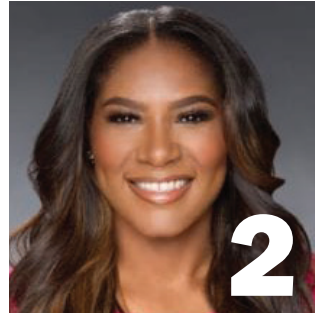


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PREDICTIONS

DEI, Purpose, Crisis, Personalization and Technology Seen Powering Successful PR in 2021

Each year we ask communication leaders to predict and spot trends for the new year. In the wake of a tumultuous and unpredictable 2020, it was not an easy job. We thank them.

For 2020, [personalization](#) was predicted, in 2019, as a dominant theme. Trust topped the 2019 list. Some trends for 2021 extend what 2020 highlighted: greater emphasis on DEI, purpose and internal communication.

In addition, our communicators anticipate greater reliance on technology in PR and marketing. Several note, though, companies will use tech and social differently in 2021. One prediction is that social will emphasize joy and tap into personal experiences. PR vet Bob Pearson envisions a potential intersection of gaming and messaging platforms (page 13).

RECOVERY OR DEPRESSION?

On the business side, the jury is out. Some see a recovery for PR revenue, particularly since the need for strategic communication rose to the fore during the pandemic. Others anticipate PR's financial difficulties continuing, particularly for those who lack flexibility and are unable to measure their contributions with business metrics.

As 2020 was a year of pandemics and elections, we've added predictions categories: Post-COVID-19 and Post-Trump, though neither COVID-19 nor the president are 'post.'

As in previous years, predictors are identified fully in their first prediction and by name only with their second.

Whatever happens, we wish all a wonderful, peaceful 2021. Most important, may it be a year of health.

POST-COVID-19

Michael Lamp, SVP, Digital, HUNTER



[The pandemic collapsed into three months](#) a process of adopting e-commerce that would have taken 10 years in the US," according to **McKinsey & Company**. This is a stunning recognition that consumer behavior has been forever changed. It's an 'Add to Cart' (for life).

The only path forward to long-term retail success hinges on our ability as communicators to provide context and inspiration, but also a through-line to online points of purchase. Platforms like **Shopify, SquareSpace** and **Wix** afford smaller businesses the flexibility to test ecommerce solutions without major investment in digital infrastructure. We know that habitual behavior can drive brand loyalty, so making clients part of this new online user experience will be essential to success.

Chris LaPlaca, SVP, Communications, ESPN



Communicators' influence in helping brands navigate incredibly challenging and rapidly changing times will continue to rise. Often, it's the communication team that has the best handle on the intersection of a company's internal and external narrative, and increasingly we see their insights helping drive smart decision-making. Continued emphasis on consistently proactive, fact-based advocacy will be critical in a world

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UPCOMING EVENTS AND DEADLINES*

**SOCIAL MEDIA
AWARDS
ENTRY DEADLINE
DECEMBER 4, 2020**

**MEDIA RELATIONS
VIRTUAL EVENT
DECEMBER 8-9, 2020**

**DIVERSITY AWARDS
ENTRY DEADLINE
DECEMBER 10, 2020**

Continued from page 1

where *what the facts are* is often muddled.

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



COVID-19 has done more than spike our vocabularies with words like *super-spreader* and *safe social distancing*. It has redefined where we work; this time, permanently.

Despite those who speak of missing the office dynamic of seeing colleagues daily, there will be a huge percentage of practitioners who remain home-based by choice. The pandemic forced us to level-up technology and other resources, and to do our jobs from home. Add the meetings driven by **Zoom** and **Microsoft Teams**, and the notion of workplace now is the kitchen table, den or spare bedroom.

By the way, talk with your tax accountant about what might be deductible as business expenses, thanks to COVID-19 relocation. There is a downside, of course—LOTS of abandoned commercial office space everywhere.

Kim Sample, President, PR Council



Solving the world's biggest problems requires collaboration. The PR industry will be a vital part of these unions.

As PR pros have counseled clients on the dual crises of the pandemic and social justice, the discipline's value has never been clearer or more measurable. The industry has come together to tackle these crises and collaborated at new levels to keep employees safe, but the stakes will be even higher in 2021 with the availability of COVID-19 vaccines.

With half of Americans reporting that they are unlikely to get a vaccine, PR will help save lives and restore the economy by delivering science-based, emotionally compelling messages, tapping culturally relevant influencers and educating and persuading audiences through paid, earned, social and owned campaigns.

Michael Smart, Media Relations Guru, PR Coach



The perceived requirement to physically work in New York or Silicon Valley is permanently gone. Talented PR pros will secure and maintain good jobs or good clients wherever they live.

An agency based in India-

napolis always was capable of being as effective as one in San Francisco, but now prospective customers and media will perceive it as such.

Charlene Wheelless, Senior Advisor for Equity and Justice, APCO Worldwide



There will be an unprecedented focus on employee well-being. If 2020 has taught us anything, it is that if your employees are at risk, your business is at risk.

POST-TRUMP

Roger Bolton, President, Page Society



Globalization has encountered severe headwinds. Nationalism and populism, as well as concerns about climate and the pandemic have created significant threats to the global trading system, causing many companies to rethink their supply chains.

At the same time, the post-war international institutions that have guaranteed peace and enabled prosperity have been under siege. In 2021, the world will begin to come to grips with the need to revitalize those institutions and preserve the ability of global markets to deliver efficiency that contributes to rising living standards and access to opportunity for people globally.

BUSINESS

Rick Gould, Managing Partner, Gould+Partners



A just-completed survey of 50 top PR agencies in the U.S. and Canada showed 76 percent lost revenue in 2020, some as much as 50 percent of their book of business, versus what they had at the end of 2019. 24 percent showed an increase in net revenue, although most gains were small. The good news is 76 percent project a recovery in 2021, with only 8 percent envisioning a decrease and 16 percent seeing a flat year. 44 percent predicted that 2021 will match pre-pandemic 2019.

Dwayna Haley, SVP, Practice Director, Porter Novelli



The communication industry is shifting rapidly, and that change is causing massive business impact to the traditional role and long-term viability of large PR agencies. Increasingly, AOR-

level client relationships are a thing of the past as companies prioritize project-level support for real-time, urgent needs.

In addition, companies are looking to reduce costs and optimize spend, which requires large agencies to be nimble, smart, fast and cost-efficient to compete with niche-agency services and the emerging force of consulting groups offering similar support.

Moving forward, we will see continuous mergers of large and mid-size PR agencies to scale business and rebuild industry confidence in the full-service agency model.

Gene Grabowski, Partner, kglobal



The combined factors of the global COVID-19 pandemic, concerns over climate change, strident political divisions, the Black Lives Matter movement and growing economic uncertainty around the world are dramatically redefining how we work, play, vote and think about our lives.

More than ever, people are focused on protecting their health, their families and their jobs. And they're looking for institutions, politicians and brands to make them feel safe. As a consequence, the work of PR in 2021 will be more relevant, more serious and more important than ever before.

Corporations, universities, governments and institutions of all kinds will be turning to PR agencies to help provide safety and comfort to their stakeholders and their families. Increasingly, consumers will expect corporations and brands to take positions on social issues and to intertwine that messaging with the delivery of products and services. PR professionals will be expected to provide guidance to companies and institutions on matters that go far beyond traditional branding and marketing.

Dr. Tina McCorkindale, APR, President/CEO, Institute for Public Relations



Companies will invest more resources into internal communication as COVID-19 continues to impact businesses and many employees continue working from home, eventually transitioning into a hybrid structure, splitting time between WFH and the office.

