

THE POWER of PR as an Influence Marketing Channel

What every
Digerati needs
to know about the
(R)EVOLUTION
happening right
now in the world
of Public Relations.

resspack

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Executive summary

Access to information has never been easier, but the digital landscape is incredibly crowded. As such, brands must fight for their audience's attention with strategies that help them convey their message in a meaningful and relevant way. PR has always been an essential aspect to brand storytelling, but its worthiness has been debated in recent years as communications professionals fight to track measurable results from their PR channels, despite knowing their effectiveness. Simply put, the days of sending out a press release, without measuring its impact, are over. Technological advancement has revolutionized the way we interact with one another in every way imaginable -- and businesses that don't keep up are losing out.

PR's relevance has come into question in the advent of new digital marketing practices, for example: AR integration, ephemeral/video content, and influencer marketing. The list of ever evolving, creative new ways of reaching audiences is changing exponentially. Under the broader business communications umbrella, PR



Brands who are successful will have an iron-clad understanding of the relationship that PR and marketing communications have with each other, and how they can coalesce to create stories that stick.

shouldn't be overlooked due to new digital marketing practices: PR is a channel that's in transition, poised to become just as important as an influencer marketing plan or viral video campaign.

With the right tools, you can transform your brand's public identity, refine your strategy through attribution, streamline your processes through automation, and establish your presence in today's competitive market.

Traditional PR at its core

PR is an earned media channel. It's not flashy advertising, hard selling or paid publicity but instead a method of creating solid relations with customers and instilling trust amongst clientele. By generating a positive reputation through adding value rather than pushing product, companies are able to win over potential customers and establish mutually beneficial, lifelong relationships. Reputation is everything, and PR professionals have been masters in promoting company value and reputation for decades.

Brand narrative also is an integral part of the traditional PR philosophy. The ability to storytell effectively is perhaps the secret weapon of PR specialists - they don't need to distract with colourful visuals or loud music in order to successfully convey their brand story in a well written, engaging piece that promotes the value of the company, not the product.

Practically speaking, PR techniques and content formats include the following:

- **Press releases**
- **Event coordination**
- **Reputation management**
- **Press conferences**
- **Speeches**
- **News programs**
- **Written content**
- **Pictures and Videos**

Key platforms



TV



Radio



Magazines



Email

Bridging the gap between the old and the new

Although PR's tried and tested methods have been used successfully for decades, digitization has rendered them considerably less effective and relevant. Most of these techniques that were once the most important method of generating a company's public identity are facing tough competition from new strategies that are playing directly into the hands of a world that has become consumed by technology. And they aren't faring as well.

Shortcomings of outdated PR methods



Time consuming- PR's current landscape of tools do not serve to alleviate the time-consuming tasks for the modern professional. Most antiquated manual tools used

by PR teams cannot compete with multi platform softwares that control numerous operations with a single click. Excel sheets have been replaced by CRMs, press releases have moved to email management software, and influencers and bloggers have become part of your target media audience along with journalists. Savvy PR specialists are now utilizing the power of these new tools to streamline their workflow and the results are evident:



Expensive with minimal ROI tracking- When trying to prove the potential ROI to stakeholders in the C-Suite, showing the value of PR may not be as easy as other channels with very clear attribution.

Consumers want content- its no longer enough to simply talk introspectively about company success or brand narrative; people want to be entertained. Entertained in creative, exciting ways with rich media content. The speed of readily available information from anywhere at any time has given consumers an insatiable appetite to constantly have more. With information available at our fingertips in a matter of seconds, content has to be innovative and engaging to stand out.

Companies employing CRM systems have achieved 65% of their sales goals in 2018, compared to 22% by those that don't.¹

Channels have changed- TV, radio and magazine are no longer the mediums by which consumers receive information. Social media channels have become the norm. Blogs, Instagram posts and Twitter feeds are where we now go to see what's happening in the world. These new influence channels have also opened up the door to audience participation- commenting and contributing to information has become an effective way of allowing audiences to have their say. A 30 second TV commercial offers no such interaction.

Content marketing generates over three times as many leads as outbound marketing and costs 62% less.²

Multicultural/multilingual audience- Target audiences have become global. Successful marketing campaigns no longer limit their target audience to one country and one language.

Getting to grips with digital marketing

With technological advancements taking place at an exponential rate across all sectors of society, savvy marketers have been at the forefront of using these new platforms to their full potential in order to reach audiences. PR professionals are among those who could reap the enormous potential benefits of engaging with digital channels with the use of digital solutions.

