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## DATA

# PR Pros Pretty Good at Disengaging From Work; Public Puts Demands on Branded Content

With July 4 upon us it means summer vacation season also has arrived. The question, though, is whether or not communicators, who are responsible for safeguarding the reputation of brands, can ever truly be off the clock.

The communicator is not alone. The average U.S. employee who receives paid vacation has taken 54% of those days during the year, says a **Glassdoor** survey of 2,200+ staffers conducted last summer. This figure is similar to earlier Glassdoor surveys on the subject.

The Glassdoor survey tracks with one from the **U.S. Travel Association**, which asked vacation-related questions last year of 5,600 U.S. workers, including 1,184 managers. It found the same 54% of staff forfeiting vacation days that Glassdoor did. That was up from 42% in 2013.

The question, of course, is why do Americans, who have fewer vacation days than workers in many other parts of the world, eschew vacation days.

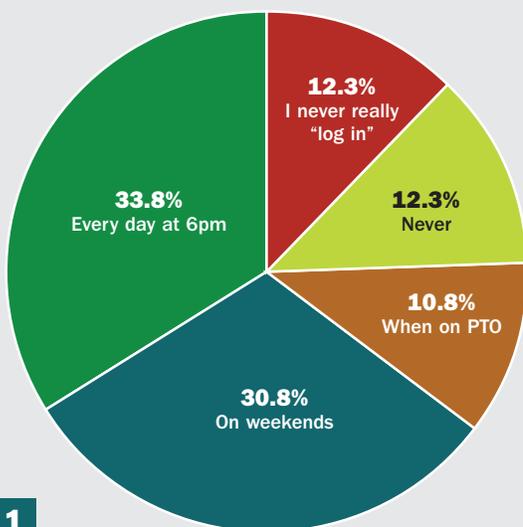
To put things more starkly, did you know the U.S. is the

only modern industrial country that lacks a law mandating paid vacations and holidays for workers?

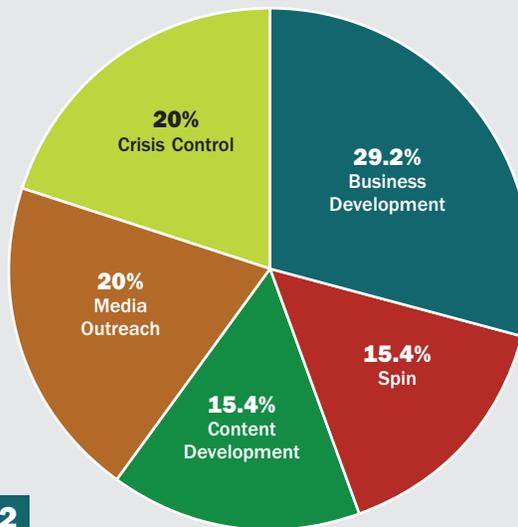
Back to the earlier question, though: Why don't American workers take their full package of vacation days?

**Scott Dobroski**, senior director of corporate communications and PR at Glassdoor, says it's fear. Staff fear falling behind on their work (34%) and believe nobody at their company will be able to fill in for them while they're on vacation

Do you ever log out from your PR job?



What is your best quality?



Source: Bospar (April 2018)

Continued on page 3



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Published monthly by Access Intelligence, LLC  
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 Rockville, MD 20850

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## UPCOMING EVENTS AND WEBINARS\*

**WEBINAR:**  
**DATA, ANALYTICS AND DASHBOARDS FOR THE NEXT-GEN COMMUNICATOR**  
**JULY 24, 2018**  
 1:30-3PM ET

**GOOGLE BOOT CAMP FOR COMMUNICATORS**  
**JULY 19, 2018**  
 NEW YORK CITY

**SOCIAL MEDIA SUMMIT**  
**AUGUST 9-10, 2018**  
 SAN FRANCISCO

Continued from page 1

# How to Get Eyes on Branded Content

(30%). A small fraction (22%) are so dedicated to their job that they fear taking vacation. The last group (21%) fear being disconnected from their job.

The prescription for PR leaders seems clear: convince your staff to reduce their levels of fear.

**[Editor’s Note:** Glassdoor’s Dobroski provides media pitching tips in our *Steal-able Slides* article in this edition.]

Turning to communicators and their attitudes toward their ability to leave work at the office, the PR firm **Bospar** asked communicators during April about their ability to log out from their job (chart 1).

Provided exclusively to *PR News*, the results are encouraging, though there’s room for improvement.

## LETTING GO

A majority (65%) is able to disengage from their PR job either every day at 6pm (34%) or on weekends (31%). Just 11% need vacation to be able to log out (let’s hope this group uses all its vacation days).

A concern is 12% say they “never” can log out from their PR gig and 25% can disengage only on weekends or during vacation.

Positives from another question to PR pros are seen in chart 2.

Asked about their best PR quality, the survey found respondents fairly evenly spread across aspects of communications. A total of 29% cited business development, with 20% each for crisis management and media outreach.

## SPONSORED CONTENT

Bospar also asked more than 1,000 people during April about their attitudes toward sponsored content from a brand they do not follow.

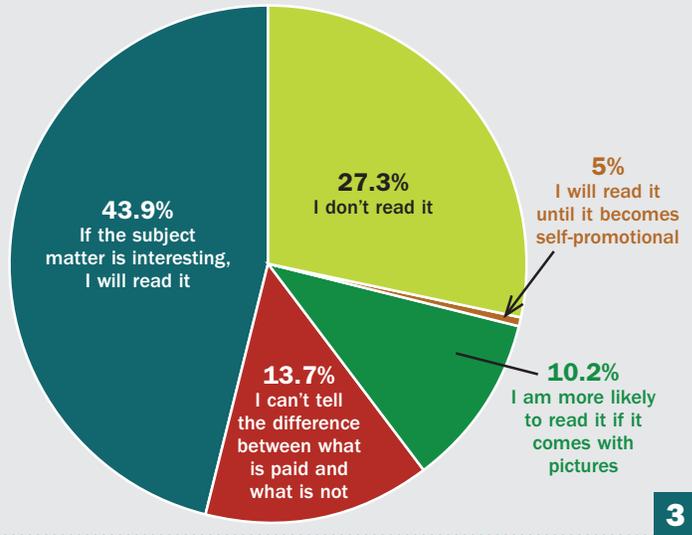
As you can see in chart 4, communicators seeking to engage new audience members with branded content are advised to make such posts newsworthy (31%), educational (36%), visually stimulating (25%) and value-providing (32%).

On the other hand, nearly 26%

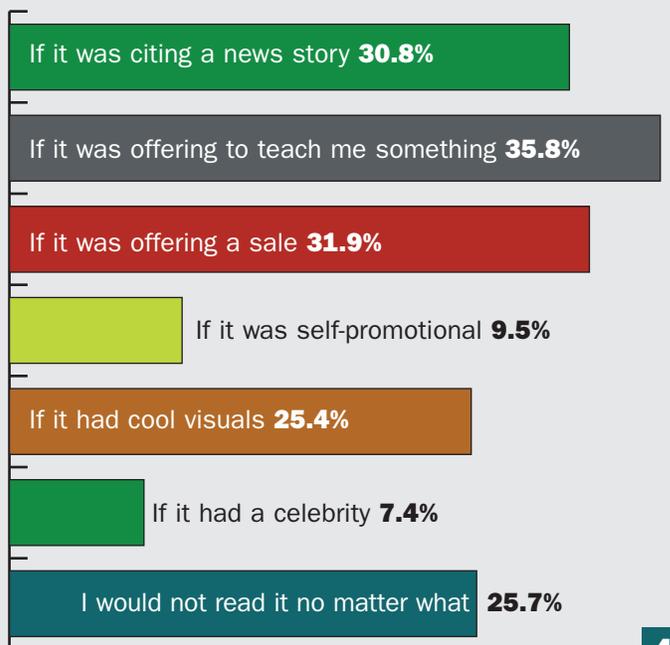
said they do not read promoted content regardless.