With the shifting needs of different types

of employees (WFH, frontline, manufacturing, etc.) and the dire health situation, companies will need to ensure they have a strong communication infrastructure, especially as vaccination accessibility increases. However, outside of internal communication, more responsibilities will be **heaped onto the communication function without increased budget or headcount.**

Kim Sample

PR agencies are agile, delivering the right expertise at the correct time, will continue to be the biggest winners.

Annual plans? They're a thing of the past. Instead, professionals will tap a plethora of real-time data sources—and a stronger-than-ever trust in the sharp intuition that's honed with experience—to help clients navigate whatever 2021 brings.

With COVID-19 and its economic impact still raging, a new administration with a questionable mandate and socially minded populations that know how to activate and get their voices heard, agility is a requirement that's here to stay. PR shops will need to continue to break down structural barriers, deepen their expertise and deploy new technologies to help those they represent see around corners.

CRISIS

Gene Grabowski

More and more, companies of all sizes will turn to experienced outside crisis communication professionals to manage crises rather than having in-house staff try to deal with them.

Most corporations have learned that just as they must rely on outside legal counsel to handle major litigation, their internal communication teams—focused on corporate marketing and branding and distracted by internal office politics—aren't equipped to manage all the variables that arise in modern crises. Agency professionals well-versed in social media assaults, cyber attacks, product recalls, major media scrutiny and politically sensitive issues will be called to address most of these challenges as the stakes grow higher for individuals and institutions under attack.

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SOCIAL MEDIA AWARDS

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Communicators Target Growth Sectors to Build Business During Pandemic

For most people working in PR and communications, 2020 will forever be known as a crisis. That's it. Continual crisis. And while crisis stymied many industries this year, it made communication more essential.

When clear delivery of information becomes a necessity, the communication industry should grow. While the advertising world watched agencies shrink due to client losses and budget cutbacks, some PR shops expanded. We look at several examples of growth.

NEW CLIENTS AND PROJECTS

Some industries, such as education, found themselves atop parents' minds as schools shut, then went remote, reopened again and closed *ad nauseum*. This instability not only made communication vital for educators and school systems, but for companies in the education sector.

RoseComm, a strategic communications firm, added three education clients: the **Council for Aid to Education (CAE)**, **PlayPower** and **Reading Plus**. CAE, a nonprofit, provides performance-based assessments that measure college and career readiness skills. Reading Plus is an online program that provides personalized intervention and instruction for students in grades 3 to 12. PlayPower is the world's largest commercial playground equipment manufacturer.

"The COVID-19 pandemic required a dramatic shift in the way education companies do business and in how they tell their stories," says Rosemary Ostmann, RoseComm's president and CEO. Its ability to pivot as the education sector changes during COVID-19 was key in the company attracting new business.



Rosemary Ostmann
CEO/President
RoseComm

CHANGES IN PARENTS' ROLE

Education organizations had to adapt their messaging to reflect the "ebbs and flows of the learning environment: virtual, in-person or hybrid," Ostmann says. As the ways educators teach and students learn changed, it was critical for education organizations to "not only demonstrate relevance, but to use new channels to reach target audiences who may not be sitting in a classroom or a district building."

Perhaps the most interesting shift for education companies, Ostmann says, is the evolving role parents and guardians play in facilitating remote learning.

"Many adults in the home have become more hands-on as they help their children," she says. As a result, companies that previously marketed to educators, now are considering how to communicate directly with parents, too.

The pandemic also is changing other things. "We're working with our clients on critical issues such as equity in the classroom as well as serving the unique needs of students with learning challenges in a remote situation," Ostmann

says. The firm's clients, she adds, are "advocating in a way we did not anticipate prior to COVID-19."

NEW OFFERINGS

Besides bringing on new clients, PR is growing through the addition of services in news areas of demand.

For example, with so many staffers working from home, cyber attacks are increasing. A **Malwarebytes** survey of 200 IT and cybersecurity professionals found [security breaches in 20 percent of organizations](#). A report from **CrowdStrike** found [more cyber crime during the first six months of 2020](#) than in all of 2019. It's getting to the point where cyber attacks need to be seen like PR crises—it's not a question of whether a company will experience a data breach, but when.

This trend led public affairs firm **ROKK Solutions** to launch a business designed to proactively prepare companies for security incidents and navigate the process of communicating a breach or incident response should one arise.

VP Kaylin Trychon runs the practice. Called **GROKK**, it's not only a play on the company's name, but on the term grok, which means to understand intuitively or by empathy.

"Last spring, companies were left scrambling to put safe and secure technology systems in place as millions of employees quickly began working from home," Trychon says. "And now we're seeing an uptick in breaches, as hackers are finding and exploiting vulnerabilities in those systems. We created GROKK to help companies get ahead of breach communications."



Kaylin Trychon
VP
ROKK Solutions

BETTER JOURNALISTS

She mentions the importance of media relations during a data breach. Journalists who cover data tend to know the subject well and often are not the writers who report about your industry. Producing a garden-variety holding statement or attempting to cover up a breach rarely works with them, [she wrote recently in Forbes](#).

"These reporters...[will] go...out and uncover what you have failed to tell them. Transparency is key."

Similar to standard crisis communication protocol, she also recommends building relationships with these reporters in advance of a cyber attack. Other tactics include having communicators work closely with company personnel involved with data, such as IT.

Other growth sectors include the cannabis industry, where communication firm **Marino** is gaining clients. And the firm **memoryBlue** added a public affairs unit to gain business as political changes begin in DC with a new administration. ■

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A Tall Order: Strategic Pitches Ensure Media Coverage for Historic Arts Venue During COVID-19

Devastation from two of the world's pandemics—the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic pandemic that followed in its wake—is well known. In the US, despite recent gains, the economy is setting dismal growth records and joblessness. There are roughly 20 million Americans without jobs, per the **US Department of Labor**. As of Nov. 25, nearly every state in the US is experiencing rises in coronavirus cases. More than 265,000 are dead of the virus and the Nov. 26 Thanksgiving holiday, and other factors, [could spur another spike in infections](#).

Even worse, [lawmakers have left Washington for Thanksgiving](#) without agreeing on a relief package for the unemployed or a stimulus plan for struggling businesses.

In short, Americans are concerned most about their financial and physical health. The arts, perceived as a luxury in good times, is far down the priority list now.

For this story, we visited [the web site](#) of **Newark Symphony Hall**

(NSH), the Garden State's largest arts venue and one of its oldest. The first thing we saw is that NSH is closed for COVID.

So, try getting support for arts-related projects when performances are suspended. Yet that's the assignment for women-owned **Violet PR**, which won what seemed, on first glance, a dubious victory, in late October, to represent NSH. We couldn't have been more wrong.

SHAPE THE NARRATIVE

Built in 1925, NSH presents “an opportunity to tell many stories to important audiences in New Jersey and nationally,” says April Mason, Violet's president. That NSH is closed is just one obstacle.

Besides NSH's turnaround, among the stories it's pitching are the positive influence on the neighborhood's economic development. NSH promises 500 construction jobs.

In a state where an estimated [one-third of small businesses have gone under](#) due to COVID-19, NSH's opportunities for 50 small businesses is welcome news.

In addition, the public needs periodic breaks from COVID-19 stories, particularly in the US, where [coverage largely is negative](#). Accordingly, Mason has racked up more than 50 news stories about NSH, including about its investment committee and a recent \$750,000 grant for its \$40 million renovation. And that's in just a bit more than one month on the job.

Another angle Violet is pitching is NSH's status as a Black-led organization. With the resurgence of #BLM, these stories are particularly attractive. On top of that, Violet is pitching NSH's historic role in promoting Black culture. Fortunately, many of those moments are included in [an upcoming documentary](#).

NSH's leadership is another ace in Violet's deck. Hall presi-

dent/CEO [Taneshia Nash Laird](#) is a dynamic personality with several compelling stories. In addition to being one of the few women leading an arts venue, she's also a Black woman and the only Black person heading a performing arts organization in New Jersey.

