storytelling vs. simply using them to distribute messages that don't reflect their personal brand(s).

Allison Fitzpatrick, Partner, Davis & Gilbert, LLP

Throughout 2020, the FTC will continue to bring actions against fake reviews, sponcon and other fraudulent indicators of social media influence. In response to mounting pressure from Congress, 2020 will see the FTC and the **Children's Advertising Review Unit** take a closer look at influencer marketing directed to children, including some of the most famous child influencers. Everyone's focus in 2020, however, will be on virtual/CGI influencers – as regulators try to figure out how they fit into the legal landscape and, specifically, how the law applies to them.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Chris LaPlaca, SVP, Corporate Communications, ESPN

Companies will increasingly recognize the importance of internal communications. While we may not always be able to control the external narrative in any given moment, working hard to ensure employee alignment around your organization's mission and vision is absolutely achievable, and critical in turbulent times.

MEASUREMENT

Mark Weiner, Cision, IPR Measurement Commission

The walls between marketing and PR will continue to fall as data-driven campaigns enable more holistic marketing and communication decision-making, planning and evaluation. For those who seek to optimize marketing's ROI, 2020 will be glorious. And for those who view PR as more than just marketing (it is) and wholly distinct from marketing (it is not), they will need to reinforce and quantify PR's unique contribution to the enterprise to validate the wisdom of management's investment.

Karen Mateo, Chief Communications Officer, PRSA

If data isn't your best friend already, you better be prepared to spend a lot more time together in 2020. As the quality of data communications professionals have access to gets more sophisticated, so does our ability to make smarter decisions based on sound analytics. Highly customized campaigns that can be measured more effectively will result in better experiences for consumers and demonstrate the value of PR in driving successful business outcomes. Audiences are becoming harder to reach and I expect to see even more personalization in our messaging using the wealth of data we now have access to.

MEDIA AND MEDIA RELATIONS

John Conrad, EVP/Partner, Merritt Group

PR pros will continue to draft press releases, but journalists will push for short, provocative story ideas with supporting content. Press releases won't disappear, but they shouldn't be the metric of a successful PR program.

I hear this during PR proposal meetings: "We want to leverage your media contacts to drive awareness for our executives, company, and solutions." Wrong. Media relationships are critical, but if you have nothing interesting to say, you will be talking to yourself. Your media "friendlies" may take a briefing, but if there isn't a story, they won't write. Leverage PR to help build compelling storylines and then provide the right validation. That's what the media wants. Creativity and validation are critical. That will be true in 2020.

Michael Smart, Principal, SmartPR
In 2020, sophisticated media relations teams will give up fighting in the crowded mosh pit for fleeting coverage from the usual suspects in the old media. Instead, they'll carefully cultivate relationships with unlikely content partners, such as associations, prominent individuals, and even PR teams and other organizations with complementary audiences. They'll abandon chasing one-time impression boosts, recognizing that for PR, trust is the new reach.

John Walls, Director, Brand PR
Neiman Marcus Group
Personalization continues to be a key business focus. This extends to the way PR pros interact with media. Yes, spray-and-pray sometimes yields success. But with publishers downsizing and outsourcing editorial, it's important to reach out to the *right* contacts. Personalizing doesn't mean changing the reporter's name and publication in a mail merge. It's developing meaningful relationships and approaching media contacts with individual pitches and angles that will inspire quality coverage.

Andrew Bowins, SVP, Communications and Public Affairs, Entertainment Software Association
To quote an old favorite, "You have two ears and one mouth, so you should listen twice as hard before you speak." In 2020, communicators will return to basics to make the biggest impact. They'll put in the time and deploy tools to really understand what stakeholders care about and whom they listen to. Don't rush to communicate, don't pollute your channels with content for the sake of content. In fact, maybe pause a little and try to be more relevant to reporters who follow your industry. Ultimately, advocacy through a third party, like the press, is still the gold standard. Understand this new age of always-on content, but don't forget above the fold and front-page still carry weight.

Media Relations and Ethics

Chris La Placa, ESPN
Information, and more specifically, misinformation that can damage your brand, originates and travels rapidly and in a variety of directions. We already live in a 24-7 environment, but somehow we have to continue to find the energy to be vigilant and act with even more speed in stopping inaccurate, harmful information in its tracks.

Mark Weiner, Cisco, IPR Measurement Commission
Given the current discourse, society's generally accepted definition of "the truth" will continue to blur and facts will become more important than ever. While the truth is malleable, dependent upon one's ability to persuade another person of what is true, facts hold up better under scrutiny. How the PR community adapts the science of persuasion to this reality will be one of 2020's great challenges.

PURPOSE

Steve Cody, Peppercomm
As more companies declare their higher purpose, we'll see a corresponding increase in purpose-washing missteps. Many companies forget to stress-test purpose with every stakeholder audience to assure they are, in fact, living up to their higher purpose. Not doing so is asking for trouble.

There's been such a gold rush to put a higher purpose in place that many companies completely miss the mark when it comes to aligning their purpose with their business strategy. Some are just not paying close enough attention to how their actions contradict their purpose. An example is **The College Board**'s self-inflicted crisis. Look for more of these disconnects in 2020.

Roger Bolton, President, Page
The **Business Roundtable** restatement of its purpose (PRN, Sept. 2019) is an attempt to catch up with the reality that companies have heard this message: Customers, employers, even investors, want business to build long-term, sustainable, societal value. We will see an acceleration of the trend in 2020, with the most creative and best-led companies making firm commitments and holding themselves accountable for progress against the **U.N.**'s Sustainable Development Goals.

RELATIONSHIPS

Michael Lamp, Hunter
There's been an emphasis on the scale brands can achieve with programmatic solutions that are personal in how they reach consumers and hyper-efficient at scale. But even these tactics lack a human touch, which can trigger a conversion or drive loyalty.

We've seen **Facebook** announce that its EdgeRank algorithm is prioritizing what it delivers in News Feed based on quality engagements and more personal, relatable content. For PR pros, this should be a welcome change given our discipline's legacy of relationship building and storytelling. On owned channels, this evolution highlights the pivotal role of community management, which, when done right, is almost peerless in its ability to grow brand advocates.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Michael Lewellen, University of Portland
In 2020, self-curated, high-end digital content will be a must-have again to share across social media platforms. Earned media is increasingly tougher to gain via media release, press conference or interviews alone. If you secure television cameras to cover your newsworthy event, that's great. But their failure to attend should not mean zero coverage. Plan ahead to capture key quotes, b-roll and images, and offer them as post-event content uploads to targeted outlets and journalists. And use professional cameras and videography support. The better the quality, the better the chances it gets used.