Chart 3 roughly tracks with chart 4, though it’s a bit more encouraging for purveyors of branded content, provided said content is relevant to the reader (44%). Again, more than 25% say they never read advertorial content. ■

### What do you think of paid advertorial content?



### If you see a promoted story in your social media from a company or brand you are not following what would make you read it? Please select all that apply.



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# How to Measure Corporate Leaders' Effectiveness at Boosting Internal Engagement and Experiences

It's a little secret of PR that internal communications just might be the most difficult part of a communicator's job. This edition's *Roundtable* explores internal communications, as does this *Measurement* article.

In our April 3, 2018, edition, **Patricia Bayerlein** (picture 1, p. 1) of the **Institute of Public Relations (IPR) Measurement Commission** wrote about the importance of creating engaging employee experiences, which boost internal engagement and profitability. Companies with engaged employees, she wrote, see a 29% increase in operating income, according to **Aon Hewitt**, the global consulting firm.

Communicators' role in boosting employee experiences often centers on improving internal communications, mea-

sured via email open rates, video views, intranet visits etc.

While those data help communicators understand "how strong a company's information flow is and identify where gaps exist," they are incomplete, Bayerlein argues, since they fail to measure "the most important communications channel—the company's leaders."

To fill that gap a series of analyses can be used, measured using the dashboards below. The first four collectively represent what Bayerlein calls a Culture Communications Scorecard. Its goal is to create an index so an organization can better understand how to leverage culture, purpose and values to improve employee experiences and business performance.

*Continued on page 4*

## Knowledge of Values

*Our company values guide me in my work on a day-to-day basis.*

|           | Baseline | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
|-----------|----------|----|----|----|----|
| Measure 1 |          |    |    |    |    |
| Measure 2 |          |    |    |    |    |
| Measure 3 |          |    |    |    |    |

1

## 3 Living the Values

Behaviors in action

- *The people on my team behave in a way that is aligned with the company values*
- *Senior leaders (Senior Director and above) of my department act as role models for our values*

| Keystone Behaviors | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
|--------------------|----|----|----|----|
| Customer Focus     |    |    |    |    |
| Teamwork           |    |    |    |    |
| Agility            |    |    |    |    |
| Collaboration      |    |    |    |    |
| Integrity          |    |    |    |    |

## Leading and Taking Action

Employee Feedback Forum Themes

What do you need from your leadership team in order to take action and lead change?



What positive change have you seen since the launch of the initiative?



What information do you need from leadership to accomplish your goals?



2

## 4 Business Impact Performance Measures

|   | FY17 Baseline* | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
|---|----------------|----|----|----|----|
| I recommended a company product to my family or friends.            |                |    |    |    |    |
| I described the company as a great place to work.                   |                |    |    |    |    |
| My team has been able to achieve its business goals.                |                |    |    |    |    |
| I was well-informed about developments that could affect my career. |                |    |    |    |    |

Source: P. Bayerlein, Gagen MacDonald

## PRNews

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Gaps indicate where leaders need to use communications to further culture and where leader behavior needs to be improved to deliver a more connected employee experience.

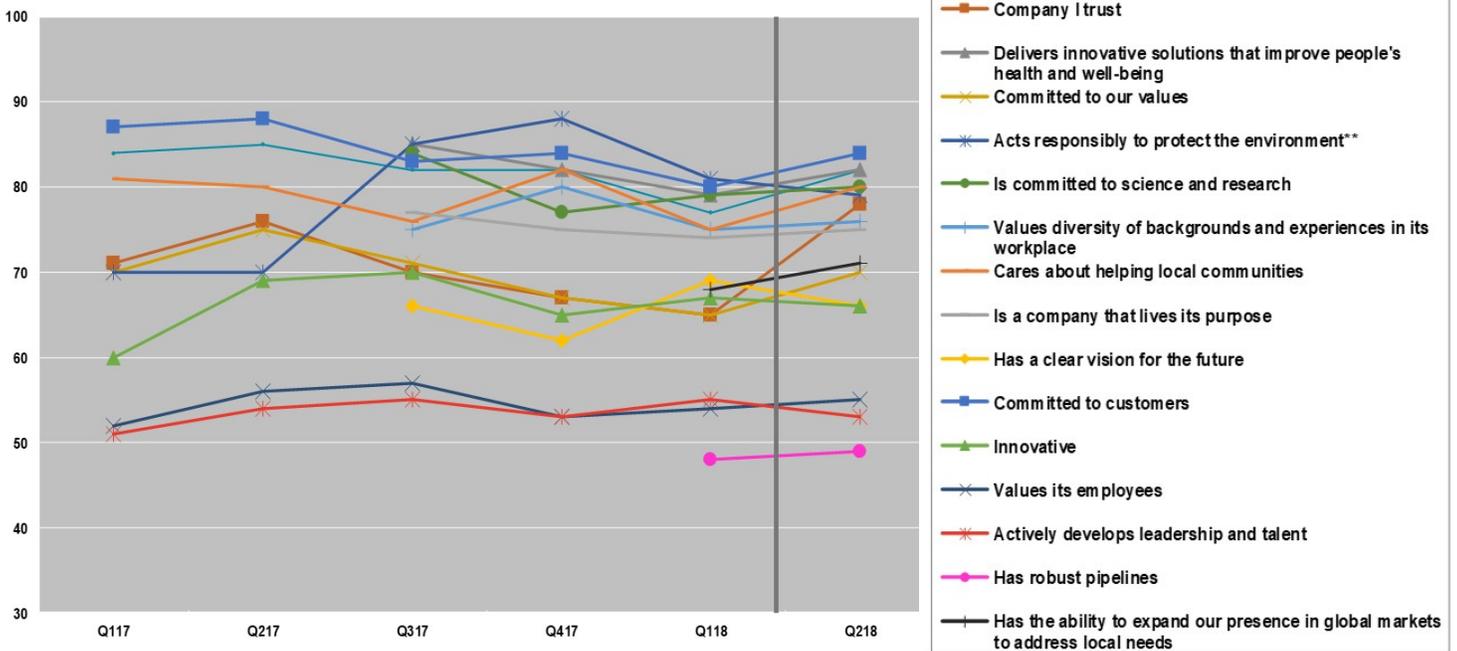
Table 1 measures understanding of values, the first step on the adoption curve. Table 3 measures how well values are lived and if employees have reached adoption/advocacy. Table 2 summarizes themes from open-ended questions that capture employee feedback and ideas on what information and tools they need to drive a high performance culture. Table 4 provides insight into the business impact in terms of employee engagement and advocacy. Communications or HR administer the surveys, which are filled out using a Likert scale.