And slowly, arts are returning to NSH, though online. Violet has news releases planned around them, including workshops, virtual programs and an artist-in-residence program.

It's far from an embarrassment of riches, yet there are many avenues for pitching. Mason tells us the firm plans to be strategic. Pitching will continue to include a mix of entertainment, business, real estate and foundation news, she says. Adding, “We don't want to overwhelm the same small group of reporters.” ■

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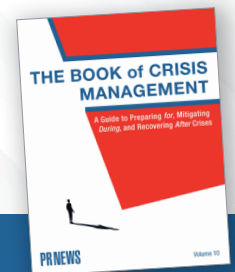
City-owned Newark Symphony Hall was placed on the Registry of Historic Places in 1977.

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How a Small PR Firm Handled a Crisis at Sea and a Global Media Frenzy at the Pandemic's Start

[Editor's Note: Having a plan is the minimum requirement for crisis pros. That's not always possible as veteran brand communicator Bobbie Carlton tells us in this Q&A.]



Bobbie Carlton
Founder
Carlton PR &
Marketing

PRNEWS: Give us the scenario, please.

Bobbie Carlton: On Saturday February 8, 2020, a former co-worker, Blake Courter, contacted me. His parents, Gay and Phil, were among [3,600 passengers quarantined](#) aboard the **Diamond Princess**, the ship where some 700 coronavirus infections occurred. He'd been trying to manage media for his parents and needed help. Could my firm handle it? Immediately? Within one hour we booked media, had partially written a press release and distributed it the next morning.

PRNEWS: Obviously, there was no crisis plan. What did you do to manage? What can our readers learn from the ordeal?

Carlton: Blake started off very well—creating a time zones table showing London, Japan, Paris and Boston (his parents were off Japan's coast and we were in Boston). Requests were coming in from all over the world. We also had a **Google** folder where we could share documents, a spreadsheet for the media list and a daily statement.

One of the biggest issues was that his parents didn't have laptops, just smartphones and a tablet. Big documents and briefing notes weren't going to work. So, we created simple schedules that could be read in email—any changes, and there were a lot—had to be entered manually.

We also instituted a daily folder system in the Google folder we shared with the media. We were sharing pictures, video and audio recordings from Phil, with credits. Reporters could dip into the folder and pick up that day's statement and any new images or recordings.

PRNEWS: Give us a feel for the volume of the media frenzy.

Carlton: I've worked with public companies and large-scale global media relations projects, but I don't think I ever dealt with a story that prompted this kind of media attention. We were booking 10-15 interviews a day and supplying images and video for dozens more. This included the **NY Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, CNN, NBC, SkyTV, BBC, CTV** and more.

It was not unusual to take a five-minute phone call and have four to five voicemails come in simultaneously. The calls and emails were coming in round the clock, in clumps, representing Asia, Europe and the US.

Since I'm a bit of an insomniac, I handled calls very early in the morning (4:00 am) until 9, when a senior staffer would take over so I could get other client work done. Then I would

pick it up again after 5:00 pm and go until midnight or so. That was really the only time we were off.

PRNEWS: You had clients who know narratives. Gay is a best-selling writer and Phil makes documentaries.

Carlton: Yes, our clients were great about focus. We all knew what we wanted to accomplish, and this helped us tremendously. We would discuss the best way to tell the story and zero in on the day's top messages. They had an eye for detail and frequently shared pictures and detailed observances that [helped build a richer story](#). Our goal was to make the story front-page news and get the US government to step in. The Courters felt the quarantine was ineffective. Personnel were not trained to implement a quarantine. Moreover, crew members potentially were infected, living in close quarters and moving throughout the ship, delivering meals and supplies to passengers in their cabins.

PRNEWS: How did you build trust with international media?

Carlton: In my previous life I headed global PR for two public companies, so I have quite a bit of international media experience. That said, there were a few times when I was guessing, albeit educated guessing, about a few of the international media. I reached out to old friends and international contacts who generously gave me guidance.

PRNEWS: This was more than an assignment. You literally were trying to save your clients' lives.

Carlton: I tell junior PR pros, "This isn't brain surgery. No one is going to die if you don't get that press release out. Put it in perspective." Suddenly, I was faced with a situation where people were dying. The Courters are in their 70s and were clearly beyond worried. We scheduled a rest day at one point. The last thing we wanted to do was exhaust them and potentially compromise their immune systems.

PRNEWS: What other tips can you give our readers?

Carlton: I can't stress enough the impact of sharing media efficiently. The folder of high-quality pictures, video and audio files was gold, and making the images available around the clock, with attribution, contributed greatly to the ubiquity of the Courters' and the Diamond Princess' story. There are literally thousands of stories on the Diamond Princess and the early days of the coronavirus spread. There's no way we could have done enough interviews to satisfy everyone and get all those stories placed. ■

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What California's Expanded Privacy Law Means for Communicators



Just when you thought you understood the complexities of the relatively new California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA), on Election Day 2020, voters in the Golden State decided to take CCPA even further. By a wide margin (56-44 percent), [they approved](#) the California Privacy Rights Act (CPRA). Think of this new package as CCPA 2.0. There is a lot to unpack in this new law and how it might influence communicators and their clients doing business in California.

Similar to other privacy laws, the first step you, as a communicator, need to consider is to determine CPRA's scope. In other words, does CPRA cover what you do as a PR pro?

CPRA modifies those businesses covered under the law by changing CCPA. Under the new law, enforcement of which begins January 1, 2023, you are a covered business if you have more than \$25 million in revenue the preceding calendar year, or if you buy, sell or share personal information of 100,000 or more consumers (it was 50,000 in CCPA).

BUY, SELL AND NOW SHARE ARE REGULATED

It is important to note the addition of the word *share* to companies in scope of the law.

In short, CPRA expands privacy rights for California residents beyond CCPA. In addition to their rights under CCPA, Californians approved:

- ▶ their ability to correct inaccurate data that businesses possess
- ▶ increased protection under a new and expanded definition of *sensitive personal information*, which they can restrict use of
- ▶ the imposition of larger fines for those who misuse children's data (defined as those younger than 16)
- ▶ higher fines for data breaches
- ▶ limitations on how long data can be retained and used
- ▶ creation of a dedicated enforcement agency and
- ▶ an expansion of CCPA's *Do Not Sell* requirement to include sharing data with third parties

More insight about the expansion of *Do Not Sell* to *Do Not Share* is needed. CCPA gave consumers the right to opt out of the sale of their data. For example, companies that sold consumer data were required to install a *Do Not Sell* button on their web pages and clearly state how to opt out.

The expansion of those regulations to *Do Not Share* includes renting, releasing, disclosing and transferring data.

Perhaps most important, the expansion applies even if there is **no monetary exchange** for the data. In other words, read the new law carefully to know if your business moves data, in any way at all, to a third party, even if you are not getting paid for the data. Californians will soon have the right to tell you to stop.

Regarding sensitive personal information, CPRA includes categories that a lot of marketers like to collect about cus-

tomers and potential customers, including precise geolocation, race, ethnicity, religion, the content of personal email communication, genetic and health data and information about sexual orientation. CPRA gives Californians the right to limit the use and disclosure of this type of information.

The takeaway for communicators: Know what information is in your company's data and where it flows in the enterprise.

CPRA also creates the **California Privacy Protection Agency**. This new agency will assume enforcement, taking over from the state's Attorney General.

The agency will be tasked with providing guidance to businesses, educating consumers about their rights and investigating and levying fines for noncompliance. There is no private right of action for privacy violations, but the new law expands consumers' ability to sue over data breaches that expose email address and passwords, and a variety of unencrypted personal information.