John Conrad, Merritt Group
Invest in a digital experience to augment your PR effort. Your audience wants to consume content online whether they are reading about you on a laptop or mobile device. Make sure

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How the C-Suite and Technology Help Align PR Measurement with Business Objectives

[**Editor's Note:** This is the second in a series of **Intrado Digital Media**-sponsored articles about measurement. The first article in the series appeared in the November 2019 edition of PRNEWS.]

You hear it constantly during PR industry events centering measurement: It's critical for PR pros to align what they measure with business goals.

On first glance the phrase can seem more complicated than it is. In reality the concept urges communicators to take a sophisticated route to measurement. For example, it argues foregoing counting inputs and outputs only. In addition, it frowns on basing the entire proof of a campaign's success on a single metric, such as social media impressions.

Aligning measurement efforts with business objectives "is a concept that's on everyone's mind…it's brought up all the time in meetings I have with communicators," Intrado Digital Media president **Ben Chodor** says. "Data for data's sake isn't meaningful or helpful," he adds. "Now it's 'How do we tie [what we're measuring] to the business and to business goals?'" It's a development that comes none too soon for Chodor and other measurement advocates.

THE C-SUITE'S VIEW

Ben Chodor
President
Intrado Digital Media

The C-suite increasingly views communications as an integrated, effective function that influences business. As such, business leaders want to put a value on communications, says PR measurement proponent **Katie Paine**, a PRNEWS columnist and founder of **Paine Publishing**. They want to see "how communications helps mitigate risk, how it provides lift to sales, the extent to which it is helping [the company] keep the people" it wants and "attract new people."

Leaders, Paine adds, want to know how communications makes the company the employer of choice, the neighbor of choice and the vendor of choice.' In other words, senior business leaders are demanding data that ties communications to business goals.

Yet ask those who judge PR industry contests how often applications refer to a single metric as the sole proof of success. Sometimes that metric is ad value equivalency (AVE). Often it's social media impressions.

SEX AND THE SINGLE METRIC

"Vanity metrics are very sexy," Chodor says. "'We had 100 million impressions'…it's hard not to share that." To this day, at the top of nearly every report you'll see the vanity metrics.

Eventually savvy communicators began looking deeper. They asked, 'What did those impressions do to help us achieve our business goals?'

For example, if one of the company's goals was to increase sales, did the 100 million impressions help? Have sales risen as a result? How many of those 100 million impressions resulted in people taking action, such as requesting information? Did the impressions lead people to talk about the company and its products?

Chodor believes "finally, the tide is changing" on more intelligent communications measurement. He finds that when "you actually sit down" with communicators today they are more willing to look at data, "both good or bad…they want to know what to do with data." Previously, Chodor says, PR pros were reluctant to look at anything bad.

Today, though, in addition to tracking earned media, a traditional metric, PR pros want to be able to measure external efforts, web traffic, social conversations, lead generation, macro vs micro influencers, among other things, he says.

MELDING OF PR, MARKETING & SALES

Chodor credits the change in PR's attitude to the demands of the C-suite mentioned above. In addition, the need to measure more thoughtfully is the result of the "criss cross" of PR, marketing and business, Chodor says. Last, it's the "rising PR professional," who comes from a data-driven world.

In addition, Chodor's bullish on communicators measuring their efforts against business goals, particularly when data shows a PR campaign is not as effective as hoped. "It's almost more important" to look at data when things aren't working as expected. "That's when [PR] should change its ways and do things differently," he says. "Say your goals are growth, and you launch a campaign that only builds awareness, I don't know if that's working."

Fortunately, gaining such business insights from measurement is eminently doable. For the first time, PR and marketing have a variety of "powerful tools…to measure their efforts …and how [they] tie to business goals," he says. There are tools being conceived "every day."

In addition to PR, marketing and sales converging, the tools they use are doing the same. "We are hearing from customers, 'We want our data in one place, not in six different places with 6 different logins…and we want to be able to mix [the data from PR, marketing and sales] and see what it all means.'"

CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Still, Chodor and others are not upbeat about all current aspects of communications measurement. For example, he admits, "Communicators can drown in too much data" and cautions against using data alone to make all your decisions. "There's a happy medium," Chodor believes.

Similarly, while he sees evidence of communicators hungry for using data to achieve business objectives, "It's not like they're calling us" constantly. In part, he says, "they may not know what we do." On the other hand, Chodor reports many communicators quickly see the light regarding

the utility of business-driven measurement during presentations and meetings.

Chodor admits that previously his company "didn't really look deeply at our PR campaigns and whether or not they contributed to revenue." Eyes were on marketing's contribution to sales and revenue, but PR's contributions to business goals went unmonitored. PR was thought of as the department that wrote press releases. More recently "we are…looking at our PR as a revenue generator as well as a way to hear the voice of our customer…so we are drinking our own champagne, in a way." ■

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you have content that users can click on, such as video, and is readable on mobile devices. If my nine-year-old twins are an indicator, make sure you have lots of video content as part of your digital experience – more so than blogs.

Gene Grabowski, kGlobal
Podcasting is enjoying a huge resurgence. Similar to blogs a decade ago, podcasts will be a popular part of recommended agency PR strategies to create brands or enhance existing ones. PR pros ahead of the curve will seek ways to measure success, but even without quantifiable results, senior executives who are articulate and like attention, will jump at the idea of being podcast stars. The real challenge will be finding topics and guests who can keep audiences interested beyond the second or third podcast episodes; and this is where the cleverest and most imaginative agency professionals will prove their value.

Social Media and Niche Messaging

Erin Flior, Senior Director, Marketing, Cystic Fibrosis Foundation
2020 will see niche audience messaging and targeting come to the forefront. In what will be an expensive and crowded ad and earned media space during an election year, brands and non-profits will move to more targeted communications, leveraging segmentation and more focused messaging to develop engaged audiences and brand advocates. Amplifying this will be increasing consumer awareness and concern around data privacy and an ongoing shift in social media behavior. Personal content sharing will continue moving toward closed groups. Intentionally public-facing, filtered content will be all that remains on the broader platforms.