Table 5 shows results from a short, quarterly pulse survey, capturing what employees are thinking, feeling and believing about their company and dimensions that drive its reputation. Again, its results inform leaders and communicators about core messages and the effectiveness of leader communications.

Table 6 is a business transformation communications scorecard capturing employee awareness and understanding of why transformation is occurring and the business impact. It tracks these measures against an overall employee engagement score and leader and supervisor/manager communication behaviors. ■

**CONTACT:** [p.bayerlein@gagenmac.com](mailto:p.bayerlein@gagenmac.com)

## 5 Long Term Trend (% Agree)



| 6 Employee Perceptions                             | Annual Goal | Business Unit | Company Overall |
|--|-------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Employee engagement score                          |             |               |                 |
| <b>Operating Model Communications</b>              |             |               |                 |
| Understand why for new op model                    |             |               |                 |
| Understand basics of new op model                  |             |               |                 |
| Op model positive for the company                  |             |               |                 |
| Op model fit with 2020 goals                       |             |               |                 |
| <b>Communication Behaviors</b>                     |             |               |                 |
| Supervisor provides regular feedback               |             |               |                 |
| Senior leaders provide regular feedback            |             |               |                 |
| Supervisor encourages dialogue to resolve conflict |             |               |                 |
| Supervisor has regular team discussions            |             |               |                 |

# How to Bolster Your Facebook Marketing Effort When You Lack a Large Budget and Ample Time

**Editor's Note:** Each month we ask communicators to unload their toolkits and tell us what falls out. In other words, What do you use to do your job?

There are few better to talk about **Facebook** marketing than **Ryder Meehan**, principal & strategist, **Meehan Digital**, and a former social marketer at **Fossil** and **Samsung**, among others, and **James Nickerson**, lead instructor, digital marketing at **General Assembly**. Their edited responses to our question about tools they recommend to enhance Facebook marketing are below.

**Ryder Meehan:** There is no denying running a Facebook marketing program to its maximum potential takes a load of time and work. Each new fan, engagement, click and conversion is hard won. Consistently creating compelling content and finding new audiences is far from an easy task.

But with the use of a few powerful tools, you can focus on tactics and strategy while automating more of the execution work.

Building a robust Facebook Ad account loaded with a plethora of ad creative and the ability to test audiences are ideal elements leading to optimal performance.

For example, say you want to test an audience based on job titles and another based on interests, or a variety of headline and image combinations. Then you want to determine the best permutation of audience and ad.

## MANAGING, REPORTING RESULTS



**Ryder Meehan**,  
Principal/  
Strategist,  
Meehan Digital

That's all good and well but managing and reporting on the test results soon becomes unwieldy, especially when you've also got a budget and cost-per-acquisition goal to balance.

That's why putting **AdEspresso** into the mix is a game-changer. The tool helps to automate many of the testing, permutation and optimization challenges of the modern Facebook marketer. It's easy to setup and use as well.

AdEspresso plugs into your Facebook account, then you load as many ad elements (headline, body, link, image, video or carousel) and audiences as you like. The tool will test every permutation of your inputs and optimize to the best ad combo for the target audience – automatically! Then it displays summarized analytics to see which audience demographic is most responsive.

There's a free trial and with a base account of \$49/month it's easy to justify the cost given your time and efficiency gains.

## SCHEDULING WITH EASE

Another tool I implore with vigor is **Buffer**. It allows the content manager to schedule posts weeks or months out, then get client or manager review and approval before they are added to the posting queue.

There is also a simple yet powerful analytics component to easily see which posts perform best. The integration of **Twitter**, **LinkedIn** and Facebook in the single Buffer interface adds in-

*Continued on page 6*

### Tools to Foster Your Facebook Marketing Effort

Ryder's Recommendations

**For Testing:  
AdEspresso**



**For Scheduling:  
Buffer**



**For Making Videos:  
Movavi Video Suite**



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creased efficiency. Then there is the content feed feature, which suggests posts to quickly share from your followed pages.

It's well worth the price of \$99/month if you manage multiple accounts and social media platforms.

### BETTER AND EASY VIDEO ADS

Finally, the importance of great creative in your Facebook ads is a major factor in how your program will perform. In my testing, nothing works as well as video ads.

Creating effective video assets historically has been expensive, time intensive and challenging. I also see whiteboard explainers as an often-used, cheap solution, but ultimately they have an impersonal, non-branded feel, in my opinion.

That's why I really like the **Movavi Video Suite**. This affordable desktop software allows anyone to turn images or video clips into sleek ad spots with built-in transitions, text overlays, background music and other elements that give the finished product a very polished look.

The videos you create within a few hours of work can be used far beyond Facebook as well – on your website, across social platforms and any where you need to demonstrate your brand and product easily.



**James Nickerson**,  
Lead Instructor,  
Digital Marketing,  
General Assembly

**James Nickerson:** At its heart, social media always has been about content: building it, sharing it, reacting to it. There was an art to finding or building great content that would surprise and delight followers. But, as social media tools have transformed into advertising platforms, the creative side of content curation has withered, taking much fun out of managing social media campaigns.

Here, however, are tools to return joy to content creation and curation.

### Tools to Make Facebook Content Fun Again

James' Recommendations



For UGC:  
**Stackla**



For Content Creation:  
**Quuu.com**

### RETURNING FUN TO FACEBOOK CREATION

You know the person at the party who constantly talks about him/herself, what they do, who they know, etc., without taking a breath or asking anything about you? That is the equivalent of a company that uses

“ **The importance of great creative in Facebook ads is a major factor in how your program will perform...nothing works as well as video ads.** ”

solely branded content in its social feeds. We react the same way to them as we do to those people at the party. We tune them out quickly and try to avoid them.

Studies show unbranded content performs 3-5x better on social than branded content. There is no better person to tell your brand's story than the people who use it everyday. This is why I love **Stackla**, a user generated content (UGC) platform that allows you to discover, curate and showcase authentic user and advocate content seamlessly throughout your marketing channels. It also handles UGC rights management, something that will keep legal happy and your advocates delighted.

Stackla also supports the nonprofit and NGO communities through **Stackla For Good**. I've seen how Stackla uses its technology and resources to help organizations around the world connect with people in authentic, engaging ways that cultivate communities and promote personal action and civil society.

### GETTING OVER YOURSELF

I admit it. I used to (and still) take too much time creating just the right post or tweet. It must have the brand voice, the right hashtags, etc.! No algorithm or auto scheduler possibly could create the epic “artisanal social content” I do, as I hover over my keyboard in the dark of night.

Well, I got over myself and found **Quuu.com**, which sends you human (!), hand-picked content based on your interests. There are more than 300 categories to choose from, and you can also decide how many suggestions you'd like to receive. Quuu also integrates cleanly with Buffer and **HubSpot**, so it's like more than just one tool.

Fellow content creators and curators... don't give up the ship! I know we have less and less time to search our favorite media for the perfect piece of content for our social feeds, but our robot overlords have not won yet!