NATIONAL AND EU QUESTIONS

Creation of the California Privacy Protection Agency raises a national question. In light of California's new law and enforcement, as well as a developing patchwork of privacy laws in other states, will Congress approve a national privacy law?

The answer will have to wait until the new Congress begins work in January 2021. So far, the House and Senate are miles apart on a national data regime. Much could depend on the Georgia run-offs next month. Should one party gain control of both the House and Senate, a data agreement seems more likely.

There is speculation that passage and implementation of CPRA will allow California to seek an adequacy decision from the **European Union (EU)**. An adequacy decision means the EU will consider California law equal to its [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#) when it comes to data protection for consumers. That will be a steep hill given [the recent invalidation of Privacy Shield](#) and other factors.

CPRA, as mentioned earlier, starts enforcement from January 1, 2023. That seems like a long time from now, but as many of you know, compliance with the CCPA, and especially the GDPR, took a long time. So, reviewing the potential impacts of CPRA on your operations should not be delayed.

This summary of CPRA and how it might impact your business or your clients is not a replacement for legal advice. Given the new law's impact, creation of the first agency dedicated solely to privacy enforcement and the huge fines for violations, if you hold a lot of California data it is a good idea to seek legal counsel and fully understand compliance. ■

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Key Lessons from Messaging to Frontline Workers During Coronavirus



While many businesses are accustomed to working virtually, essential workers have remained on site during the pandemic. In pre-coronavirus times, internal messaging routinely thanked staff, celebrated victories, updated employees and bolstered morale. During the past nine months, the volume of such messaging has risen significantly.

Still, the pandemic has led internal communicators to change tactics and messaging in spots.

WHEN IT FEELS STALE, CHANGE THE MESSAGE

Fatigue has been a critical challenge during the pandemic: physical, emotional, even information fatigue. To keep staff engaged, some internal communicators turned to tasteful humor, used different angles and employed more testimonials than during a normal period.

Ironically, a major issue for communicators working with frontline workers was easing of lockdowns and related controls. As the summer began, and communities started to venture outside, communicators knew it was important to ask frontline staff to remain diligent about infection control.

This was more difficult than it might seem. Nobody wants a lecture, least of all overworked staff. Yet, as the pandemic rolled on, frontline workers relaxed, as did everyone else.

A critical difference with frontline workers is that their workplaces, such as medical and related care facilities, often contain a highly vulnerable population. Consistent messaging urging staff to remain vigilant was necessary.

The post at left tried to convey that message, but also broke from the routine “Wear Your Mask” content. It ran on an employee **Facebook** channel. Its mix of humor and education was well received.



This humorous content cemented dogma on mask-wearing. Source: The author

Keep in Touch, Constantly: You can never over-communicate. Unfortunately, that piece of conventional wisdom wasn't meant for lengthy crises. The importance of constant communication is real; still, changing message elements becomes critical.

Communicators who initi-

ated internal weekly manager calls and regular all-hands staff communication during the pandemic now realize their benefit.

They're likely to continue, in some form, when the pandemic is over.

Again, changing routines during these sessions is important. One method that's worked well is texting. Whether it's a reminder to frontline staff to attend weekly testing or a simple, *Thank you*, communicators have another tool in their kit.

CELEBRATE SMALL MOMENTS

This is a hallmark of internal communication. It's morphed slightly during the pandemic. For example:

1. Make employees top priority: If we had a dime for every internal statement issued during the pandemic that read, 'Employees are our top priority,' we could all retire.

Still, after the initial months of the pandemic, employees needed regular boosts to keep going. Internal communicators can make staff feel special with a modest investment.

Pre-pandemic, it was good practice to include motivational quotes and tips for stress relief on organizational Facebook pages. Do it more now.

2. Mix in education: During the pandemic, internal communicators' top goal is to ensure that staff is receiving operational and educational messages. Is the content helping staff do their jobs well? In frontline situations, this is vital.

As such, internal communicators used celebrations and other upbeat content as opportunities to weave in educational messages. For frontline workers, those included content about the state of the pandemic, how to be safe at home, and managing through changes in travel restrictions.

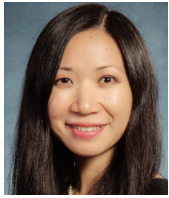
3. Circulate regular communication through multiple channels. Here's an example of internal communication having an external element. When visitation to medical facilities reopened, some internal communicators proactively shared visitation guidelines with patients' families through email, phone calls and social media. Not only did this give families hope that they'd see their loved ones again, but it also benefited frontline staff, as fewer phone calls were placed to strained switchboard employees.

4. Leverage blogs and social media. To continue to educate patient families and the larger community that it's safe to visit facilities, internal communicators included short videos in organic posts. This helped the community and families better understand visiting procedures. In addition, this line of education was included in blogs and contributed columns for community papers.

The challenges are not over. But we have seen the importance of internal communication for making employees feel appreciated and motivated. ■

Contact: jsheedy@lorettosystem.org

Dr. Yan Jin, Professor, PR, University of Georgia



2020 challenged crisis communication and strategic conflict management in unprecedented ways. Besides numerous organizational crises and public emergencies, we saw the rising tides of “sticky crises.” We use “sticky crisis” at the **University of Georgia’s** Crisis Communication Think Tank to indicate a crisis resulting from industry-wide, complex and challenging issues that often are intertwined and likely to reoccur. Many facets of the COVID-19 pandemic represent forms of sticky crisis mutation, detrimentally threatening public safety, disrupting business continuity and rattling social-economic stability globally.

As we continue combating COVID-19 and its aftermath, a post-pandemic communication-management system, driven by purpose and engineered via advanced crisis intelligence, will need to be built to facilitate stress-coping and resilience-strengthening across sectors.

Crisis practitioners and scholars will work even more closely to conduct sticky crisis research that generates industry-wide knowledge. Insights gained from practitioner-scholar collaboration will help us better prevent and prepare for future sticky crisis tsunamis.

Esther-Mireya Tejada, Chief Marketing & Communications Officer, SoundExchange



We are still marching through uncharted territory as we head into 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic rages on with a potential vaccine coming, a new US president will take office, racial and social unrest continue throughout the country, and we are more divided than ever. Heading into the new year, communicators will be laser focused on crisis management as we lead organizations, brands, and people through these turbulent times. More organizations will embed a crisis response team into their communication and PR departments. Communicators will be tapped for strategic counsel, critical thinking and analyses, with the focus on safeguarding brands and organizations.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Felicia Blow, Co-chair, Diversity Committee, PRSA, Associate VP, Development, Hampton University



In 2020, it finally became okay to use the phrase *Black Lives Matter*. Unfortunately, it took the dramatic and violent deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor to raise awareness of the very real challenges that are so prevalent in minority communities. This increased awareness

created a tumult of new D&I practices in companies large and small, the installation of chief D&I officers and a greater focus on seeking to understand the challenges Black and Brown communities in America face.

This pace will continue and greatly expand in 2021. I wish I could attribute this simply to an interest in D&I. Not so. The changing demographics of America and the full understanding of the business case for diversity are driving companies to institute programs and practices, which will enable them to better engage with not only customers, but employees.

Angela Chitkara, Founder, World in 2020 Project



There will be more pressure for organizations to identify and solve problems, contribute to society and for their words to align with their actions. In this era of transparency and accountability, we’ll see more information about DEI in public disclosures.

There’s an opportunity for organizations to address societal issues and polarization through engagement from employee resource groups (ERGs), the C-suite and rank-and-file employees. More companies will seek PR’s strategic counsel in embedding DE&I, which ties to corporate reputation, trust, talent recruitment and retention and innovation.

I am hopeful that organizations will work closely with the new administration in healing this beautiful country we call home and restoring its standing in the world.