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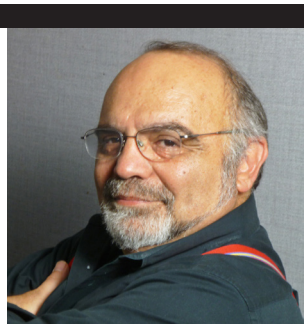
STORYTELLING

BY ED TAZZIA, PRINCIPAL, SYCAMORE AND COMPANY

Putting Your Audience First: The Importance of Outside-In Thinking



Any effective communications effort starts with a strategy. That's pretty well accepted. The better and tighter the strategy, the greater the likelihood of success with the total effort. Easy to accept. Harder to deliver.

In 2008, a group of PR and marketing professionals started a program called the **US Marketing Communication College**, which has been referred to in these pages (PRN, July 2019). The task was to help members of the **Department of State**, the **Department of Defense** and other agencies be more effective in their communications programs.

These were serious people charged with swaying public opinion and driving substantive behavioral change. Yet most of them had never been trained in the art and science of communications.

ABCDE METHOD

The ABCDE method of building a communications strategy grew out of the decade of work the PR and marketing pros did with these individuals. It stands for: (A) Audience, (B) Behavioral Objective, (C) Content, (D) Delivery, and (E) Evaluation.

While a title like ABCDE may make it sound as though the process is linear and sequential, it is anything but. A good strategy has to be developed in an iterative way.

- **First**, you start with the audience you believe you are ultimately trying to reach and a behavior you are trying to elicit. You may soon find, though, that to convince your ultimate audience, you need to identify a totally different audience that can influence the target. Your communications strategy has to shift.

Common sense? Yes. Not rocket science. Too often, however, people charged with communicating a message to a given audience are so focused on that task and objective that they don't step back. As a result they fail to understand

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what it takes to convince their ultimate target.

It is these intervening steps that must be addressed and dealt with in order to get to the ultimate goal.

- **Second**, when trying to establish the behavior you desire to change, it is essential to consider the change from the audience's perspective. The concept is outside-in thinking.

Over the years we observed that many, if not most of our students from the government or the NGO communities, have been directed to execute a given program or communicate a specific policy without a clear understanding of the behavior they are trying to change or drive.

On many, many occasions, once the objective was articulated, it was clear that the program was not going to get the desired result.

Often the policy as described would result in a very different behavior on the part of the target audience. Too often we are so focused on what we want to execute that we don't think about whether it is the right tool for the task.

- **Third**, and relatedly, the content–the actual messaging that must be driven by the strategy–must also be based on the outside-in perspective of the audience. Again, too often we have found that we are so concerned about what we want to say, that we don't think about what the audience needs to hear in order to behave in the way that we ultimately need.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

For example, if you are trying to get a group of countries to support U.S. policy on international clean air, you cannot focus on why Washington's position is the correct stance. You need to determine what benefit the audience will receive if it supports that position. What's in it for them?

So, a few things to consider as you work through your ABCDE of communications. First, recognize that where you start may not be where you end. There might be a few layers of communication that you need to go through.

And as you are working through each stage, make sure you start from the outside in. Ultimately it is the audience that gets to decide if it will change its behavior and accede to your desired goal. ■

Editor's Note: The ABCDE method is detailed in "Crafting Persuasion," by Kip Knight, Ed Tazzia and PRNEWS Hall of Fame member Bob Pearson. It is available at Amazon.com, Kindle and in e-book formats.

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HISTORY

BY JARED MEADE, PRINCIPAL, RAYNE STRATEGY GROUP

Father of PR Employed Principles That Communicators Find Crucial Today

[**Editor's Note:** This is one in a series of articles about the history of PR as part of our celebration of PRNEWS' 75th anniversary. The series is part of a partnership with the **Museum of Public Relations**.]

November marked the 85th anniversary of the death of the father of PR, **Ivy Ledbetter Lee** (1877-1934). Far from an obscure historical figure, Mr. Lee helped shape the public's perception of the profession. He also set standards that practitioners continue to follow to this day.

I asked **Shelley Spector**, co-founder of the Museum of Public Relations, about why Lee still matters.

Jared Meade: What do you think Lee's most significant contribution to public relations was?

Shelley Spector: It was the creation of ethical crisis management practices is his most important contribution. This is all the more remarkable considering that in Lee's era, the early 1900s, companies would most likely hide an incident from the press, or even lie about it entirely. So Lee, a former newspaper reporter, went on his gut and understood that a company not accepting responsibility or worse, keeping a crisis hidden, would result in bad coverage, thereafter causing distrust between a company and reporters. He counseled his clients on how to turn an unintended crisis into an intentional step toward improving a company's reputation.

Meade: One of Lee's most well-known clients was John D. Rockefeller, Senior (PRN, Oct. 2019). It was Lee who transformed the public image of the Rockefellers. Why was Lee so successful? What can we learn from his example?

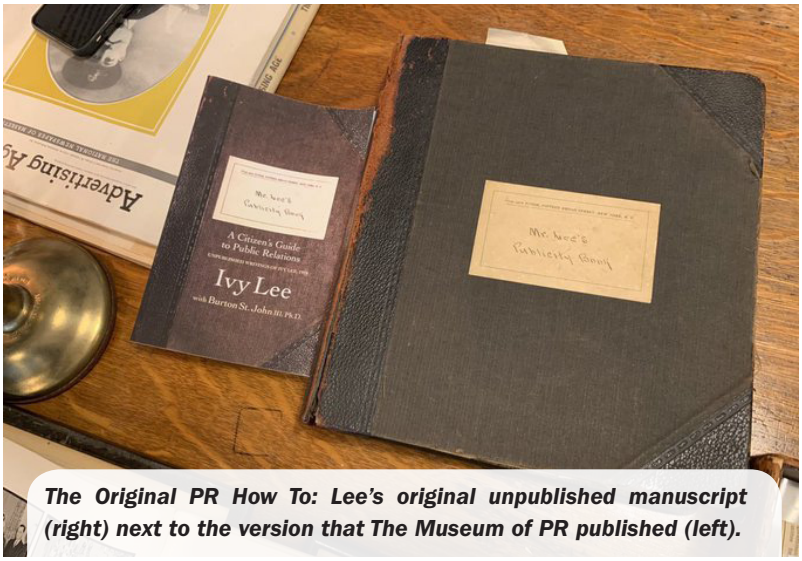
Spector: When Lee first worked with John D. Rockefeller, Sr., he was known as the richest man in the world and also a very selfish, monopolistic tyrant, who cared little for the masses. This was an age, remember, of robber barons, and a growing distrust of corporations and their management.