Nothing beats human eyes and minds finding great things for audiences to read, share and react to. I strive to keep that skill set sharp by looking for great content daily, if only for 5-10 minutes. ■

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[jamesmnickerson@gmail.com](mailto:jamesmnickerson@gmail.com)

**Note to Subscribers:** You'll hear more from Ryder Meehan and James Nickerson during PR News' Aug. 9-10 Facebook Boot Camp and Media Summit in San Francisco as well as social media experts from Adobe, Macy's, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, IBM, Paypal, Twitter, THX, Audubon Society, Clif Bar, Logitech and more. As a PR News subscriber, you receive a \$300 discount on this event and a 33% discount on all PR News events and webinars. Visit: <http://www.prnewsonline.com/go/pr-news-social-media-summit/>

# 13 PR Pros Reveal Their Best Practices for Internal Communications During Times of Change

Change is hard. It comes in spades with mergers & acquisitions (M&A), which some believe could occur with rapidity in the coming weeks and months.

In media, where size and scope are valuable, things are moving furiously already. Fresh off a court's approval of its \$85 billion acquisition of **Time Warner** June 12, **AT&T** said June 25 it was in pursuit of digital advertiser **AppNexus**, an asset it needs to assemble a media empire.

Also in media, behemoths **Comcast** and **Disney** are battling for vulpine media empire **21st Century Fox**.

While in communications M&As are far smaller than those noted above, a slew of modest mergers and a larger one, the late-February combination of **Burson-Marsteller** with **Cohn & Wolfe**, have occurred.

## POOR COMMUNICATIONS AND M&A PROBLEMS



**Larry Parnell**, head, Strategic PR Program, George Washington University Graduate School of Political Management

An issue with M&As is companies often forget a successful merger is “about people, not Xs and Os,” says **Larry Parnell**, a former corporate communicator and PR firm executive who heads the strategic PR program at **George Washington University's** graduate school of political management. As a result, companies often give short shrift to the importance of aligning cultures after a merger, he adds. Another casualty is internal communications to employees about their future.

Part of the problem, he says, is communicators often are summoned only *after* the resolution of legal and financial issues. Yet this is when “the real heavy lifting [of a merger] begins,” Parnell insists. Many corporate leaders are gone by that time, though they leave instructions for communicators and managers to “Go figure it out,” Parnell says.

This disregard for culture and internal communication leads to dysfunction that bleeds throughout the merger. As a result, the promised financial goal of M&As, increasing shareholder value, is achieved just one-third of the time.

But back to change, a brand need not be involved in a gargantuan M&A for its employees to experience change. A garden-variety restructuring will do the trick, as will a sudden or gradual departure of a valued employee or employees.

With this background, we asked PR pros to offer best practices for communicating internally during times of change.

Their edited responses are below.



**Katina Arnold**, VP, Corporate Communications, ESPN

When you're in a situation that's public, unsettled or filled with change, you should communicate an internal plan as soon, and as directly, to employees as you can. In employees'

“ We used to say, ‘Expect internal messages to show up externally within a few days.’ Today, in the digital age, you’ll see them externally in the press within a few hours, minutes or even seconds. ”

-Katina Arnold, VP, ESPN

minds, no news equals bad news. This is why communicating quickly in a variety of ways—including employee meetings where employees can ask questions, through email, the intranet and message cascade with managers—achieves the best results.

You don't have to have all the answers when you begin to communicate, but you should try to relay the company's vision, state the reasons why you can't talk about certain things and at least demonstrate a clear plan to move forward in a smart and thoughtful way.

We used to say, “Expect internal messages to show up externally within a few days.” Today, in the digital age, they re-appear [externally] within a few hours, minutes or even seconds. You must adopt a mindset that anything you say internally could be immediately consumed externally.

We still try to give employees a first look at certain announcements and personnel changes so they read about it from us versus the press, but typically we try to time our internal and external announcements as closely as possible.



**Morry Smulevitz**, Head, Corporate Communications/Media Content, AbbVie

When communicating change, I am reminded of the Socrates quote: “The secret of change is to focus all of your energy not on fighting the old but on building the new.”

With that in mind, my advice is for PR practitioners to consider these 5 C's:

**Clarity:** No matter how complex the scenario, clear and honest delivery of the vision, rationale, benefits and process for change is critical. Thank employees for their patience, cooperation and continued focus along the way.

**Credibility:** Employees recognize when they aren't getting the whole story. If all the details can't be shared for legal or other reasons, then say so. Also, it is important to ensure

Continued on page 8

leaders across the organization are consistent in delivering the narrative and messages.

**Compassion:** It's hard to deliver tough news in times of uncertainty, but it's harder to be on the receiving end. While communications don't need to be apologetic, consider the emotional impact to employees who don't have the broader view of decision makers.

**Commitment:** Highlight successes, provide updates on progress, and offer employees a resource for questions. Reinforce the change narrative and weave it into your corporate language. As significant milestones are met, town halls beat emails every time.

**Cascade:** Nail the flow of information from the start. Depending on the degree of change, consider starting at the top of the enterprise. Equip directors and line managers to discuss in more detail with their teams in succession, utilizing a variety of resources, including an FAQ.



**Robert Hastings**  
EVP/CCO/Chief of Staff, Bell

The most important and impactful thing an organization can do during times of significant change is lead. Leadership in the form of company leaders, armed with a good communications plan and a supportive communications team, make all the difference. Tell employees what's going on, explain what it means to them, listen and respond to their concerns, show them leaders are committed and like the old commercial said, "Rinse and repeat." The one thing you can't overdo during periods of significant change is to over-communicate.



**Marie Andel**  
EVP, People & Culture CSAA Insurance Group  
Communicating about change is a constant. A few learnings:

**1). Avoid jargon, acronyms and corporate speak.** Find ways to keep the change story relevant and interesting. When you can, make it fun!

**2). Focus on everyone's favorite radio station: WIIFM** ("What's In It for Me?"). Remember this when explaining the impact of change. Communicate how change will benefit employees as well as customers.

**3). Explore fresh ways to tell the change story.** For example, make use of video and infographics, deploying different channels aimed at specific audiences, and integrate it broadly so your messages become part of the fabric of the company, rather than one-off communications.

**4). Check in with employees to gauge where they are on the change curve, and use that to tailor your messaging.** Offer employees frequent updates—don't wait for big news."Build credibility by being transparent about setbacks as well as successes.

**5). Consider leveraging external media to tell your change story.** News stories can be promoted internally to reinforce the progress you are making and inspire employees, while enhancing brand and reputation with potential customers and partners.

“ **The one thing you can't overdo during periods of significant change is to over-communicate.** ”

**Robert Hastings, CCO, Bell**



**Lauren Hodapp**  
Director, Internal Communications  
Conservation International

**1). Foster dialogue.** Staff and executives alike benefit from opportunities to talk openly in moments of change. Last year, **Conservation International's** founder/CEO stepped down after 30 years. We fostered dialogue with staff throughout the succession process by conducting multiple Town Hall discussions—on time zones appropriate for our globally dispersed staff—where anyone could ask any questions. Our staff appreciated the opportunity for dialogue and our executives gained insight and perspective by listening to and reflecting on these staff questions. And the sessions set the tone for further open communication with the new leadership team.

