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MEDIA RELATIONS

Media Opens 60% of Pitches; Reporters Look for News Value, Authenticity and Personalization

Every PR pro has heard a variation on the statistic about there being far more communicators than reporters. The most recent news peg reporters used to cover this dismal (for reporters) item was the poor prognosis for newspapers from **Warren Buffett**. The billionaire investor said in a late-April interview with **Yahoo** that he's unenthusiastic about the future of most newspapers. The decline in ad revenue has made the majority of newspapers "toast," he said.

MORE PR JOBS

From there reporters at **Bloomberg** mentioned **Census Bureau** statistics saying PR pros outnumber journalists by more than 6 to 1, up from 2 to 1 two decades ago.

Social media will result in even more PR jobs. **The Labor Department** predicted April 12 communications gigs will rise to 282,600 in 2026, up 9 percent from 2016. News jobs, though, are forecast to fall 9 percent to 45,900 over the same period.



Sherry Smith,
VP, *Clarity*

Added to these predictions is the anecdotal evidence that the one reporter in the 6:1 ratio is doing the job of two or three. (Let's not even discuss the gap in salary between PR pros and journalists.)

This unbalanced ratio is leading some communicators to incorporate more owned content and other non-earned-media tactics into their strategies. [We'll explore this next month.]

On the other hand, many companies and organizations still want at least some earned media. And, yes, so many executives believe the earned media universe starts and ends with a mention in the **NY Times** and/or **Wall St Journal**.

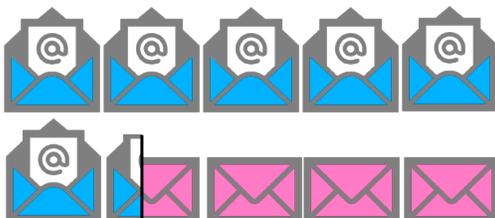
Certainly we urge you to provide informed counsel to executives as to why that's not a sound media strategy (and use the article from **Zeno Group** EVP **Michael Brito** from our April edition as ammunition). Still, much of the PR pro's job

Continued on page 2

1 Approximately what percentage of email pitches & press releases do you open?

63%

of email opened on average



2 Do you answer your phone if you suspect it's a PR person?

82%

Will answer the phone for a pitch



Source: *Clarity PR, April 2019*



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Continued from page 1

6:1 Ratio Raises Annoyance Concerns

3

remains getting mentions in major media (see **Frederik Bjørndal's** article in our Dec. 2018 edition for tips on major media placement). [Ed Note: All articles are available to subscribers in our Subscriber Resources Center.]

AN IMPORTANT RATIO



Michael Smart,
Principal,
SmartPR

The ratio of communicators to reporters mentioned above is relevant. With so many PR pros chasing a dwindling number of reporters, it's almost inconceivable that media do not, at times, feel overwhelmed. Add to this uneven numerical situation the fact that so many PR pros still pitch and pray, sending the same (often off-target pitch) to hundreds of reporters with the click of a mouse. Some news releases aren't merely errant pitches; they actually lack discernable news content. This helps make the annoyance factor considerable.

It's little surprise then that PR pros can come off as annoying, wasters of journalists' time and someone to be avoided. Perhaps this has spawned the practice of journalists engaging in the **Twitter** shaming of PR pros.

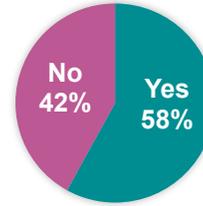
The larger question is how can PR pros stand out from the media-pitching crowd? To answer this we asked **Clarity PR** to survey journalists late last month about pitching preferences and pet peeves. How many email pitches do they open? Why do they elect to consider some pitches and ignore others? What motivates a journalist to consider a pitch? Are there words or phrases in pitches that raise red flags? Clarity even asked about Twitter shaming.

The response on Twitter shaming from the 100 journalists in the survey was a bit alarming. Nearly 60 percent said yes, they'd Twitter-shamed a journalist (see chart 3). One journalist said shaming a PR pro was the result of poorly written pitches and coming off as being too aggressive.