But the image the press and the public had of Rockefeller was only partially true. Rockefeller was a major philanthropist, possibly the world's most generous donor. Typical of the polite behavior of the era, Rockefeller never wanted to talk about his philanthropy, as it would be considered boasting and unseemly.

He also didn't think anything could dispel his public image. That all changed with Ivy Lee, who counseled Rockefeller that he could earn the respect and admiration of the public naturally. The key, he believed, was getting the public to see Rockefeller as a human being and learn about the good works he made possible, like hospitals, parks and public gathering spaces.

So Ivy Lee invited newsreel reporters into Rockefeller's once-hidden, private world. The cameras captured him at his estates in New York and Florida, playing croquet, hugging his grandchildren, even giving away dimes to indigent kids. (We still don't know if Lee counseled him to do that or if it was Rockefeller's idea.)

And Lee began regularly issuing announcements to the press about Rockefeller's philanthropy. As noted earlier, some considered it poor form to talk about philanthropy. Doubtless this was an easy sell.

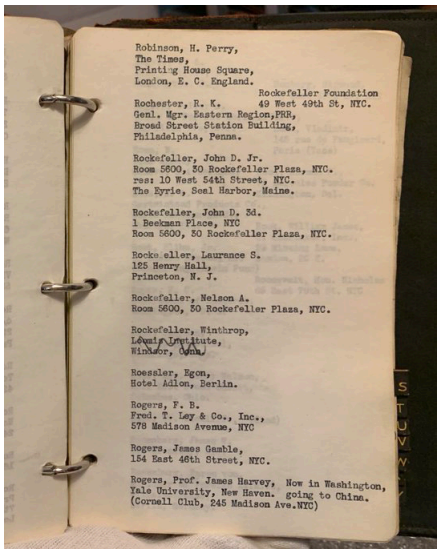


The Original PR How To: Lee's original unpublished manuscript (right) next to the version that The Museum of PR published (left).

Regardless, the press statements detailed the amounts he was giving away and the public good these donations were set to do. Through the newsreels and newspapers, the public got to see a positive side of Rockefeller, far different from what it had imagined.

Meade: Lee believed that good policy made good PR and that organizations must first do good work. Why was this revolutionary?

Spector: History shows that Lee – a minister's son and an esteemed newspaper reporter – built his business on the principle that companies needed to earn the public's trust to thrive. This was a highly unusual concept at the time. Lee instinctively knew, though, that the public would eventually discover a company lying about itself and its activities.



Robinson, H. Perry,
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Printing House Square,
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Rockefeller Foundation

Rochester, R. K. 49 West 49th St, NYC.
Genl. Mgr. Eastern Region,PRR,
Broad Street Station Building,
Philadelphia, Penna.

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The Eyrie, Seal Harbor, Maine.

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Room 5600, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, NYC.

Rockefeller, Winthrop,
Lewis Institute,
Winsor, Conn.

Roessler, Egon,
Hotel Adlon, Berlin.

Rogers, F. B.
Fred. T. Ley & Co., Inc.,
578 Madison Avenue, NYC

Rogers, James Gamble,
154 East 46th Street, NYC.

Rogers, Prof. James Harvey, How in Washington,
Yale University, New Haven. going to China.
(Cornell Club, 245 Madison Ave.NYC)

Rock, Paper, No Scissors: Ivy Lee's address book showing contact information for the Rockefellers Source: The Museum of Public Relations

In addition, if the company's statements did not match its actions, the business would find it hard to win back any trust and respect from its publics, whether customers, community or employees.

So committed to ensuring his clients were dealing in ethical communications with the public that Lee, in 1906, wrote "Declaration of Principles," the first document to embed ethics into the practice of PR. It also was the first published document to separate the practice of PR from the practice of press agentry. While press agents may be allowed to fool the public, the goal of the PR person is to keep the public accurately informed.

Meade: Lee wrote the first press release. Why was this tactic so successful that we are still using it more than 100 years later?

Spector: The idea of the press release, which Lee introduced in 1904, has become the single most important instrument of the PR pros today. In Lee's view, the press release, or "statement," as he called it, is the bridge of communications between the company and the public.

While it is every PR person's goal to get the release printed verbatim, as Lee's were, this hardly ever happens today. Nonetheless, Lee's strategy should be respected as much as possible: to write it in such a way that the reporter himself would cover the event, with objectivity, little promotional language and with as much balance as possible.

The objective, in Lee's view, is to not just have media run the release, or cover the news, but to have readers see the story, and, assuming they trust the source, believe and understand the actions of the company.

With the respected media's objective, third-party endorsement, there would be far more credibility for the story.

Ivy Lee likely would find that today's PR practice is missing that credibility. This is owing to the predominance of social media, which allows a company's story to reside as a paid placement or run on a company-owned platform.

When companies issue statements, Lee would think, without the filter of the media, the public cannot possibly have the same level of trust or credibility. ■

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BY JAMIE MUSTARD, CEO, THE ICONIST

Scarcity of Attention: How to Overcome Our Biggest PR Challenge

[**Editor's Note**: We asked **Jamie Mustard**, author of "The Iconist, the Art and Science of Standing Out," (**BenBella Books**, 2019) to discuss standing out in a crowded market.]

The most significant PR challenge of our time is overcoming the scarcity of attention from potential customers.

Bombarded relentlessly with information, a deluge of products and services, and too many unsubstantiated claims, potential customers have tuned out, and become all but unreachable. Now resistant to communication, they can't process 5 percent of what is thrown at them, maybe even less.