**2). Prioritize staff by emphasizing transparency.** Staff appreciate transparency, particularly during institutional shifts. As **ESPN's Katina Arnold** mentioned earlier, sharing changes in a timely and authentic way can be more important than settling on the perfect message, waiting for every piece to be final or sharing only part of the story.

We started communicating with staff about our CEO's plans to step down very early and introduced the succeeding leadership team to staff fewer than 24 hours after the decision was finalized. The priority was on sharing this news with staff quickly—ahead of our partners, community, and the wider world—because it was critical for the Conservation International family to hear the news first.



**Ken Peterson**  
Senior Communications Strategist  
Monterey Bay Aquarium

We use a few consistent methods to communicate when there's big news to share, some of it involves change communications. Key members of our leadership team will send an all-staff email when there's a major announcement—often a new business partner or a policy success that helps us advance our mission, but also reorganizations and adoption of new strategic priorities.

We share and celebrate positive news in face-to-face forums as well: at bi-monthly, all-staff meetings and monthly meetings of manager-level staff. In addition we communicate directly at regular work-group and cross-divisional meetings.

One of our most productive communications tactics is a story board that serves as an information-sharing, planning and coordination group for news and activities we might want to share through our earned, owned and paid channels—from

our website and social media, to earned media outreach.

Another tactic is a daily stand-up meeting of frontline staff, who go over operational issues but where they also share updates on institutional changes and news.



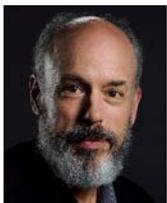
**Barbara Moreno**  
Executive Director, Communications  
San Diego Convention Center Corporation

Having gone through reorganizations, management changes and rebrands, there's one thing I've learned: communications directors are instrumental to success. That is because we are the gatekeepers, brand managers and message leaders. While most of us focus on our external messaging much of the time, during periods of change, building brand ambassadors starts on the inside.

**1). Know your audience.** Yes, this is a tip you are likely to find at the start of nearly every PR initiative, yet too many of us overlook it or fail to give it the importance it deserves. It is imperative that you understand whom you are talking to and know how employees are perceiving changes that are occurring in the organization. Hold an employee meeting, allow employees an opportunity to voice questions through online forms or old-school note cards. Run through scenarios and questions. In times of change, employees may not have the courage to speak up. It is part of the communicator's job to empower them.

**2). Over-communicate.** This can't happen enough. Tell your internal audience members what you want them to know, then tell them again and again...and again. Also make sure your leadership team is well aware of each other's roles and responsibilities. Times like these call for lots of meetings, and while we usually dislike meetings, they are a key part of communications strategy.

**3). Make yourself available.** Accountability and integrity at the start are necessary to a successful launch of any new team member, role or product.



**Bob Pearson**  
Vice Chair/Chief Innovation Officer  
W2O Group

It's not a secret that change makes most of us uncomfortable. When we introduce new people, structures or products to our organizations, we all need time to process and we do it in different ways.

From 30 years of being involved in change and change communications, I find the following to be critical to success:

**Authenticity:** Are staff hearing directly from leaders in an unscripted manner or are they merely hearing corporate messaging that feels a bit too over-prepared?

**Storytelling:** Think of how storytelling can be used to better explain change and improve the value of your organization. Communicators have a choice: we can help employees discover the power of progress via our communications and storytelling or we can pump out all of the necessary content, check off our list and have far less success.

**3&3:** Great communicators know how they want to shape

the organization over three years, yet always ensure they take the right steps every three months with an eye on that vision. They know every step matters on the journey.



**Ewan Main**  
CEO  
Daggerwing Group (Ketchum's Change Management and Internal Communications Consultancy)

During times of change, silence is not golden. Keeping all the stakeholders talking, collaborating and storytelling is critical to managing the human factors that can undermine the success of major initiatives such as restructurings and transformations.

There are three priorities for executive sponsors of change.

**Articulate a very clear picture of the future, in as positive a light as you can, even if the change is tough.** Everyone needs to understand exactly what the change means for them and what their role is in getting there.

**Make sure leaders own the communications about the change and are talking about it with employees every day.** Focus on early successes to build momentum and keep sharing and celebrating milestones along the way.

**Ensure employees are part of the conversation – involvement equals commitment.** Change is much easier if people feel they are part of shaping it, as opposed to feeling the change is something being done to them and that they have no control over what is happening.



**Rebecca Fannin**  
Managing Director,  
Change & Internal Communications  
Hill & Knowlton Strategies

Employees can be resistant to change even when the outcomes are beneficial. This is why many campaigns fail—they address how we *think* people should be, rather than how they really are.

We counsel clients to create internal communications and engagement strategies based on behavioral science, with an understanding of core motivations around purpose and passion and the relationship between culture and performance inside their company.

It's key to assess and build credibility for leadership to chart the new course. Employees should hear a steady cadence of communications from leadership. These messages should be transparent and frequent to show progress made, address ongoing challenges and engage employees around new opportunities.

Direct managers should be engaged as early as possible, since they will hear directly from employees about questions and concerns.

This qualitative input should inform near-term strategy to better align to where employees are in the transition process.

When tough choices need to be made, they should be linked with specific, tangible improvements and include benefits to employees.

*Continued on page 10*

Finally, the narrative and activations should be tailored to address employees' questions about their role in the company, individual growth and support for mission, and ways to align behaviors to new goals.



**Heather Kruse**  
VP, Human Resources  
Rogers & Cowan

At **Rogers & Cowan**, we believe employees are our best brand ambassadors. That's why CEO **Mark Owens** has an open door policy and communicates directly with staff whenever possible. We regularly employ Town Halls, which can be joined in-person and by **Skype** from all our locations.

In addition, we announce changes via email and correspondence with our parent company, **Octagon**, that disseminates information to our family of network sister agencies.

As we are in the integrated marketing and communications business, we understand the importance of effective communications. As others have said, being first to brief employees of change is critical. Not only do we want to be the first to inform our employees of news, we want to help them understand *why* change is happening and listen to and address any concerns they may have.

It is our belief that engagement, transparency and trust are key factors leading to happier, more productive employees who advocate on behalf of the agency.

This type of brand advocacy in turn leads to higher retention rates, the ability to attract better talent and more new business.



**Jason Meyer**  
Director, APCO Worldwide

In times of significant change, proactive, well-planned communication cannot be emphasized enough. While employees may experience a wide range of transitions to their titles, duties or career trajectory, it is paramount they understand a roadmap—underpinned by stability for the organization—exists.

Three fundamental principles leaders must keep in mind when embarking on a change communications initiative:

**1.) Tailor communications to ground the rationale for change in the core values of the blended organization.**

When merging cultures, it is inevitable that various attributes of a workplace culture appealed to the existing workforce, which attracted them and has kept them there. Do the due diligence to understand which values and attributes drove affinity for workplace culture and be intentional about outlining how the future state of the combined organization will reflect these values. Change will be easier to understand when placed in the context of a solid, welcoming culture.

“ **Communicators have a choice: We can help employees discover the power of progress via communications and storytelling or pump out the necessary content, check off our list and have far less success.** ”

**Bob Pearson, Vice Chair, W20 Group**

**2.) Ensure leaders and managers at all levels are briefed on key details and understand when and how to most effectively engage those who report to them with key information.** As others have said here, change communications should never feel like a top-down exercise. Clear leadership visibility bolstered by enthusiastic surround sound is the way to go.