Another shamed a communicator who pretended to know the journalist and sent a bogus personalized pitch. Fortunately, several journalists said they eschewed the practice of shaming PR pros in public.

For **Frank Ahrens**, VP at **BGR PR** in Washington, D.C., "Journalists are doing PR pros a favor by Twitter shaming. They're rightly—if not gently or decorously—telling us to up our game," he says.

Have you ever Twitter shamed a PR Person?



What did they do?

"Too many examples, but mostly just poorly written pitches or unnecessary aggressiveness"

"They wrote an email that was supposed to sound personalized, but instead of my name and a link to my work, it said [writer name] and 'I really enjoyed your [link to piece].'"

When featured in pitches/press releases, which words/phrases annoy you?

(Check all that apply)

- 55%** Disruptive/Disrupting
- 54%** Transformational/Transforming
- 46%** World-class/Best-in-class
- 36%** Leader/Leading
- 16%** Next-generation
- 13%** First-ever
- 12%** Innovative

4

The former VP, global corporate communications at **Hyundai Motor**, is the author of a recent prnewsonline.com article on Twitter shaming. PR pros who don't want to be Twitter shamed, he says, "spell names and organizations correctly," are respectful and brief. "They offer actual news and don't pitch reporters on topics not on their beats." They avoid sending emails starting with, 'Dear XXXX' and don't affect a faux-chummy tone if they don't know the reporter."

GOOD NEWS: AN OPENING

Perhaps the biggest surprise from the survey was that journalists still seem to depend on pitches. They open nearly two-thirds of the email

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5 What factors most contribute to your opening a pitch/press release email? (Check all that apply)

1.  I cover the company it refers to **46%**
2.  The email is obviously personalized **44%**
3.  I know the sender **39%**
4.  It contains a dollar figure **31%**
5.  It references a household name/brand **21%**
It's an exclusive **OR 17%**
6.  It's counter-intuitive or provocative **17%**
7.  The news is under embargo **11%**

6 What factor(s) would make you NOT open the email? (Check all that apply)

1.  The sender fakes that we know each other **71%**
2.  Previous bad experience or no experience with sender **56%**
3.  It sounds spammy **35%**
4.  I can't tell what the news is **32%**
5.  There's too much jargon or hyperbole **25%**
6.  There's a glaring error **18%**
7.  The news is under embargo **24%**

itches and press releases they receive (63 percent), the survey says (please see chart 1).

PHONING IT IN



Nati Katz,
SVP, BCW

A whopping 82 percent of journalists say they'll answer the phone if they suspect a PR pro is calling (please see chart 2).

Late last year PRNEWS and partner **PublicRelay** held a Communications Leaders Roundtable (see our Feb. 2019 edition) where the importance of building relationships with media was emphasized. Consensus was that an often-overlooked tool in the

digital era is the telephone.

"Pick up the horn," is the advice a senior communicator said her mother, a PR pro decades ago, repeats con-

stantly. Another said, "I tell my young staffers it's not enough to email" journalists, "you need to call them." Added another, "I don't know how else you build trust" with journalists and "offer nuance."

Adds pitching guru and frequent PRNEWS contributor **Michael Smart**, principal of **Smart-PR**, "The phone is your secret weapon. PR pros read Twitter rants about journalists hating phone calls and are scared to use the phone. But you carefully and authentically create digital touchpoints with targeted journalists, and then find an appropriate time to reach out. And then you enjoy a relationship that endures."

OPENING THE PITCH

Still, email pitches predominate. So, how can communicators prime the pump and increase the chance that their email pitches and press releases are opened? The formula includes a mix of the basics and a few surprises.

The top vote getter from the journalists is hardly a surprise. 46 percent respond to a pitch when it's from a company "I cover" (see chart 5). This emphasizes the importance of pitching the correct journalists, of course.

For **Nati Katz**, SVP/senior director at **BCW**, it goes beyond that. "This," he says, "is the turning-point element every PR person should put in front of themselves: 'How do I get the company I represent to be of interest to a reporter, as opposed to a one-time transaction?' The PR pro's mindset should be: 'How do I relay to media a sense of 'You can't afford to miss this?'"