While doing research for **Microsoft** and **Apple** in 1998, **Linda Stone** coined the term "continuous partial attention" to describe how most of us are so distracted by all of the advertising and messaging constantly bombarding us that we only partially pay attention to anything.

At the time of Stone's concept, the internet was not yet in full swing and social media was decades away. Let that sink in for a moment.

Today, the digital interaction we experience includes responding to email and **Slack**, **Facebook**, **Twitter**, **Instagram**, **WhatsApp**, **Pinterest**, **Snapchat**, text messages, mobile calls, etc. This is reality. We are beginning to realize the effects of the overwhelming messaging assault it brings.

HOW TO OVERCOME LACK OF ATTENTION

Unfortunately, the scarcity of attention is crippling the efforts of some businesses to grow and expand.

There is a solution, however, and it is radically simple, even if it seems a bit counterintuitive.

- **The PR/marketing message must be simple, clear and credible.** Still it must be big and bold enough to hit the prospect between the eyes and lodge in her/his mind instantly.
- **The message must penetrate the prospect before she/he even has a chance to process it.** If not, the prospect will move to the next website and another company.
- **After the message's initial penetration, the next step for marketers is to repeat the message relentlessly, like a drum.** It must be a never-ending mantra, at every contact point with the customer. Only then, will the message cut through the scarcity of attention and become an identifiable, even defining narrative for the company.

Without this chorus effect and a clear, credible message, no one will believe it. Unless well-respected voices in a particular industry are saying the exact same thing at the exact same time, the message will not cut through in a world overloaded with too much messaging.

WHERE SOME GO WRONG/HOW TO FIX IT

Unfortunately, many companies lose the battle because the message is overly complicated, unfocused and delivered with little or no repetition. Here are several concepts that can provide an immediate business advantage over your competition when you are vying for the attention of potential new customers:

- **Instead of creating several messages, businesses should identify and lead with ONE thing.** It should be an intersect point between your offering and your potential customer's greatest need. Find it, and distill it down to a single, punchy, bold point. I like to call this a Block.
- **Then communicate it with a large, single image or oversized lettering.** Overly large, singular images or massive, oversized words — like road signs — command attention. Create a visual or conceptual road sign out of your message at every point of customer contact. This bold, monolithic way of communicating is transparent and carries conviction, which in turn will create instant credibility.

THE FEDEX EXAMPLE

An example of the difference between a Block and a slogan (a slogan is a weak and desperate attempt to create a Block) is the famous **Federal Express** (now FedEx) late 1970-early 1980 ad campaign, "When It Absolutely Positively Has To Be There Overnight."

In the days before FAX machines and the internet, FedEx repeated this statement loudly and boldly everywhere. It resonated with anyone who needed to get a crucial document somewhere fast. This statement is based on a desired need, not a slogan. **Forbes** named it one the most successful ad campaigns of all time.

If you create a road sign and get it right in terms of the message — remember, it is about your customers' needs and what they care about — you will lock attention and successfully pull your audience into the full capacity of what you do. Once your audience locks onto something simple, it will engage with the more intricate aspects of your offering.

FORCE IT INTO THE CUSTOMER'S MIND

The primal law at work here is the bold singularity of your message. Again, it is based on what that audience cares about and is repeated mercilessly at every opportunity.

This grabs attention, eliminates any competition for attention surrounding it, and reflexively, mechanistically forces it into the mind of any onlooker.

After all, you only have an instant to grab a prospect's attention or you may lose them forever. ■

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BY NICOLE SCHUMAN, CONTENT MANAGER, PRNEWS

Social 2020: FTC Alerts Influencers via Video, Twitter Offers Users an Exit

It's hard to believe we're at the end of 2019, let alone an entire decade. PR has advanced light years from what was called social media strategy in 2010. Back then, **Facebook** reigned as the top platform, featuring a video of the **Old Spice** guy. **Twitter** took off when people realized the power of its connection during the **BP** oil spill and Haiti earthquake.

At the start of the decade we also witnessed the birth of social media's monetization. Ten years later some platforms acknowledge the need to pull back on controversial buyers.

To get you ready for the next decade of social, we offer a brief update on platform changes and a review of the **Federal Trade Commission**'s re-release of influencer guidelines.

Contrary to some critics, influencers are not going anywhere, at least not in 2020. This makes it important for brands to review strategies and make sure all is up to code.

FTC RE-RELEASES INFLUENCER GUIDELINES

Last month's FTC re-release of its influencer guidelines seems tailored for a social audience. In addition to an online guidebook, a concise video describes in plain language what previously was laden with legal terminology. [See the guide and video at the PRNEWS subscriber resources page.]

Michael Atleson, an attorney in the FTC's division of advertising practices, said influencers should know the rules, but ultimately brands are responsible for social content.

"Generally speaking, a company is ultimately responsible for what others do on its behalf; it can't delegate that responsibility away," Atleson told PRNEWS. "Thus, if brands are going to use influencers, they need to have reasonable training, monitoring, and compliance programs in place."

For attorney **Allison Fitzpatrick**, a partner at **Davis & Gilbert LLP**, one takeaway from the re-release is "that eliminating deception in the online marketplace…will continue to be a top FTC priority in 2020."

No doubt 2020 is going to be a big year on social media. It's the beginning of a new decade, but also a year of an impactful U.S. election. Every election during this millennium has left an historic mark on social.

In 2008, **Barack Obama** raised a record-setting $750 million, according to **The New York Times**. Much of it came from small contributions received via the internet.

Facebook's reputation, though not its revenue, continues to suffer from accusations and missteps made during the 2016 election. It allowed Russian trolls to create smear content that millions of Americans saw in their feeds.

That said, social platforms are looking to avoid similar issues in 2020. Twitter brazenly took the lead with a ban on political ads for 2020, foregoing substantial revenue. Facebook may follow suit.

Brands and Influencers Beware

- Always disclose your relationship with the brand
- Broadcast the partnership early in the message, not in your profile or a hashtag
- Label posts as "Ad" or "Sponsored" in the description
- Influencers can't talk about their experience with a product they have not tried
- Influencers can't make positive statements about a product they think is terrible

Source: FTC, www.ftc.gov/endorsements

CONTROLLING THE CONVERSATION

Consumers seem fed up with a lot of the messaging and conversations published around social media. Twitter, in particular, is one of the more divisive forums. It allows live, direct access to celebrities and public figures, including their personal statements and opinions.