**3.) Establish a feedback loop with employees in tune with your organization's culture.** Whether through online surveys, townhalls or other means, ensure your people know they are heard and that you plan to be responsive to their thoughts during the transition.



**James Bailey**  
Professor of Leadership  
George Washington University School of Business

When facing a major change, communication across organizations should adhere to three principles.

First, it should be as transparent as possible. The rumor mill already is grinding. Clear, honest information frames the change and lends credibility to management.

Second, it should be positive in tone. People are worried, even afraid, of what the change means to them. A positive tone, if in earnest, will help calm the concerns of employees.

Third, communications should be consistent. As soon as messages start to contradict, the conception that no one is in charge sets in and a virtual panic ensues. ■

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**Note to Subscribers: Would you like an important question of yours put to a group of senior communicators in an upcoming PR News Roundtable?**

If so, please contact our editor ([sarenstein@accessintel.com](mailto:sarenstein@accessintel.com)) with your question(s). If we pick your submission, you will be acknowledged when it runs in a future edition of PR News.

# Burger King and the EPA Wrestle for Crown of Worst Crisis Communicator

Often organizations try too hard to either capitalize on hot news topics or avoid them altogether. Neither strategy is particularly effective.

First we have **Burger King** trying waaaaay too hard to leverage not one but two major news events. On the other side, doing its best to avoid the news at all cost was the **Environmental Protection Agency** (EPA), which went into a media death spiral as a result.

## BURGER KING

The author **Michael Pollan** famously advised us to, “Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.” To paraphrase him, I’d advise Burger King to, “Use global events. Not too much. Mostly don’t.”

Not surprisingly, this year’s **World Cup** in Russia had marketers working overtime trying to figure out the cleverest way to capture people’s attention, shares and comments. Burger King won the battle. It offered women \$47,000 and a lifetime supply of burgers if they could prove any man who was playing in the World Cup had impregnated them.

## BURGER KING’S WORLD CUP GOAL ISSUE

The first problem was the goal. While most ads are intended to either sell product or build brand, the stated goal of this one came right out of *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Its Russian spokesperson explained that Burger King made this bizarre offer in order to “procure the best football genes to ensure the success of the Russian Team for generations to come.”

The ad, which might have been acceptable in a totalitarian society bent on dominating world soccer, was posted on the company’s social media account, which of course guaranteed the world would see it. And, not surprisingly women around the world objected.

To BK’s credit, it took only about 48 hours for the ad to be pulled and an apology issued, leaving many wondering if it was just a creative director gone rogue or a publicity stunt.

## DRIVING THE BUSINESS

The same question was raised two weeks later when Burger King decided to capitalize on the historic moment when Saudi Arabian women finally were allowed to drive cars. To mark the event, the brand renamed its signature sandwich, offering the WhoppHER free to every female driver going through its drive-through during the next 30 days.

While clueless creative types who obviously never heard of domestic abuse lauded the concept, most other observers were left scratching their heads, trying to figure out why Burger King was encouraging violence against women.

The lesson in both of these incidents is nothing you post online, or anywhere for that matter, will be seen only by your designated “target audience.”

While many Russians were unfazed by an ad encouraging

women to have sex with random football players, the rest of the world was appalled.

To be sure, in Saudi Arabia there were many Saudi women who were very grateful to eat free burgers for a month regardless of what they were called in English. But women all over the world who also eat at Burger King were horrified.



## HAVE IT YOUR WAY

None of this may be an accident. In a recent *Business Insider* interview with Burger King CMO **Fernando Machado**, (published the same day as the company apologized for the Russian ad), Machado indicated that he was fine with the brouhaha.

“Honestly, we didn’t have cases of backfiring to the point that truly affected the brand. For us, so far, when something doesn’t work, it’s not like it went negative, it’s more like it didn’t work. So people didn’t talk as much as we thought they would. We didn’t get as much on media as we thought we would,” Machado told *Business Insider*.

In other words, he’s counting media exposure as “success.” Whether it’s positive or negative doesn’t matter.

Obviously, Burger King met its goal with these two fiascos. Of course the interview with Machado was done before the campaigns were launched, so I wonder if he’d seen them when he told *Business Insider*: “We try to be respectful, we try to not get divisive, we try to not come across as bullying.”

Not sure what definition of respectful includes encouraging people to “whop” women and getting pregnant just to win a sports competition. Clearly his staff is missing his respectful inclusion message. More likely they know that all he cares about is exposure, so that’s what they’re delivering.

## THE EPA

If there were an Ig-Nobel prize for crisis communications, the Environmental Protection Agency would win in it in a heartbeat. Never has any organization tried so hard to avoid media scrutiny and yet wound up at the center of so many scandals and front-page stories.

A **Sierra Club** Freedom of Information (FOIA) request brought to light the extraordinary efforts that EPA director **Scott Pruitt**’s staff undertook to avoid public scrutiny. Those efforts included ensuring that only scripted questions were allowed at public meetings, dividing the public into friendly and unfriendly camps, threatening to call the police on reporters, blocking media access to public appearances and in general simply being rude to the media.

“You have a great day, you’re a piece of trash,” EPA spokesperson **Jahan Wilcox** famously told a reporter from *The Atlantic*. It should also be noted that Wilcox is a veteran

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of numerous political campaigns, and lacks a communications background.

**Erik Wemple**, a *Washington Post* reporter, presciently pointed out, “These recriminations from the EPA press office have been going on for months and where has it gotten them? More piercing, dead-on accurate scandal coverage,

not to mention a dozen federal probes of Pruitt.”

The latest scandal revolved around the release of a long-awaited report on PFAS—chemicals known to cause health issues.

Administration officials dubbed the report a potential “public relations nightmare” in emails *Politico* discovered.