PERSONAL PITCH

Next on the list came two predictable elements, the email

Continued on page 4



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pitch “is obviously personalized” (44 percent) and “I know the sender” (39 percent).

Following the money continues to motivate journalists. 31 percent said a dollar figure in a pitch or press release would influence them to open a pitch and peruse it.

A brand’s name-recognition counts too. When the pitch or release contains an iconic brand it motivates 21 percent of journalists to open the email, the survey says.

CREATIVITY OVERRATED?



Frank Ahrens,
VP, BGR PR

For those who spend a lot of time devising counter-intuitive and clever pitches, the numbers weren’t great. Creativity motivates just 17 percent of journalists to consider your story, the survey says.

Katz, though, takes issue with this finding. “Creativity [in pitching] isn’t going away,” he says, but a creative pitch might not seem so on first glance. “Creativity

makes an impact in today’s pitches around the question of ‘Why?’ and ‘Why now?’ and ultimately, ‘Why pitch to you?’”

To reach that level of creativity, Katz is a strong advocate of excessive reading. “The more information, sources, and multi-topic areas you expose yourself to, the more likely your mind will start connecting those dots and reaching new ‘whys’ that are of unique interest to reporters,” he says. “Technology, economics, policy, consumer preferences, demographics and world events; they can all be connected in ways that matter to journalists and can help journalists differentiate their story, a goal they have almost daily.”

BAD WRITING HURTS...

What gets a pitch or press release tossed? The reasons are more subjective than why a pitch is opened, “but there are definitely some best practices to be gleaned,” says **Sherry Smith**, VP, media, mobile & marketing at Clarity, U.S. The most commonly-selected reasons are all, at least in part, related to how you assemble your pitch, she adds.

The survey assumes that a pitch or release outside the journalist’s beat immediately gets it a trip to the trashcan. As such, badly aimed pitches weren’t included in the survey.

Some of the common wisdom around journalists is that they hate bad and unclear writing in pitches and press releases. They’re also supposed to detest jargon and hyperbole. The survey confirms this.

AS DOES JARGON...

The sin of “too much jargon or hyperbole” keeps 25 percent of journalists from opening a pitch or reading a press release. “I can’t tell where the news is” deters 33 percent. Together these responses encompass bad writing, gathering nearly 60 percent of the respondents.

Smith notes, though, removing jargon and hyperbole is done easily. Yet she admits sometime there are issues.

For example, some organizations insist their press releases refer to them as “the leading authority...” or “the leader in the field...”

“If you and everyone else says they’re the leader, then leader has no meaning,” she says. The exception, of course, is if you can quantify the measure of your leadership.

...AND A LACK OF AUTHENTICITY

While bad writing motivates almost 60 percent of journalists to ditch a pitch, it’s not quite the 71 percent who’ll toss a pitch if the communicator pretends to know the journalist, but doesn’t. Authenticity remains the coin of the realm.

It’s not difficult to assume this pet peeve is related in some way to privacy concerns at a time when digital technology makes compromising one’s personal data relatively easy.

It might also attest to the importance of real relationships between media and PR pros. For example, 56 percent of those surveyed said if they “had no experience with the sender/or a bad previous experience” with the pitcher, they’d toss the pitch.

“A top-tier journalist told me he believes that PR pros use software that scans the web and mail-merges the headline of his most recent article into mass emails,” adds pitching pro Smart. “I’ve had an agency executive admit that they type in ‘re:’ in the subject line of a cold outreach to trick journalists into thinking they’ve already had a dialogue.”

Says Smart, “How can you establish a relationship of trust if it’s founded on subterfuge?” A proponent of ‘less is more’ when pitching, Smart says, “The time you invest in researching a limited number of crucial contacts is returned to you tenfold in increased coverage of higher quality.”

WORDS TO AVOID

Speaking of bad writing, Clarity also asked the journos about words that annoyed them in pitches and releases. Since a large percentage of the journalists who responded to the survey write about technology and other tech-related and financial subjects, it’s not surprising they dislike seeing words such as “disruptive/disrupting” (55 percent), “transformational/transforming” (54 percent) and “world-class/best in class” (46 percent).