Twitter recognized the exasperation in its community. It has moved to create tools to let users to control conversations that tend to go off the rails. While inflammatory dialogue can occur on any social media platform, Twitter is leading the charge to make its experience more pleasant.

The launch of Twitter topics allows users to curate their timelines, following more of what is useful and interesting to them. Communicators and marketers can acquire audience knowledge utilizing topics in a way that's similar to following hashtags on **Instagram**.

"When you choose to follow a topic–whether it's your favorite band, sports team or celebrity–you'll see tweets from a whole host of accounts that are experts, fans or just tend to talk about that thing a lot on Twitter," the platform says.

This will help clear away much of the "junk" that may currently float to the top of users' timelines.

SORRY, GOTTA GO

Twitter also is allowing users to leave conversations they no longer wish to engage in. The platform's "hide reply" function lets users exit a dialogue when they feel threatened, uncomfortable or are just sick of seeing their notifications blow up.

The function also can unlock should the user wish to return and relive the conversation.

Twitter's research shows that many users fail to utilize the block and mute functions currently available on the platform, fearing retaliation. Hide reply should help users get around that and safely curate their experience. ■

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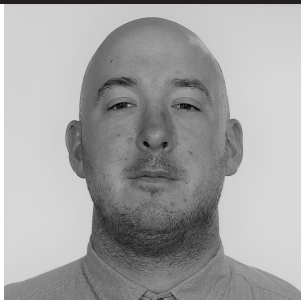
BY LUKE BUDKA, HEAD, DIGITAL PR & SEO, TOPLINE COMMUNICATIONS

A Step-by-Step Way to Manage Your Reputation on Google, for Free



[**Editor's Note:** This is the first of a two-part series. Part II will run in the January 2020 edition of PRNEWS.]

Where do you go when you want information? When you're researching a product or a company? It's obvious, right? Everyone turns to **Google**. It dominates search.

Google is a discipline in itself. It's also a verb. I googled to see if you can study for a Google degree. You can't. I'm surprised, but not surprised. I am told that a U.K. university takes three years to develop a degree program. It's hard to predict what Google will do tomorrow, let alone in 1,095 days.

Truth is that mastering Google is the best way to manage your reputation online. And I'm not talking about classic SEO. I'm not talking about ranking for important top, middle and bottom of sales funnel keywords, though these rankings undoubtedly have an impact on your reputation. As a result, I have approached this article with a mind-set of classic reputation management, which has nothing to do with SEO.

So, here are the first four points in our rundown of the nine best ways to manage your reputation on Google.

GOOGLE MY BUSINESS (GMB)

This has been known as all kinds of things over the years (think Google Places etc). The map deck containing business listings appears at the top of the search engine results pages (SERPs). Or the GMB profile sits above/alongside your website in the SERPs when a prospect conducts a branded search. Most prominent GMB features include review stars and photos.

What do your reviews look like? Are they influencing the click-through rate on your normal website listing in Google? If you need better reviews, Google offers tips about how to generate GMB reviews here: https://bit.ly/33GdSEn

Have you verified/claimed your GMB listing? And what do your photos look like? Are they 'on brand'? The GMB profile goes way further than reviews and photos to be fair. You can add Q&As, and list your services - it's a powerful free tool. Invest in it; it's probably the first thing a prospect will see.

KNOWLEDGE PANEL

If GMB is all about your business (more often than not related to a particular area, for example, self storage in Manchester or property accountants in Nottingham, it's such a feature-packed resource that can so drastically affect reputation, I advise every business to claim theirs, whether the company is geographically focused or not), then the Knowledge Panel is about an entity. Find a musician, a business, a place, for example. It serves as a snapshot, nothing more.

Still, though, the Knowledge Panel contains vital information. For example, your business name, its description and your associated social profiles.

These can make or break you, of course. What if prospects are sent to the wrong social profiles? Or what if you merge with another company and your business name changes? Claiming and verification require a Gmail address, so don't give it to the intern and panic when he or she leaves and you no longer have the login details. Here are Google's tips on Knowledge Panel verification: https://bit.ly/2sEVVJJ

BRANDED SEARCH

Silly question, but does your website show up first when you Google your business name? Anyone searching for you online likely will be highly qualified. They've already decided they want to work with you and now they just need to find you.

If you're not appearing first for your own branded searches, then address it as a matter of urgency.

'PEOPLE ALSO ASK'

Quite often if you conduct a search and scroll down the page, you'll see a 'People also ask' box containing three or four questions, about a quarter to halfway down.

This box can be expanded limitlessly. To do so, click on the dropdown icon next to each question.

Have you checked to see the questions people are asking about your brand? If so, have you checked to see who's answering them? Google's returning content in response to the questions. It's pulling the content from somewhere, maybe your competitor's blog. If you're not answering these questions, you should be. ■

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PRNews
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BY MARK WEINER, IPR MEASUREMENT COMMISSION/CHIEF INSIGHTS OFFICER, CISION

Dispel These Nine Measurement Myths in 2020 En Route to Success

As 2019 winds down, we reflect on the past, look forward to the New Year and consider the many opportunities and challenges it will bring. Thoughts turn to beginnings, fresh starts and replenished budgets. To succeed, though, we must discard old notions, reject tired chestnuts and dispel the myths that stifle our profession.

1. PR Research is Too Complex and Expensive: Communications research is more accessible to more professionals than at any time in the history of PR. Some do-it-yourself platforms are even free.

Despite the limitations of free and low-cost tools, they provide simple ways to conduct an online survey and a media analysis. Based on the findings from such a survey, you can create an appetite for data and insights they enable.

As the interest in data and insights grows among internal clients and your team, resources for more evolved approaches will materialize. These will take you even further on your PR research and evaluation journey.

2. PR Measurement, Research and Evaluation Mean The Same Thing: As the wordsmiths representing our organizations and clients, we must strive for precision in every instance. As such:

- Measurement is the lowest form in this hierarchy; it's equivalent to "counting"
- Research involves gathering, analyzing and interpreting data about a market, a company or a brand, and its past, present and future potential
- Evaluation requires expert judgment to draw data-informed conclusions about quality, merit or worth

YOU'RE SUNK WITHOUT A REAL-TIME EFFORT

3. Real-Time Analytics are Essential: The pace of business and society often demands immediacy and responsiveness. Still, high-stakes situations require thoughtful consideration, in which case, "right time" matters more.