Not surprisingly Pruitt as well as the White House tried to

## Burger King

| Criteria   | Grade                        | Comments   | Advice   |
|--|------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Extent of coverage</b>                          | A or F depending on the goal | If, as Burger King’s CMO said, the campaigns are all about the exposure, both ads got lots of it. Given the global nature of interest in the World Cup it wasn’t surprising that the Russian ad was picked up by media outlets from around the world. The Saudi ad did not evoke quite the same level of interest. | If your goal is exposure, it’s not very hard to generate these days. Generating desirable exposure is a very different objective, though. For most brands that brag about generating “billions of impressions” I might point out that there are only 6.5 billion people on the planet, and most can’t afford, can’t access or have no use for your product. So how many impressions do you really need? Essentially impressions are like sperm—there may be millions of them, but very few of them do what they’re intended to do. |
| <b>Effectiveness of spokespeople</b>               | C                            | The official apology was issued via a statement out of the U.S., putting the blame squarely on its “Russian Team” calling the ad “clearly offensive.”  | Blaming your subsidiaries in other countries doesn’t hold water these days. A skeptical public assumes that if you control the media, the message and the budget, you should have known what the team is doing. Especially if it’s in a country where all eyes are watching these days.  |
| <b>Communication of key messages</b>               | F                            | The message that came across was that Burger King cared more about improving the future chances of Russian soccer players than it did about women. And that it was totally deaf to the meaning of #MeToo.  | If you can’t pre-test a message that is going to appear before the world, perhaps you should at least run it by a few female customers first.  |
| <b>Management of negative messages</b>             | F                            | There didn’t appear to be any attempt to manage any negative positioning.  | Issuing a statement from your PR office half a world a way is not a good way to manage negative messages.  |
| <b>Impact on employees and potential employees</b> | D                            | Whatever Burger King might say about its diversity, these ad reflect a remarkable insensitivity to women’s issues. It might have something to do with the fact that there is only one woman on its board.  | Unless you operate in a country overflowing with talented potential employees, you need to examine every statement you make online or in social media as a potential negative review on Glassdoor. Millennials more than any other generation in history expect employers to take action in support of social justice, sustainability and human rights. They will avoid you like the plague if your public record shows anything else.   |
| <b>Impact on stakeholders and customers</b>        | D                            | Chances are that a couple of social media posts aren’t going to have a significant impact on either stock price or store traffic in the short term. But if the trend continues, all bets are off.  | The media may like edgy marketing, but shareholders and customers won’t be nearly as enthusiastic. Make sure you’ve pre-tested your messaging on ALL your target audiences before releasing it to the world.   |
| <b>Overall score</b>                               | D                            | At best Burger King’s social media posts were tone deaf and dumb. If in fact they were part of some super-edgy strategy to garner media impressions, they are truly horrific.  | Edgy for edginess sake, just like creativity for creativity’s sake, is frequently the cause of major crises. Make sure when you are launching a campaign that the business objectives are clear and there is a direct line between the campaign and the desired outcomes.  |

get the report suppressed.

Naturally, as soon as word of the report leaked in May, the scandal became front-page news.

The report revealed that the chemicals studied endangered human health at far lower levels than previously assumed.

Apparently the current “acceptable level” was 10 times higher than what was deemed safe. The report also revealed that the health of roughly one-third of Americans could be at risk from PFAS contamination.

To make things worse, the chemicals have been found at particularly high levels around military bases, including some of those under consideration for housing immigrant children taken from their parents at the border.

Not surprisingly, given the history of bad media relation-

ships and attempts to suppress the news, EPA’s “PR nightmare” shows no signs of ending anytime soon.

### AND THERE’S MORE

And speaking of nightmares, as we were going to press there were reports from Washington that seemed to pour more fuel on the fire at EPA.

The Washington Post reported July 3 Pruitt aides provided details to congressional investigators in recent days about the administrator’s push to find a six-figure job for his wife at a politically connected group. They also discussed his enlisting staffers to perform personal tasks and seeking high-end travel despite aides’ objections. ■

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## EPA

| Criteria                                    | Grade | Comments   | Advice  |
|---|-------|--|---|
| Extent of coverage                          | F     | If the desire of the EPA was to stay OUT of the headlines, the strategy is failing miserably. Pruitt’s scandals are fodder of daily headlines and the report he tried to suppress has been discussed in every local paper in the country.  | The key to staying out of the media is to be overly transparent. When the media gets sick of you offering comments or sees you as “too” available, they’ll begin to ignore you.   |
| Effectiveness of spokespeople               | F     | While the current news cycle has had its fair share of infamous spokespeople, the EPA’s Wilcox is in a class by himself. Given that his boss tries to avoid the media at all costs, Wilcox has become the de facto voice of the EPA, and his personal animus toward the media ensures that he can’t credibly deliver any messages. | To be an effective spokesperson means to drive home key messages, provide credible answers and minimize myths rumors and negative messaging. In order to do that you have to be seen by the media as credible and an able mediator between those asking for information and the person you represent. |
| Communication of key messages               | F     | His strategy appears to use his personal vitriol to distract the media from the message.   | If you want the media to hear your messages and ideally pass them on to their readers and viewers, it’s not enough to have a good message. You have to have a good-enough relationship with the media so that it is willing to listen and believe what you’re saying.                                 |
| Management of negative messages             | F     | Wilcox and the EPA have done nothing to ameliorate negative messages. Every tactic they’ve tried to avoid bad publicity has only resulted in more of it.   | To mitigate negative messaging requires enormous amounts of trust and credibility between your spokesperson and the media. Without it negative messages will be all that emerge.  |
| Impact on constituents                      | F     | The EPA depends on Congress for funding and permission to exist. All the negative publicity has resulted in numerous investigations as well as calls for Pruitt’s removal.   | When you make strategic decisions in a crisis, the people you need to keep top of mind are the ones who give you permission to exist, whether that is Congress, voters, investors, the board, donors or customers. Any of them can and will revoke that permission in a heartbeat these days.         |
| Impact on employees and potential employees | F     | Both recent hires and longtime staffers are leaving the EPA in record numbers. Give the EPA and Pruitt’s reputations it will be hard to replace the lost talent.   | In order to be successful every organization has to attract and keep talent. If you have a reputation for lying, obfuscating and/or belittling people, it will be that much harder to attract and retain talent.  |
| Overall score                               | F     | If anyone needs a primer on how NOT to manage the press during a crisis, the EPA has provided one.   | If you need to manage a crisis or are just planning for one, make sure the person responsible for communications has the trust and respect of the media and also understands the constituencies that keep you in business.  |

# Aligning PR With Business Goals to Grab Mindshare and Larger Budgets



“If I was down to my last dollar, I’d spend it on public relations.” With this statement, it’s obvious **Microsoft** founder **Bill Gates** believed in the value of PR.

The same goes for Sir **Richard Branson**, founder of the **Virgin Group**, who sees the strategic value of PR. “Publicity is absolutely critical,” the English billionaire has said. “A good PR story is infinitely more effective than a front-page ad.”

These leaders, along with many others, have experienced the positive lift in brand awareness and sales growth PR can deliver, especially when you have a strong team of communicators and a great story to tell. In today’s data-driven world, it’s essential to measure and report your PR results to reinforce that value. And successful measurement starts with tying key performance indicators (KPIs) to your business objectives.

## STEP ONE: UNDERSTAND BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

It is essential to tie PR to business objectives for several reasons. These include the importance of aligning to the goals of your company leaders and showcasing the value behind the metrics. Ultimately, reporting PR results with a focus on business results increases your opportunity to get even more budget for your next activity.

As the company or organization you work with sets its strategic objectives, it is important that you understand them. After all, the better your comprehension of the overall strategy and end goals, the more you can align your PR objectives with that strategy and contribute to the achievement of the business goals.

## VISIT WITH STRATEGISTS

If a leader from your team—such as the chief marketing officer or chief communications officer—has a seat at the table as strategy is debated and finalized, you are in an ideal position to arm him or her with the background on what PR can deliver. This includes, but is not limited to, driving brand awareness through editorial placements and winning share of voice with targeted coverage. This leader can influence the strategy, tying PR to the critical tactics that will help achieve the business objectives.

Whether you have a seat at the table or not, I recommend you invite a member of your strategy team to walk your communications team through the latest company strategy, including the background on each objective and any interesting points your executive team wrestled with when finalizing the strategy.

These insights can be very valuable as you build and drive to achieve your PR objectives, so be sure to invite your agency partners to join in as well.

## WRITING OBJECTIVES CAREFULLY

As you draft your PR objectives, think about how they can be written to reflect what your business wants to achieve. For example, rather than “increasing readership through article placement,”

position one of your objectives as “gaining customer mindshare through thought leadership.”