Social media- arguably the most revolutionary change that has shaken up traditional marketing methods. Social media has completely transformed the way we interact with each other and consequently how businesses are to interact with consumers. When of the world regularly uses social media platforms³, targeting those channels is imperative and creating content that is shareable in those channels, is also imperative.

SEO- Without the use of effective SEO in marketing strategies nowadays, organically generated web traffic plummets dramatically. SEO is integral; without it webpages can get buried in a sea of similar material that will appear higher in search engine results. **Google accounted for '79% of all global desktop search traffic' in 2017⁴**- a huge surge from the previous year.

Mobile optimized strategies- with most of us using our mobiles as our primary source of browsing and receiving information, successful digital marketing techniques cater to our obsession with mobile devices; the App market has boomed and digital marketers are utilizing its potential. In order to stack the deck in your favour, content must be adapted for all mediums- creating content in formats which are not responsive, is ultimately a waste of time and resources.

'Trend hijacking'- implementing newly available software such as Google Trends allows companies to stay in the know and track what is trending, targeting audiences therefore becomes much more focused.

Influencer marketing- Targeting individuals who have a strong online presence/influence over buyers has become commonplace in the PR and marketing campaigns of most companies. A high profile Instagrammer has enormous potential to promote brand and reach ideal target consumers, much more so than a generic promotional email. **84% of digital consumers say** they consider online reviews as trustworthy as personal recommendations⁵- influencers have become figures whose opinions we trust.

Marketing automation- Perhaps the most practically useful, marketing automation software provides a seamless way of managing numerous tasks under one roof. CRMs and CMSs have taken the manual and arduous repetivity out of daily PR tasks.



So how do we successfully combine the old with the new? Instead of having to 're-learn' the golden rules of PR, optimal results come from using these two methods in conjunction with one another, by bridging the gap that has been created by technological advancement.

Why PR still has its place in the digital sphere

A channel with impact

Despite contest to the contrary, PR is not a dead practice. It has simply been overhauled. PR should be on your roadmap in order for you to stay agile and competitive in today's market; it is still a facet of any marketing strategy that holds enormous weight.

Think about globally successful brands. When considering the importance of a strong PR strategy, Coca Cola have always remained a prime example. Their 'Share a Coke' campaign afforded a personalized brand experience with consumers in 'one of the greatest global communication campaigns ever to be launched.'⁶

In the face of competition from new, creative digital marketing practices, PR's core values remain imperative and should form the basis of any successful campaign. Establishing long lasting relations with customers, promoting credibility, maintaining company reputation and having control over brand narrative are techniques that should not be neglected in favour of flashy online advertising and colourful content.

Brand awareness and reputation is paramount considering 92% of consumers trust word of mouth recommendations over any other form of marketing.⁷



PR is arguably the most important marketing channel we have.

More and more companies are now discovering that despite their SEO expertise and killer content, they need PR specialists to make it relevant. Tech savvy marketers often lack the basic PR skills that have been tried and tested for years; the most up-to-date software and digital techniques are rendered useless without knowledge to implement them successfully.

Moreover, PR teams are naturally suited to multichannel management. They are versed in the coordination of numerous operations and can bring these invaluable skills into the digital arena. Albeit on a different platform, the core skills employed by successful marketing professionals both in traditional PR and in the digital sphere, are largely the same.

Understanding the symbiosis between PR and digital marketing



In order to create a marketing campaign that optimizes all channels efficiently, PR and digital marketing must be used simultaneously. The most successful marketing campaigns leverage connections between all marketing disciplines, recognising the benefits and shortcomings of each and adapt their strategy accordingly.

Most importantly, both techniques target different audiences. While the new wave of digital PR can reach a huge online audience via social media, blogs and influencers, traditional PR still reigns when it comes to traditional media. This is of particular importance when considering brands who's primary consumers are within the older demographic.

If audiences are active on numerous different platforms, companies need to be able to cover each one. Simply put, wider audiences can be reached when the two methods are used concurrently.

Perhaps PR is not on your radar...

It's easy to overlook traditional PR methods when the current status quo is to dive straight into the digital marketing arena and direct all efforts into generating attractive content and SEO best practices.

Or perhaps moving into the digital sphere is a taking a leap into the unknown...

PR veterans -- alike all professionals facing the realities of rapid technological advancement -- may find it difficult to adjust to digitalization of their role. Transitioning into an unfamiliar environment can be challenging after years of familiarity with the same principles, tools, and processes.