Here, right time represents the speed of deliberate decision-making, often at higher levels within the organization. To fuel such decisions, the trade-offs between speed, accuracy and budget shift the balance in ways commensurate with the situational implications, which may be high.

4. PR Research Only Tells Us What We Already Know: While that's true some of the time, wouldn't you enjoy the benefits of pre-testing your hypothesis in advance of launch? Reassurance holds great value when alternative approaches may be too speculative, expensive or even careless when under closer scrutiny

5. PR Tools are 'Insights Engines:' While technology plays an essential role in achieving the desired insights and analysis, it represents only one-third of the insights equation. The other two parts reflect the need for research and evaluation (see number 2, above), which are the human complements to achieve a reliable outcome.

Sector expertise ensures that the data and research are undertaken by people familiar with PR, your industry and the media.

The third element, statistical acumen, guarantees accuracy and an ability to reveal the stories below the surface. Eliminating any one of these three parts translates into findings that are either inaccurate, irrelevant or inexecutable.

EVERYONE IS USING AI TO MEASURE

6. Artificial Intelligence Drives Most PR Research Programs: While AI captures a lot of attention in PR discourse, there's very little that qualifies as true artificial intelligence, as opposed to machine learning, which is a lower-form of AI.

Machines continue to struggle with intangibles. Take content analysis, as an example. There are hundreds – maybe thousands – of ways an author can express a reputation theme such as innovation. Without humans to 'teach' and manage the technology, using AI to track the concept of innovation will fail.

The future of AI in PR holds great promise, but it won't be hands off and it's not here yet.

7. PR Research Kills Creativity and Negates Professional Expertise: This argument implies that the sterility of data conflicts with the ingenuity of the communicator. On the contrary, research and evaluation focus the communicator's brilliance on areas holding the highest potential for explosive results and positive ROI.

8. Connecting PR With Sales Remains Out of Reach for All But The Biggest Companies: Until 2018, when advances in marketing technology enabled PR pros to track clicks from the digital news article level all the way through to online purchase, this myth held true.

In the past, the only ways to quantify PR's contribution employed marketing mix models (still popular) or the rare case where PR operated in isolation with no competing factors to influence the buying decision.

Now, even low-budget PR campaigns – even B-to-B – track consumers from article (origination) through awareness, consideration, understanding and purchase (optimal completion). Called attribution analysis, the incremental budget for this technology falls within most PR budgets (PRN, Oct. 2019).

9. The Right Budget for Communications Research is 10 Percent: This canard suggests that all companies and brands are at the same stage in their respective life-cycles.

Continued on page 14

Continued from page 13

The right answer on budget for communication research, of course, is : "It depends." If you plan to announce a breakthrough product, 20 percent might not be enough to optimize the occasion. If, however, you plan to milk a dying brand, 2 percent could be too much.

The best advice: Speak with a communications research expert. They can guide you. A great source for free information is the **Institute for Public Relations** (www.instituteforpr.org)

ANCIENT SOCIETIES AND PR

When we think of myths, we tend to think in terms of ancient societies. To explain certain phenomena, these cultures applied limited knowledge to uphold a particular belief, which, in turn, typically supported the conventional wisdom of those in power at that time.

Today's leadership knows enough about business and the power of data sciences to elevate the enterprise in ways that go far beyond PR's purview. As we seek to quantify PR's unique contribution, to communicate our impact on business performance and to remain relevant as a profession, measurement, research and evaluation hold an essential position for the modern communicator. With that in mind, 2020 may be the year for clean slate public relations. ■

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Continued from page 7

Social Media and Regulation

Andrew Cross, Walker Sands

Regulators will get serious about big tech. **Google**, **Facebook**, **Apple** and **Amazon** have come under increased antitrust scrutiny, which will magnify in an election year. But it's not just congressional probes that could explore a break-up of big tech. Shareholders also may be warming up to the potential value unlocked from a Google spin-out of **YouTube** or a Facebook spin-out of **Instagram**. A more competitive environment in social media and search has big implications for PR and marketing pros, who may have to contend with a greater diversity of platforms.

STORYTELLING AND WRITING

Larry Parnell, Associate Professor/Program Director Master's in Strategic PR
The George Washington University

My training as a journalist compels me to reflect on the number of the year ahead – 2020 – and its use in journalism and copywriting – to recommend a renewed focus on quality writing and storytelling. As educators of PR pros, we must be vigilant and stress that clear, succinct writing is a critical skill for all communications professionals. Too often we see examples – online, in the traditional media, politics and government – of poor or, even worse, unethical writing. It is our responsibility to combat this trend every day in class and in the workplace. Nothing is more important than getting your copy right – and doing the right thing in the process – in all of our communications work products.

Michael Smart, Smart PR

In 2020, content marketers and PR pros will stop pointing fingers and bashing each other about declining shares, backlinks, impressions and placements. Instead, they'll collaborate to create and distribute a vital few pieces of amazing content. They'll be willing to sacrifice quantity for quality, because they recognize that nobody is paying attention to the daily/weekly/monthly output dictated by the calendar and not newsworthiness. No more fighting over who gets to go first – true integration means storytelling is the premium, and channels are secondary.

John Walls, Neiman Marcus

PR pros need to better understand the demands of media in order to be more valuable resources. Reporters aren't simply writing stories. They've evolved into content engines, writing blogs, live tweeting events, and streaming interviews, to name a few. This will continue in 2020. While our pitches need to be more succinct and straightforward, they must be diverse in the offer. We should be offering a second interview for **Facebook** Live or IGTV, or pitching an additional exclusive image to be revealed on the outlet's Instagram page, or suggesting LinkedIn or Twitter posts once the outlet commits to the story. PR success is about being a trusted resource for content.