This language will appeal to business leaders in the company, as they are focused on putting customers first and building a leadership position in their industry.

## ALIGN ON TARGET AUDIENCES

Speaking of customers, don’t forget to understand and align on the target audiences for your company or organization. This may include partners, investors, donors, media, analysts, etc.

By identifying your key target audiences and what publications they read on a regular basis, you can establish your target publication list.

The next step is to build relationships with reporters and editors at the target publications. A good way to forge these relationships is to do your research—understand the publication’s contributed content guidelines and learn the beats of your targeted journalists so you can increase coverage of your company and win more share of voice than your competitors.

## PLACING AN ARTICLE IS THE FIRST STEP

Don’t forget that having the readers of your target publications see your editorial placements is just the first step. You can maximize the value of these articles by sharing links to them with your sales team so they can send them along to customers.

Imagine: One of your account managers leaves a meeting with a prospective customer to whom he or she has introduced a recently launched product. As a follow-up, the account manager can email the prospect a link to an article placed in one of your target publications that touts the benefits of this product. This may just help secure the sale!

Marketing teams always are looking for current content—such as positive coverage or published case studies—to highlight in email campaigns, for example. You should make it standard practice to share your key placements on a regular basis with your marketing colleagues.

## REPORT RESULTS WITH A BUSINESS MINDSET

In reporting your results, keep this same business mindset. For example, we know sales results are reported in comparison to goals annually and year-over-year. This can be done for PR metrics too.

For example, say your earnings are reported on a quarterly basis. Ensure you develop a **PowerPoint** slide that summarizes PR objectives and actual results, including the percent of increase or decrease vs. the goal for this year and for the same quarter during the previous year.

Some of your metrics may include share of voice as well as the number of media impressions and placements.

Many PR teams also showcase how often their editorial content is being shared on social, an additional data point that can highlight PR's influence and return on investment (ROI).

### DESCRIBE WHAT'S BEHIND THE DATA

Also think about adding the "So what?" behind the data. This can include brief bullets on key learnings, innovative tactics that achieved significant success or perhaps how you leveraged a byline in more than one country to drive even more ROI.

Overall, it is important to report your results regularly to your executive team and even your board of director. Keep your report concise and data-based, so that you can highlight the business benefits PR delivers.

By aligning with business objectives, sharing your content and reporting results, you will gain advocates for the PR program at all levels of the company who will be willing to invest additional budget so you can increase activities and thus the value of PR for everyone.

As one of the world's most successful investors, **Warren Buffett**, has stated, "It takes about 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you'll do things differently."

Start doing things differently now by ensuring your PR program is aligned to your business objectives. ■

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## STEALABLE SLIDES

# How to Upgrade Your Pitching by Researching and Targeting Reporters Using Social Media

"Everyone's doing everything on social media," is an oft-heard remark.

It may not apply to PR pros who pitch stories to journalists, however.

During a recent PR News webinar, a trio of media relations pros were sanguine about using social media to do research about journalists and publications as a prelude to choosing the correct reporter and publication to pitch. They also recommended using social to build relationships with targeted journalists.

Using social media to pitch journalists, however, was eschewed. Believe it or not, all three insisted judicious use of the telephone remains an effective tactic, *after* you've sent the journalist information about your story via email.

Still, with social being where many if not most journalists live, there are a wealth of pitching-relat-

Continued on page 16

ed activities you can do on social.

For example, look at Slide 2 from **Scott Dobroski**, senior director of corporate communications at **Glassdoor**. Looking at the **Twitter** accounts of journalists you've targeted can offer tips, he says. For example, notice **JP Mangalindan** and **Julie VerHage** display their email address. "You should email them," Dobroski says. Others provide their DM. **Julie Bort** and VerHage mention their hobbies. Once you've established a relationship with these reporters, you might slip in a mention of their hobbies.

Speaking of emailing reporters, Slide 1 offers another Dobroski tip: including the reporter's name in the subject line in CAPs and letting her know what the pitch is (left) and an exclusive to her (right). In addition this slide emphasizes a creative use of data to grab a reporter's interest. "Data is everything to us...we use it all the time," to grab reporters' attention, he says.

The next slide (3), from Stacey Jones, managing director, corporate communications and global media relations at

## PAUSE BEFORE CLICKING "SEND"

Make sure your email pitch includes...



**Catchy headline:** Your subject is the first (and often only) chance to grab a reporter's attention, so make it count. Ensure it is eye-catching and pithy – and urges reporters to read on. **Pro tip:** Keep the subject line concise, with the most essential information upfront, so it isn't cut off on smartphones.



**Lede & news hook:** Create a compelling lede that sets up the pitch in a clear, engaging way. Lead with a news/seasonal hook to emphasize relevance. Explain why your pitch is important TODAY.



**Story angles:** Offer a menu of possible topics your expert(s) could address – and/or angles a reporter could take with the story. Be sure to tailor story options to each reporter's beat.



**Data:** Provide data points and/or links to key research related to the pitch topic. Articulate how the data advances the story you are seeking to tell.



**Spokespeople:** Highlight all spokespeople available to interview – including titles, bios and specific perspectives they can lend. Specify timeframes when they are available to connect.

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3

**Accenture**, provides a quick checklist to use when emailing pitches to reporters. As you can see, she also highlights using data to grab attention, but also urges using a compelling subject line (headline) that's short enough to be seen on a mobile phone. A common mistake, she says, is naming spokespeople in the pitch who are on vacation when the pitch is sent.

**Editor's Note:** Subscribers get 33% discounts on all PR News events and webinars. This webinar was called "How to Engage with Journalists on Email and Social Media." ■

## TAKEAWAYS

# Takeaways From Internal Communications Roundtable and Crisis and Editorial Resources

In each edition of *PR News* we highlight takeaways from an article as well as additions to the PR News Resource Center, which is available only to subscribers at: <http://www.prnewsonline.com/subscriber-resources/>

Suggest content fellow readers would find useful by contacting the editor at: [sarenstein@accessintel.com](mailto:sarenstein@accessintel.com)

### SELECT TAKEAWAYS

**Roundtable** (pages 7,8,9, 10):

- ▶ "One thing you can't overdo during periods of significant change is to over-communicate." **Robert Hastings**, CCO, **Bell**.
- ▶ "Sharing changes in a timely, authentic way can be more important than settling on the perfect message, waiting for every piece to be final or sharing only part of the story." **Lauren Hodapp**, director, **Conservation International**.

### NEW TO THE SUBSCRIBER RESOURCES CENTER

**2018 Deloitte Crisis-Management Survey:** The global professional services firm surveyed some 500 senior crisis executives during late 2017 and early 2018. Among the findings: the number of crises is on the rise; many crises can be averted; and there is a "dramatic difference in outcomes when senior management and board members are involved" in crisis planning, preparation and exercises.

**2018 PBS Editorial Standards and Practices:** Adopted June 21, 2018, the guidelines took a year to craft and apply to social media and traditional media. The social media guidelines include specific mandates: "Exercise civility, treat errors just as seriously as on other platforms, prevent conflicts of interest, provide adequate context, avoid sensationalizing to generate clicks, and vet third-party content." This document is recommended for brands seeking an editorial guidelines template for their news operations. ■