Steve Cody, Founder, CEO, Peppercomm



Employee Experience programs will pivot in lighthearted, yet more meaningful, ways in 2021. Such seismic events as the global pandemic, the murder of George Floyd and rise of the #BLM movement demand that more organizations and agencies speed up their DE&I efforts AND the national election forced CCOs, CHROs and agency leaders to reset priorities, redeploy resources and invest very heavily in the employee experience.

The new year will provide new, and unexpected, challenges to these very same leaders as they strain to maintain some degree of morale, engagement, productivity and wellbeing from a Zoomed-out, burnt-out workforce.

Look for a significant rise in the use of a healthy dose of comedy and humor as purpose-driven CEOs try to convince employees that lifting their spirits—while also building resilience—in the darkest of days is, at long last, more important than surpassing Wall Street’s quarterly expectations. #PeopleOverProfits.

Dwayna Haley

While Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (*aka* the JEDI initiative), always was a business and moral imperative for companies across all sectors, the hyper-polarized and mainstream attention to these issues reached critical mass in 2020.

Research shows that today’s “culturally conscious consumer,” a term AdWeek coined, expects brands they support to prioritize the imperative. People are demonstrating that expectation by galvanizing social conversation, carefully

discerning where they spend hard-earned dollars and even where they choose to work.

Companies will have no choice but to create organic, actionable, sustainable and measurable impact absent of comfortable appropriation; otherwise, they will face quantifiable business attrition unlike anything we've seen in this country.

Michael Lewellen

The historic achievement of the Joe Biden-Kamala Harris ticket would be incomplete without one more groundbreaking move: naming a person of color as White House Press Secretary. Friends in the **Black Press USA** and **National Association of Black Journalists** remain disappointed that Barack Obama never saw his way clear to make additional history with such a pick. And he had two terms to do it. But at a time when Black voters—especially Black women—rallied in record-setting numbers to help unseat Donald Trump, it's time to pay communicators of color this sign of professional respect and inclusion. **[Editor's Note:** This prediction was made in early November, [prior to the announcement of an all-female communication team](#), including several women of color.]

Dr. Tina McCorkindale

DE&I will be a significant focus as more companies act, while internal and external stakeholders also hold them accountable. Demands for increased transparency and demonstrations of change will move the needle (but not as fast as we would like) to increase recruitment and retention for BIPOC professionals. Companies will put in place more programs, measures and initiatives with support from leaders. However, progress at the executive level, including the board of directors, will be slow.

Kim Sample

Diversity is a must. The social justice movement in the summer of 2020 demanded commitment and action from PR. While the end of 2020 has been quieter on DE&I, the industry will be held accountable for measurable progress against promises made.

While the priority is hiring, promoting and retaining BIPOC talent, PR shops are creating supplier diversity programs, undertaking pro bono campaigns for minority-owned businesses, and making cash donations to relevant causes. A recent **Davis & Gilbert** study found [PR firms with the most diversity are outperforming those that are lacking](#). That trend is sure to continue as companies demand diverse teams and supplier diversity commitments.

Charlene Wheelless

[My prediction for 2020](#) centered on it being a year of reckoning in companies around Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and a growing impatience by employees in waiting for their companies to do something meaningful. An interesting thought.

In 2021, smart companies will shift from a focus on DE&I to a talent-management strategy. They'll recognize that the real issue isn't DE&I and the lack of diverse talent in their organizations. Instead, they will focus on the problem and

not just the symptom—systemic racism, bias, and pervasive injustice and a lack of equity within their cultures. They will realize that the racial reckoning is deeper and more insidious than they could have imagined.

Heroic leaders and companies will understand and act on the need to get comfortable being uncomfortable and see the moment for what it is—the opportunity to be on the right side of history by championing racial justice in the workplace.

DIGITAL MARKETING

Karen Jones, Chief Marketing Officer, Ryder System, Inc.



Double down on digital. The impact of COVID-19 has accelerated the need for a sound digital marketing strategy in the B2B space.

Developing a customer journey that will nurture the awareness, consideration and decision-making process by keeping a brand relevant and top of mind while a prospect engages with online content will be the focus of many B2B marketing campaigns. We will continue to see B2B customers clamor for B2C digital experiences. They want to engage with brands that can provide value-added content and services to help them navigate the complexities of their job and industry.

ESG AND PURPOSE

Roger Bolton

[A year ago, I predicted](#) an acceleration in businesses building societal value. Little did I know that the COVID-19 pandemic would make that an understatement.

Stakeholder capitalism is blossoming. In 2021, increased demand for integrated reporting of financial and ESG goals will force even reluctant companies to jump on board. The remarkable business response to the pandemic—ventilators, PPE, vaccines, therapeutics—will continue. In addition, many companies will shift attention to economic opportunity and equity, with a focus on diverse and underserved populations, as well as the mental health of their employees.

Andrew Bowins, SVP, Communications and Public Affairs, Entertainment Software Association



Truth, transparency and relevance should be top of mind for any communicator charged with shaping and managing corporate reputation.

Without a doubt, 2020 reminded us that words matter and that how we communicate is as important as what we communicate. Whether you are engaging with the media, policy makers, special interest groups or the general public, you need to be relevant and trusted.

In 2021, purpose-driven organizations that place a premium on communicating value and their role as a corporate citizen will shine above others that push messages designed to help shape P&L or sales goals.

Angela Chitkara

Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) branding and communication will be all the rage. The lack of diversity and inclusion poses social risks to organizations within an ESG framework. The US remains divided. There were many issues on the ballot: race and ethnicity, coronavirus, the economy, crime and safety, healthcare policy. These societal issues are interconnected and require organizations to focus on stakeholder engagement, internally and externally.

FAKE NEWS

T. Garland Stansell, APR, Chair, PRSA 2020



With the proliferation of mis/dis/mal-information associated with everything from the pandemic to the social injustice movement, and fueled by incivility and a seeming lack of any desire for constructive dialogue, communicators will spend more time and resources working to promote civil discourse and helping to educate and extricate truth based in facts.

PRSA will launch an initiative in the first quarter that will provide resources and information to help communicators combat the pandemic of incivility, the mis/dis/mal-information that abounds, and the scourge of social injustice. There is so much we as communicators can do to help mitigate the effects of these systemic challenges and to make a difference in our society.

HEALTHCARE COMMUNICATION

Gil Bashe, Managing Partner, Global Health, FINN Partners



Follow-the-money! The global wellness economy has reached \$4.5 trillion; chronic disease management in the US is \$4 trillion. A sick-care system gives a poor ROI. Wellness is a big win-win-win for the households, companies and governments ultimately footing the sickness bill. Employers and payers will

find that encouraging self-care and chronic-illness intervention is a smarter business model. The tools are available: AI, communication and technology put people in the driver seat toward a happier and healthier future. Communicators have a significant role in helping consumers understand that their personal health investment enables them to embrace life's possibilities.

Dr. Yan Jin

As the trench warfare against COVID-19 continues, PR pros will combat viral health misinformation. Studies published in 2020 [prescribed formulas for debunking misinformation](#) and [correcting misperceptions](#), including: amplifying the power of truth-telling news media and health authorities via factual elaboration and containing viral misinformation spread by enabling people to vet risk and crisis information transmitted on social media.

In 2021, practitioners and scholars will collaborate further to identify more effective approaches to health misinformation prevention and treatment. New social-behavioral research

findings shed light on ways to overcome unintended effects of health communication, such as message fatigue and issue desensitization among at-risk individuals.

Public health risk and crisis communication campaigns will need to be more innovative and energizing to get out messages in a more-cluttered-than-ever media environment, reaching individuals' minds, resonating with their hearts and motivating them to take protective action based on accurate information.

