

# PUBLIC RELATIONS

BEYOND THE PRESS RELEASE  
AND INTO THE SOCIAL AGE



Vuelio

# INTRODUCTION

You probably don't need reminding of the fact that the media landscape is in a period of rapid flux. And it's not just old world media powerhouses that are now fighting for their lives, often competing against more agile, digital start-ups as the lines between print, broadcast and digital channels continue to blur. As a PR professional your life is undoubtedly getting more difficult. With organisations and individuals potentially yielding the kind of influence (via high profile social media outlets) once only afforded to a handful of media owners, your little black book of media contacts no longer opens every door to PR success.

If you are looking for certainties in the digital age, disruption is perhaps the only guarantee. As such, the modern PR must keep their eye on the future, or risk losing themselves to history. In this white paper we list the fundamental rules of PR - which have now been amended, altered and tweaked so as to best fit the demands of communicating in the social age.

# IT'S ALL STILL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

The one thing that digital disruption cannot change about PR is the basic principle the industry is founded on - solid relationships.

However, the way we form, engage and maintain these relationships is changing. Because influencers now come in many shapes and sizes and are often not found sat behind the desks of large publishing houses or broadcast networks, we must rethink the way we reach out to and engage communities. While the humble press release might still have a place in the PR professional's arsenal, the modern PR cannot rely on such narrow communication channels and must be prepared to engage on a more targeted and therefore personal level.



## TOP TIP

While social media has widened our reach and significantly added to the relationships we must maintain, today's socially-led communities (including the media) will not tolerate blanket communications. This means as PR pros we need to work harder and smarter at building those ever important relationships.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In the digital age, social engagement and community is built on the back of relevant, engaging and timely communications. While we in the creative industries have long chanted the mantra “Content is King”, this approach is perhaps somewhat dated in the social environment. If content is to engage a wide and diverse audience, it can no-longer be positioned to solely dictate the conversation. Content should now be designed to drive interaction from target audiences, so as to involve the wider community in the conversation. This means taking the time to build content that consumers will want to share and comment on, creating a sense of ownership and community amongst the target audience. This approach will demand dedicated resource in terms of monitoring and engagement, combined with a solid social media strategy to ensure conversations remain fluid and ultimately deliver expected outcomes.

## REMEMBER

Great conversations (as opposed to blind broadcasts) can potentially put you at the centre of your community. The community is a place where opportunities are found and nurtured. This cannot happen by constantly dumping, broad-reaching content (such as the catch-all press release or unmonitored blog post). Being ready to engage means being on hand to manage and steer conversations in real time.

# INFLUENCING INFLUENCERS



Social media conversations, especially when primed by high profile influencers, are now seen as a seeding strategy for wider coverage in the mainstream media. Having the insight into who to “friend” or to “follow” and who to engage (and at what level) can give you a huge competitive advantage.

A database of media contacts cannot be considered truly complete if it does not feature prominent bloggers, social media influencers and other high profile public figures such as politicians, business people and community leaders. More over, added details, that can also be found in the Vuelio database, such as contact information, pitching preferences, and special interests, gives PRs that winning edge.

# LIFTING THE MEDIA FILTER

The rise of social media and the smartphone has not only changed the way news is consumed, the rise is also often responsible for capturing stories as they break.

While it would be foolish to underestimate the power of the traditional media, they no-longer have a monopoly on breaking news. Falling advertising revenues and circulations have forced many journalists to significantly cut costs and as a result many find themselves confined to headquarters instead of pounding the streets looking for the next big story. More than 50% of news now breaks via social media, very often first reported by “citizen journalists” and shared widely across the social networks before being picked up by traditional media outlets.

Add to this the impact of extremely high-profile media journalists who are connecting directly with their audience via social media, and the influence of social media “celebrities” and thought leaders who often bypass traditional media completely, and it is easy to see why your first point of contact when pitching a story might not initially be via the newsdesk.

Traditional media still plays a vital role in distributing your message beyond the realms of social media and undoubtedly adds credibility to a story. Consider how much traditional media houses rely on footage from mobile cameras, YouTube videos and social media when building a story. Ensuring content is distributed widely across these social-led channels will aid your discoverability and could potentially help seed your stories in the mainstream media.

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# THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Because people buy from people they like and trust, people they identify with, putting real people at the forefront of your campaigns has never been more important. Smart organisations take their inspirational CEOs and other business leaders out of their ivory towers and position them directly in front of their public with the most successful brand ambassadors presenting themselves as accessible and open to engagement.



This means individuals must take control of their own output via social media and other channels, including your corporate blog. It also means listening to and engaging with the wider conversation. The days of an individual thought leader leading a one-way conversation are over now that conversations can be joined by other social media influencers and even the general public. Even large organisations like Apple and Facebook rely on social media commentary to create excitement around their brands and products.

## REMEMBER

It is vitally important to empower everyone in your organisation who wishes to partake in brand-related social media conversations with the right tools, guidelines and boundaries to ensure their conversations stay on brand and do not exceed their areas of responsibility. You want to create authentic brand ambassadors. Failure to set expectations from the start may result in damaging repercussions.



# SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Sometimes the best ambassadors do not come from inside your organisation. They lead conversations and influence their (your) communities independently. These people are able to build influence on the basis that their audience finds it easy to identify with them. However, because they do not often front highly visible organisations (commanding large marketing budgets) they can be difficult to identify, track down and engage. These people can only be found by listening, analysing and engaging with the social web and this is best conducted with a blend of technology and human engagement.



## TOP TIP

When engaging individuals, as opposed to corporations, you might need to change your pace. Social influence is won via trust and when personal reputations are at stake, trust is hard won.

# IN CONCLUSION

As PR professionals, we've always been good at steering the conversation. In the digital age where social media can often dictate and disseminate the news, the basic rules of great PR have not changed - they have simply become more fluid, more wide-reaching, more traceable and more open to criticism (both positive and negative).



# IS YOUR PR READY FOR AN EXCITING NEW AGE?

## THE LARGEST DATABASE OF MEDIA CONTACTS

A good story is only half the PR challenge. The other 50%? Getting your brand heard. But if you have the story we have the platform to help you tell it.

Vuelio has acquired Cision's UK operations, and will now provide Cision and Vocus PR software in the UK and is now the exclusive provider.

## WITH VUELIO'S #1 MEDIA DATABASE YOU WILL GET:

- All media contacts: journalists, editors, bloggers, national and local press
- A comprehensive guide to both traditional and emerging media
- Pitching preferences, preferred contact methods and other key details to guide your outreach
- World's best integrated comms software



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