TECHNOLOGY AND ETHICS

Sophie Scott, Global MD, Technology, FleishmanHillard

The need for the technology sector to display strong ethics and a clear moral compass will (continue to) extend beyond the realms of AI. Around the world, we hear ever-louder cries for increased tech sector regulation and legislation. In fact, according to our research, 31 percent of consumers think tech companies are regulated too little. And beyond the rule of law, I anticipate conversation and debate around numerous techlash topics, from privacy to anti-trust, and geopolitics to shared responsibility. In 2020, the best remedy to techlash will be tech companies' internal and external commitments to working with government, academia and each other, and to behaving in ethical, socially responsible ways. To not only do the most profitable thing, but the right thing, on behalf of all stakeholders. ■

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Consumer Engagement Falls 10% Year-to-Date for B2Cs, 30% for B2Bs During Jan-Nov 2019

While social media isn't yet old enough to be considered conventional, several traditions and best-practices have developed.

In the 'old' days of social, which weren't long ago, having the largest audience was almost all that mattered.

The industry has matured. While a gaudy audience figure still counts for something, the metric is just one of several savvy communicators and marketers use to assess a brand's social media success. Generally, a best practice is to be wary of any effort that touts a single metric without surrounding context.

Shareablee

TOP B2C BRANDS IN THE U.S.: JANUARY – NOVEMBER 2019

Based on Total Actions

Data provided exclusively to PR News by Shareablee

Sources:

RANK	B2C BRANDS		TOTAL ACTIONS	TOTAL CONTENT	ACTIONS PER CONTENT	TOTAL AUDIENCE
1	FASHIONNOVA	Fashion Nova	276,904,324	21,573	12,836	17,795,236
2	HUDABEAUTY	Huda Beauty	226,144,606	2,495	90,639	43,939,951
3	VICTORIA'S SECRET	Victoria's Secret	192,479,809	2,737	70,325	107,478,786
4	KYLIE	Kylie Cosmetics	190,043,133	3,448	55,117	25,510,195
5	COLOURPOP	ColourPop	146,755,665	4,477	32,780	10,522,504
6	CALVIN KLEIN	Calvin Klein	129,074,468	2,241	57,597	34,181,680
7	FENTY BEAUTY BY RIHANNA	Fenty Beauty	126,062,839	2,306	54,667	8,724,269
8	Red Bull	Red Bull	125,420,026	15,093	8,310	61,840,587
9	FOREVER 21	Forever 21	105,738,713	4,045	26,141	34,063,951
10	JEFFREE STAR COSMETICS	Jeffree Star Cosmectics	98,513,537	1,017	96,867	6,033,073

MANY METRICS

In the charts on pages 15 and 16, which data partner **Shareablee** provides exclusively to PRNEWS, you can see the importance of a large audience. Still, audience size during the first 11 months of 2019 (Jan. 1-Nov 24) is but one factor when it comes to the rankings of top social brands.

For example, **Red Bull**'s audience of 62 million dwarfs that of the top-ranked social brand, **Fashion Nova** (18 million), yet the energy drink is number 8 on our list in terms of actions, or consumer engagement.

In these charts, actions is defined as the sum of likes, retweets, comments and shares on **Facebook**, **Instagram** and **Twitter**.

FASHION NOVA TAKES TOP SPOT

Fashion Nova, the leader, combines a solid audience size with a plethora of posts (22,000) and it gets a very respectable number of actions per piece of content (13,000). Moreover, nobody is within hailing distance of its total consumer engagement figure.

By contrast, Red Bull posted fewer times than Fashion Nova, yet its average consumer engagement (8,300) per piece of content trailed that of Fashion Nova.

Of course, many brands would be more than satisfied to achieve Red Bull's notoriety on social and its engagement figure. In addition, Red Bull moved up 5 places on this list of top social brands, year over date, says Shareablee marketing chief **Herman Chen**.

Its consumer engagement rose 34 percent across all platforms, with Twitter up 26 percent and Instagram rising 40 percent.

CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT OFF 10 PERCENT

As a category, reviews are mixed. Once again beauty and fashion dominated the top B2C 10 list. Yet there's more reason for concern. The top 10 dominated, accounting for 25 percent of all B2C engagement, Chen says.

Another concern is the drop in consumer actions, year to date. B2Cs had 7 billion consumer actions during the 11-month period, which is a 10 percent decrease from the same period in 2018.

On a brighter note, B2Cs experienced a 10 percent rise

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in consumer actions on Twitter vs the same period last year.

Moving to the next chart, about B2B brands, the race is much tighter between three perennial social media powerhouses: **IMG Models Worldwide**, **Pantone** and **Sotheby's**. The total actions total of fourth place brand, **Wix**, is not close to number three Sotheby's.

Looking at color company Pantone illustrates how it's possible to succeed with a less-is-more strategy. Only **FedEx** posted fewer pieces of content during the period, yet Pantone would up as number two on the list.

Its not-so-secret secret was averaging 11,000 consumer actions for every one of its 518 pieces of content. That was up 40 percent vs the same 2018 period. In addition, Pantone was consistent. Both its Facebook and Instagram pages enjoyed a 40 percent rise in consumer engagement.

ACTIONS OFF 30 PERCENT

The larger story in the B2B category is that consumer engagement was off 30 percent, Chen says.

As you might expect, figures for this category are vastly smaller than for the B2C sector. For example, B2Bs accumulated 74 million consumer actions during the period; B2C had 7 billion.

In addition to the leaders, two other B2B brands made big news. Cisco Training & Certification, which was outside the top 50 last year, moved into the top 10, with an increase in consumer engagement of 300 percent. **Kaspersky** had a similar story and increase. ■

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Sources:

RANK	B2B BRANDS	TOTAL ACTIONS	TOTAL CONTENT	ACTIONS PER CONTENT	TOTAL AUDIENCE
1	IMG Models Worldwide	5,949,713	1,641	3,626	2,068,422
2	Pantone	5,739,331	518	11,080	2,880,164
3	Sotheby's	5,554,923	4,357	1,275	1,699,087
4	wix	2,442,738	1,651	1,480	4,764,684
5	Shutterstock	1,459,464	4,148	352	1,244,663
6	Pentagram Design	1,239,557	583	2,126	963,074
7	Cisco Training & Certification	1,023,982	1,465	699	899,527
8	FedEx	855,783	407	2,103	2,998,649
9	Amazon Web Services	709,156	8,478	84	2,304,861
10	Kaspersky	647,358	6,032	107	331,584