Dr. Debi Miller, APR, Director, Communications, Cone Health



The importance of, and need for, timely, strategic and effective health care communication will continue to increase. Communication leaders will be expected to guide teams through the intersection of strategy and tactics with originality and agility.

Effective communication will stress the importance of COVID-19 preventative strategies, virtual care opportunities, vaccination timing and options and self-care.

Using invaluable lessons from 2020, communicators will balance their bandwidth and appropriate use of technology to support business continuity and provide easy, instant access to information for the new remote workforce.

Enrolling internal and external audiences in helping reduce the spread of COVID-19 will involve more authentic, transparent messaging delivered using an innovative multiple channel mix. The need for local, recognizable messengers who reflect our diverse communities will be paramount.

INFLUENCERS

Allison Fitzpatrick, Partner, Advertising, Marketing & Promotions, Davis & Gilbert LLP



As commercial productions continue to be put on hold due to COVID-19, brands will shift more of their marketing budgets to influencers, particularly kid influencers. However, due to congressional pressure, the **FTC** will be looking more closely at these young influencers and whether they are including effective disclosures in their videos. Meanwhile, self-regulatory and advocacy groups will eye the amount of junk food being promoted in kid influencer videos.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Chris LaPlaca

Forward-facing brands always need to communicate authentically to consumers. The events of 2020 emphatically brought that into focus. Internally, we need to listen to our diverse employees at all levels. They can help us communicate externally more effectively. Communication and DE&I pros will develop stronger relationships and strategies to continue the momentum begun in a tumultuous, but ultimately enlightening, 2020.

Dr. Debi Miller

Communication leaders will be expected to be strategic-thought partners on behalf of CEOs and most senior leaders while using

a variety of new and existing tools to create and deliver effective communication to remote, deskless and in-office employees.

The goal will be to keep employees well-informed, wherever they are in 2021. Enhanced-change communication, especially to help employees overcome change fatigue, and build employee engagement and retention, will dominate the function throughout 2021.

Communication leaders also will be challenged to create content that supports and advances DE&I amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the social unrest pandemic sparked by the death of George Floyd, all while navigating a challenging and divided post-election world.

MARKETING

Karen Jones

Strike while the iron is hot. The environment we live in has created a captive audience in many industries. Developing valuable content for audiences to engage with can't happen quickly enough. Brands will accelerate budgets, timelines and product development to take advantage of the opportunity. Making it easier to do business is the goal.

Creation of relevant content that relates to personal experience also will continue to become more critical. Customers and prospects want to engage with brands that can provide value-added content to help them navigate the complexities of their job and industry. This content needs to not only be personally relevant to the end recipient, but come in short form and digestible mediums.

MEASUREMENT

Richard Bagnall, Chair, AMEC

Co-Managing Partner, CARMA International



Organizations of all sizes will scrutinize budgets as never before. Since the financial crisis, PR pros operated under intense pressure, adapting to a disrupted media, with more work to do but with less time and fewer resources. COVID-19 has put this disruption on steroids and added in significant financial uncertainty.

We are living in the age of accountability. With budgets under intense pressure, any PR pro who can't clearly demonstrate the value that PR and communication brings to their organization will be seen as just a cost center, ripe for pruning. Difficult times are ahead for the communication and PR profession. The evolved practitioner who can clearly demonstrate strategic effectiveness will be well placed to thrive.

Richard Bagnall

The trend for organizations to look for better metrics will continue. *Spurious metrics* that some use to try to point to the effectiveness of PR will continue to fall in importance. In addition to the now-universally derided AVE (advertising value equivalent), hits, impressions, opportunities to see, website traffic and volume style metrics will be viewed for what they are—large numbers that don't really mean anything.

As global economies start to rebuild from the calamity of 2020, smart organizations will look to measure reputation,

their contribution to society, the strength of their purpose, and, of course, how much communication and PR supported and drove the company's objectives. There is plenty of help to those starting on this journey. Use of the [AMEC framework](#) will continue to climb significantly.

Steve Cody

Research organizations will have to fight hard to regain our industry's trust. Mega brand name researchers such as **Harris**, **Gallup** and **MorningConsult** (not to mention their academic brethren at **Marist** and **Quinnipiac**) will have a LOT of explaining to do to corporate and agency clients in the wake of their second-straight complete miss in predicting the winners of national, state and local elections.

While CCOs and CMOs will still rely heavily on Big Data (remember when BD was the bright shiny *object du jour*?), they will increasingly insist on a qualitative overlay to quant trends.

And they will INSIST on knowing the answer to the question Why? before signing off on a new campaign. Quant's big failing is its inability to keep diving deeper and deeper to answer why someone thinks, acts and feels the way they do.

MEDIA

Annie Gudorf, VP and Partner, Walker Sands



Humility and relationship building are only going to become more important. COVID-19 wreaked havoc on newsrooms. In a matter of days, reporters were pulled off their regular beats to cover the pandemic. And as the pandemic has continued, many newsrooms have made staff cuts.

Reporters are tired and tasked to do more than when 2020 started. If PR pros want to be successful in telling their stories via media, they'll need to recognize reporters are people first. Reporters are going through this as we all are. That means checking in with them to see how they're doing and getting to know them and their coverage. How has it changed since the pandemic started? With less time but more stories to cover, communicators need to emphasize relationship building more than ever in 2021.

Karen Mateo, CCO, PRSA



Among many devastating results of the COVID-19 pandemic was further consolidation in media, the demise of several important news outlets across the country and the loss of thousands of journalism jobs.

At a time when credible information from trusted local sources is more important than ever, the consequences of these unfortunate events will have a lasting impact on maintaining an informed public. There's much we can do as communication professionals to support journalists as we reimagine how to build those relationships remotely and present story ideas that are well researched, offer diversity in thought and provide high-quality sources and visual assets.

Brand storytelling across owned media channels will also

be more important than before.

Michael Smart

Further consolidation of digital native media ([Buzzfeed and the HuffPo merger](#)) means additional splintering. Journalists departing traditional and new-media outlets will be starting smaller sites and even **Substack** newsletters—media relations pros need to follow them there.

MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS

Rick Gould

The PR M&A field was going strong in 2020 until everything stopped on March 16. From March 16-May 31 there was virtually no activity. Activity resumed June 1, but buyers are very cautious, concerned about a loss of revenue if a second pandemic wave results in a major threat to budgets.

The good news is there are buyers with substantial war chests for the right strategic acquisition. In addition, sellers must be realistic about the valuation of their firm and willing to share in any downside during the buyout period via the earn-out model used in almost all M&A transactions. Healthcare, Crisis and Public Affairs specialties are in high demand, as well as the always needed Digital, which is selling at a premium.

REGULATION

Allison Fitzpatrick

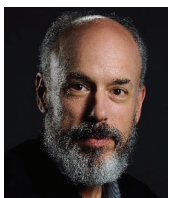
In 2021, the **FTC** will update its [Endorsement Guides](#). They will focus on kid influencers, consumer reviews, affiliate marketers and how to make effective disclosures on **TikTok**. And, after four years of craziness, most of us are going to take a break from our **Twitter** feed and read a book or two.

Michael Lamp

As we collectively turn the page on 2020, there's a sort of *Joy Void* forming. While news of viable vaccines spurs optimism, there's still a sense of anxiety dominating consumer sentiment on social. Nearly half (40 percent) of consumers already are turning to brands to help fill this Joy Void during the holiday season—through virtual gatherings and general feel-good inspiration, according to **Twitter** data.

As brands fine-tune social and influencer strategies for 2021, this consumer mindset must remain central to content planning. How do we create (largely virtual) moments to not only connect with our audiences, but perhaps more importantly, help them connect with those they care about most? Expect virtual reality and experiential social (livestreaming, collaborative content) to drive these efforts.