Rather than neglecting modern advancements or forgetting solid practices from the past, today's smart communications strategies will adapt traditional PR practices to a new contexts, marrying the potential of digital tools together with ironclad storytelling.

Speaking PR's new language

Exploring new resources

With endless new tools available on the market intended to optimise PR efforts, performance can now be measured and backed up by visible data, allowing marketing strategies to be adapted in accordance with performance indicators. Indeed, PR pros must learn to 'speak the new language' of their profession in order to maximise the output of these tools. Digitalization of PR has created a landscape in which traditional methods are no longer limited by the restrictions of outdated technology. In this exciting new era of marketing, the digital realm has pathed the way for endless advancements and opportunities, while simultaneously cutting costs and time.

For those that find themselves thrust into the world of PR with little knowledge of its best practices, new software platforms that offer maximum ease of use are ideal. It has become commonplace in today's business structure that the role of PR management is often delegated to an individual who did not specialise in the discipline. Their background in another field leaves them lacking compared to PR specialists who have lived and breathed its principles for years.

Instead of blindly following the traditional methods of the past, we now have access to software that will allow us to determine their effectiveness.

Built in analytics means we can see in real time, the true effect of our marketing strategies.

Implementing these new tools provides a way for the inexperienced to master the art of successful PR marketing and influence.

Campaigns can subsequently be refined and adjusted in accordance with these results to optimise efficiencies—the days of wasting time and money on ineffective marketing techniques are over.

ROI

While outdated PR practices generate virtually no indication of ROI, the latest software systems to hit the market have the power to measure ROI effectively. Stakeholders are much more likely to invest in PR practices when its value can now be quantified.

Analytics

Most systems implemented to aid with PR functionality are now fully equipped with built in analytic software. What does that mean for marketing strategy? That our efforts can now be tracked and monitored. Those generic emails being dispatched can be analysed to see how many people are actually opening them. And whether they are useful.

According to a study carried out by Hubspot this year, proving the ROI of marketing activities accounts for '40% of company's top marketing challenges.'⁸

Content is still king

One thing that has remained constant while transitioning from traditional PR into the digital realm is the prevalence and importance of both written and visual content. The distribution of strong, convincing content has always remained at the forefront of any successful marketing strategy- whether it was 20 years ago via a magazine article or today in the form of a thought leadership piece. Great content works.

Digital marketers today have the hard task of producing endless content on numerous different platforms and in new, exciting, out of the box ways. But it's payoffs are huge.

Updating and republishing old posts with new content and images can increase organic traffic by as much as 111% and companies that published 16+stories per month got almost 3.5X more traffic than companies that published 0-4 monthly posts.⁹

Conclusion

PR is not only alive and well -- it's a channel that brands need to master to stay competitive in today's market. While its place on the digital stage has been the subject of recent debate, PR is an invaluable influence marketing channel that has enormous potential when implemented



effectively. Despite the overhaul of traditional methods in favour of digital techniques, core PR practices are still invaluable in any marketing campaign.

The tried and tested methods from the past must adapt to fit in a new digital world, while the tech marketing professionals of today must recognise the importance of basic PR techniques that have been used for decades.

PR and digital marketing are not mutually exclusive agents. Rather, they are codependent methods that combined, have enormous potential for company success.

Recommendations

As PR veterans and marketing digerati meet, staying in the know about the latest software available to ease the transition is vital. With a plethora of new solutions on offer, it can be difficult to navigate your way to a successful marketing strategy.



Savvy marketers will draw from the two schools of thought to create a campaign that seamlessly integrates both, while keeping ahead of the competition in terms of digital marketing techniques.

Bridging the gap between old and new has never been more straightforward. Equipped with the correct tools, we can help you effortlessly combine traditional PR and digital marketing techniques to ensure the success of your brand objectives.

In order to successfully path the way to success, epresspack is proud to offer an all-in-one software solution.

In one platform: manage, publish, distribute (email and social media), and analyze the results of your campaign.

epresspack Newsroom Content Management Solution is a customised software system that takes the labour out of everyday PR demands



epresspack solution provides



About epresspack

As digital communication specialists, we offer innovative solutions to communication specialists.

Working across a wide variety of industry sectors with companies such as Louis Vuitton, Sanofi, Aston Martin, and Accor Hotels, to name a few, epresspack has developed a customized newsroom content management solution which enhances the way communicators manage, publish, distribute, and analyze their rich brand stories (text, images, video content etc.) that they share with media, influencers, investors, employees and other key stakeholders.

To discover how epresspack can help optimise your PR strategy, reach out to our experts in one of our three branches to request a demo.



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