Bob Pearson, Founder & Chair, The Next Practices Group



In a world where **TikTok** star [Charli D'Amelio](#) reaches 10 times the audience of **CNN** prime time on election night, it's obviously time to find new ways to reach our audience worldwide. Gaming and message platforms each reach about 3 billion people and their audience is growing rapidly.

Gaming is the [new family room](#). We will learn how to be-

come relevant via video, text, ecommerce and game mods. Imagine enabling a gamer to play *Grand Theft Auto* and fight racial injustice. Love the game, change the narrative.

Message platforms are the new newsroom. Imagine establishing a network of 1,000+ private groups in cities worldwide all receiving news or relevant content. More impactful than staring at a big screen in an airport. The only question: Who will lead the way, and when?

TECHNOLOGY

Gil Bashe

COVID-19 unleashed pent-up desires for efficiencies in a health system that's historically resistant to change. Digital health will drive these changes at lightning speed—from access to providers to remote diagnostic tests to medical records. Game changers will be familiar power names, flexing their muscles to enter the three-trillion-dollar health sector.

Google has ability and credibility to smash obstacles to interoperability. **Amazon** will squeeze costly waste from an overextended drug supply chain. **Apple** will demonstrate clinical value as a frontline diagnostic assessment tool. **Microsoft** will change drug-development workflow and monitoring. These behemoths know how to integrate innovation, market to consumer expectations for personalized experience and address government cost-saving demands.

Annie Gudorf

Employees will demand more automation. This will have many practical benefits for PR pros. In 2021, we'll start to see employees demand more automation in the workplace. Employees have heard the promise of automation for years, but most organizations haven't delivered on that promise.

As employees get more comfortable with the technology and no longer fear automation, they're going to start demanding their companies incorporate more tools that help automate parts of their work.

TRADE ASSOCIATIONS

Felicia Blow

Challenge and opportunity will be on full display for associations and member organizations. How will associations deliver value to a more fractured, de-centralized, and interpersonally disconnected world? How can they embrace and pivot to a new normal through increased innovation, adaptability and using the speed of technology and innovation that their members so crave?

There already are predictions. First, associations that make so much revenue from conferences must adapt. **Microsoft** co-founder Bill Gates predicts more than 50 percent of business travel will disappear in the pandemic's aftermath. Social media companies and nimble competitors have affected engagement with member-based associations already.

Only the strong, well-organized, financially stable, and nimble/adaptable organizations will survive. Collaboration will be key, value-add will be critical and content/professional development surely will be king. ■

Why Communication Analysis Continues to Need a Human Element



Given the extraordinary adoption of communication technology, everyone in PR has a tool and data.

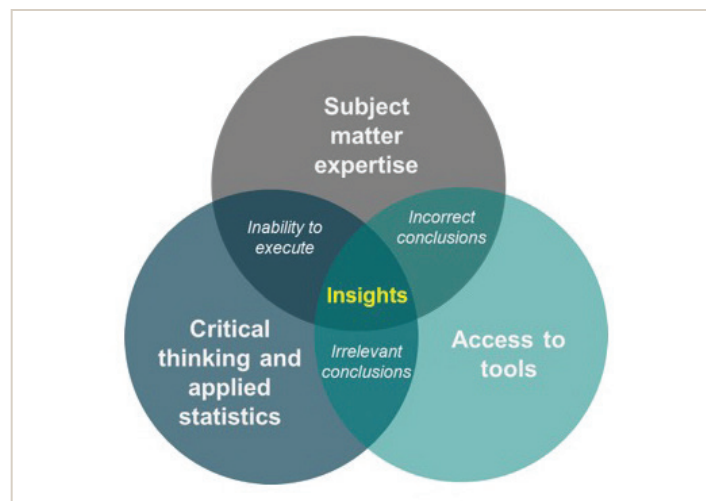
While counterintuitive, broad acceptance of technology to advance productivity and efficiency reveals a greater need for the human elements required to manage tools and think about data they generate.

Moreover, as analytics software enables new and better choices, communication data and analysis expertise and judgement lag. The result is that more communicators risk mismanaging, misinterpreting and misapplying data.

Phillip B. Stark, professor and chair of statistics, **University of California, Berkley**, notes, “The type of data isn’t the point at all. The way of thinking matters.”

Stark’s schematic below demonstrates essential elements of communication data science, two-thirds of which require human contribution. In the diagram, *Access to Tools* represents technology-enabled execution.

Without experts’ input, though, technology is utterly stupid. Even AI requires training before it can think for itself.



The diagram illustrates Stark’s point that humans are key to discovering insights via data. Source: Phillip Stark

A MIX OF HUMANS AND TOOLS

Rather than the instant insight-engines buyers expect, data-informed communication exceeds the power that technology alone provides. Communication research, analysis and evaluation require subject-matter expertise, statistical skills and critical thinking to achieve meaningful insight.

Subject Matter Expertise is a keen understanding of a company’s situation, PR and media. Statistical skills and critical thinking enable the communicator to reliably uncover stories the data reveals.

Just as tools, statistical acumen and subject matter expertise enable insight, overlooking any single element brings significant consequences.

• **Inability to Execute:** If you understand PR and statistics, but lack technology, you won’t uncover scalable insights.

Instead, computation will require time-consuming manual approaches. The result is an overworked staff and the loss of analytical talent owing to repetitive, mundane tasks. Without technology, the staff must focus on cleaning, processing and analyzing volumes of data without applying their skills for meaningful and satisfying outcomes.

• **Inaccurate Conclusions:** If you have subject-matter expertise and technology without critical thinking and statistical acumen, the organization is vulnerable to drawing the wrong inferences, even from good data. Worse, communicators may make bad choices in the absence of the critical information required to achieve objectives.

• **Irrelevant Conclusions:** When tools and critical thinking are available, but subject matter expertise is missing, the company is vulnerable to worthless answers to the wrong questions. In addition, the organization lacks the understanding to uncover solutions it requires. Noise, sampling errors and bias can creep in, which lead to wasted resources as well as poor and potentially harmful decisions.

CHECKING THE BOXES

Many in PR may feel they’ve *checked the PR measurement box* after subscribing to a software platform. But even the best tool tells you only what happened, rather than why and what should be done about it.

And that’s the aim of every professional communicator: to uncover insights to guide better PR and business decisions.

At its best, measurement aims to be a tutor rather than a report card, which grades your work without providing direction for improvement. A tutor provides information, context and guidance to help elevate performance over time.

POSITIVE SIGNS

While the combination of tools and talent described here is uncommon in the PR environment, positive signs point to a rise in in-house communication research departments. Examples include **Oracle, Prudential, Ford** and **Adobe**.

Large and even mid-size PR agencies employ research and analytics practices. Also, many companies, large and small, continue to rely on outsourced communication research for hire.

For the future, more graduate PR programs will expose emerging communicators to the full potential of data-informed communication. These future PR leaders will at least understand fundamentals of communication research and will expect to lead with accurate data and actionable insights. ■

Contact: Mark.Weiner@cision.com

Foundations of Fundraising: PR's Relationship with Philanthropy

Dolly Parton made headlines when she donated \$1 million to COVID-19 research, helping fund **Moderna's** vaccine. **Global Citizen**, a nonprofit that aims to end extreme poverty by 2030, hosts a yearly fundraising festival in NY's Central Park (pre-pandemic). Meanwhile, CSR pioneers like **Ben & Jerry's** continue their corporate activism despite, and because of, the pandemic.

Philanthropy always played a significant role within PR—and vice versa. A public figure or corporation wants the right PR campaign for a favorable image through philanthropy. Nonprofits need campaigns and influencers to raise awareness.

IVY LEE AND JOHN D.

Before Warren Buffet and Jeff Bezos there was John D. Rockefeller, Sr., a billionaire the country (and press) loved to hate. As we've noted in these pages, PR pioneer Ivy Lee was hired to change Rockefeller's image from a robber baron with tainted money to the world's most generous donor.

It was not an easy task. The public immediately attacked anyone associated with the Rockefellers, especially following the 1914 **Ludlow Massacre** in Colorado, where hundreds of miners and families were killed.

When the mine's owner, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., found himself in the middle of the conflict, he dismissed offers to bribe the press. Instead, he found comfort in a consultation with Lee, who stressed that the family—and all prominent figures/corporations—needed to earn the admiration of the public naturally, through good deeds.

Lee visited Ludlow to hear miners' grievances directly. Along with poor working conditions, miners were most concerned that management was not listening to them. Lee advised Rockefeller Jr. to take the same trip and attach a human face to the Rockefeller name.

DELICATE DANCE

Rockefeller Jr. went further. After two weeks listening to miners, he spent his last night in Ludlow at a community dance.

At one point, he demanded the floor be cleared and did not leave until he'd danced with every miner's wife—winning affection from the community. These strategies eventually led to Lee helping the Rockefellers, and his other clients, establish the earliest forms of crisis communication plans.

In addition, Lee successfully counseled the elder Rockefeller to share with the press, naturally and often, his many philanthropic efforts. With Lee's help, the Rockefeller charities gained mentions. As a resource for a biography on John D. Rockefeller, Sr., [Lee helped paint a more positive picture](#) of the once-hated Rockefeller family.

MARCH OF DIMES, POLIO AND A PRESIDENT

Many would say that support for Polio research and its vaccine would not be possible without the help of President

Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was stricken with the disease, at 39 years old, proving it was not exclusive to children. FDR spent his entire presidency as a champion for polio's vaccine and a leading light of the March of Dimes.

In 1937, FDR founded the **National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis** (NFIP)—which eventually became the **March of Dimes**—thanks to celebrity endorsements and generous free radio time. **Hollywood entertainer Eddie Cantor** coined the phrase "March of Dimes." He'd asked 1 million children to donate a dime to demonstrate support for battling polio. The message was simple: "Join the March of Dimes."

By January 29, 1938, the White House was flooded with 80,000 letters filled with dimes, quarters and dollar bills, something the president was not expecting! FDR went on radio to thank Americans that day.

The nonprofit's efforts were widely successful. It funded years of research to create two approved polio vaccines, by **Drs. Salk and Sabin**, in the mid-1950s. Once polio was nearly eradicated, through the vaccines, the March of Dimes turned its attention to prevention of premature births.

PHILANTHROPY & PR TODAY

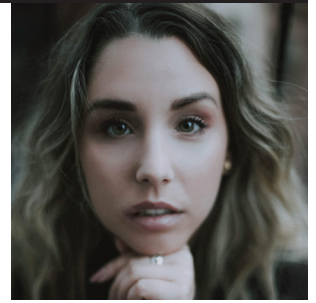
Today's PR pro is knowledgeable about philanthropy and its influence on corporate image. Luckily, when creating fundraising campaigns, we now have access to online tools: shareable digital platforms (GoFundMe), the recently created Giving Tuesday and CSR programs inside corporations responsible for philanthropy. In addition, fundraising events, like the Met Gala and Global Citizen Festival, include well-known entertainers and other celebs. PR works closely with these organizations to raise awareness of their work.

"To date, the actions of our global community, along with high-level advocacy efforts and partnerships with philanthropists, corporations and artists, have resulted in commitments and policy announcements from leaders valued at more than \$48 billion, affecting the lives of more than 880 million people," said Sarah Acer, head of global philanthropy at nonprofit **Global Citizen**.

Acer works closely with Global Citizen's global head of PR, Charmion Kinder, who agrees that the relationship between PR and philanthropy will grow in the years ahead. ■

Editor's Note: If you're looking to do good this holiday season, the **Museum of Public Relations** could use your support. It is digitizing more than 2,500 pieces of PR history as it continues to bring its collection to the public, online, in the new normal. Please consider donating to its GoFundMe campaign. [Click here to learn more and make a contribution.](#)

Contact: jenny@prmuseum.org



DATA

Cosmetics Dominate Pre-Holiday Social Engagement on Instagram, and a Tree Grows in NY

There's little doubt about the main subject of pre-holiday consumer engagement on **Instagram** for the period Sept 1, 2020, through Nov. 15, 2020, according to **Shareablee** data supplied exclusively to PRNEWS (bottom chart). Despite a

troubled economy and uncertainty surrounding travel and festive gatherings during the 2020 holiday season, demand to look one's best endures, whether it's on **Zoom** or in person. We've never seen such domination; seven of the top 10 brands produce cosmetics and the remaining three firmly are rooted in beauty. On the other hand, how many times do you need to hear someone tell you 2020 was an unusual year?

Some things don't change. Perennial social media powerhouse **MAC Cosmetics** dominates. It also took the top spot on a similar chart for **Twitter**, says Madison Busick of Shareablee. Interestingly, it's not the most-efficient Instagram play. That honor belongs to Kylie Jenner's **Kylie Cosmetics**, which averaged 164,000 consumer engagements per post.

In both charts, consumer engagement is listed under Actions. For Instagram and **Facebook**, actions is equal to the sum of reactions, shares and comments.

TOP BRANDS POSTING ABOUT THE HOLIDAYS

Based on Total Actions (reactions, comments, and shares) 9/1/2020-11/15/2020

Sources:

RANK	MEDIA COMPANY	ACTIONS	CONTENT	ACTIONS PER CONTENT	AUDIENCE
1	Rockefeller Center	160,830	3	53,610	546,521
2	AARP	157,336	15	10,489	2,072,965
3	ADT	90,463	4	22,615	628,146
4	Animal Adventure Park	79,528	30	2,650	1,561,921
5	Victoria's Secret	74,865	29	2,581	29,634,723
6	Kylie Cosmetics	74,798	7	10,685	3,993,095
7	Best Friends Animal Society	73,385	4	18,346	1,352,998
8	Bath & Body Works	68,861	13	5,297	10,033,425
9	CHANEL	61,368	5	12,273	22,524,998
10	Cracker Barrel Old Country Store	58,589	10	5,859	3,045,168

shareablee

SOCIAL SCORECARD

TOP BRANDS POSTING ABOUT THE HOLIDAYS

Based on Total Actions (reactions, comments, and shares) 9/1/2020-11/15/2020

Sources:

RANK	MEDIA COMPANY	ACTIONS	CONTENT	ACTIONS PER CONTENT	AUDIENCE
1	MAC Cosmetics	3,551,861	84	42,284	23,408,807
2	Kylie Cosmetics	2,460,615	15	164,041	24,806,439
3	Victoria's Secret	2,094,850	23	91,080	68,713,897
4	Bath & Body Works	987,894	23	42,952	6,067,184
5	Sephora	941,998	24	39,250	20,321,676
6	Dior	743,505	9	82,611	32,713,739
7	Anastasia Beverly Hills	737,505	20	36,875	20,133,369
8	Kylie Skin	654,541	9	72,727	4,477,955
9	ColourPop	526,674	11	47,879	9,744,291
10	Charlotte Tilbury	519,669	42	12,373	3,736,254

'A POST LOVELY AS A TREE'

Looking at the upper chart, for Facebook during the same period, the leader is **Rockefeller Center**, with just three posts and the smallest audience of the top 10. We're pretty certain we've never seen that combination either.

The story behind Rockefeller Center sitting atop the **Facebook** chart stems (no pun intended) from a photo post about its holiday tree. Social went wild, judging the tree scrawny, making it highly appropriate for 2020. **Rockefeller Center** leaned into the joke, posting in response that the tree would look better, eventually, with lights and trimming. [It does.](#)

Happy Holidays! ■