As mentioned above, overuse of the words “leader” and “leading” is a pet peeve of journalists. As such, those words garnered a healthy 36 percent of disapproval from journalists in the survey.

“So many of these terms are overused to the point that they’re more than just meaningless, they’re downright annoying,” Smith says. A solution, she says, is to illustrate the “disruption,” or why your company or its products are “innovative” or “transformational.” Use real examples or reasons why you believe that to be true. “If you can’t express the rationale behind the claim, then don’t make the claim.”

Looking at the survey and the state of media relations, Ahrens says, “It’s pretty simple, really: Offer something timely, of value, to the right journalist with respect. And don’t annoy them.” ■

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Platinum Honorees, Social Shake-Up Speakers See Speed, Authenticity, Analytics as Future Keys

[Editor's Note: For our regular roundtable feature, we shifted things a bit. Instead of asking one group a single question, we've asked multiple questions of two teams of communicators. As PRNEWS prepares to honor excellence with its **Platinum Awards** in the fall, we asked questions of the 2018 winner and honorable mentions in the Platinum PR Person of the Year category. And as we're in the midst of this year's **Social Shake-Up** in Atlanta, the second group of questions is directed at select social media specialists scheduled to speak at this year's show. The questions and edited responses are below.]

THE PLATINUM HONOREES



Stacy Rawls
CCO
KFC

PRNEWS: *What qualities are most important for today's communications leaders?*

Stacy Rawls: I recently took on the role of chief communications officer at **KFC**. It is a new position for the brand, intended to develop KFC's business narrative as well as lead its external and internal communications.

Possessing a deep level of expertise in the communications field goes without saying—you must have the requisite skills, knowledge and attributes to perform in a communications role.

BE AN INFLUENCER...

An even more critically important quality for any communications leader is the ability to influence. Communication is the thread that enables an organization's leaders to create a culture of trust with employees. It also is a consistent voice wherever people (employees and customers alike) see or interact with your brand.

No one is a bigger steward of a company's culture, vision, values and goals than the company's communicators. Owning that narrative begins with the ability to advise and influence the top leaders in an organization.

Though all business leaders communicate on a daily basis, it takes a different level of communications experience

to engage and empower employees, shape a business narrative, and manage a company's reputation. Leaders across an organization can benefit from the communicator's expertise, but that starts with a communicator who knows how to engage with and influence stakeholders so they'll be open to the his or her perspective and guidance.

...AND AN ANALYTICAL STORYTELLER

To be an excellent communicator, it's also important to be an analytical storyteller. Storytelling always has been at the heart of PR and communications. And as the lines between communications and marketing blur—and as digital marketing becomes increasingly important for driving business results—blending an analytical mindset with a knack for storytelling becomes a superpower for communications professionals.



Jon Sullivan
Director, Corporate Communications
Aflac

PRNEWS: *At a time when technology is prevalent, how can communicators ensure that customers still feel a brand's human touch?*

Jon Sullivan: Can a robot console an angry customer or a chatbot discuss investment strategies? As technology assumes a greater role, it is imperative that communicators recognize its limitations. **Aflac**, like many companies, is undergoing significant transformation, and how that is communicated to customers, shareholders and our workforce is crucial. Here are three things to think about:

- ▶ Understand that people, not a machine or an app, are the source of brand empathy for stakeholders.
- ▶ Remember, technology scares people, particularly employees concerned about their future.
- ▶ Pick up the phone from time to time. Technology is impersonal. Conversations, or face-to-face interactions, build relationships.

Continued on page 6

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Adam Ritchie
Principal
Adam Ritchie Brand Direction

PRNEWS: What excites you about the future of PR and communications?

Adam Ritchie: PR is moving beyond storytelling and into authorship. We're changing how PR is practiced and using it to drive product and service development. In addition, we're pushing the limits of what brands expect from PR. Integration used to occur within the organization. Today it's happening within the individual.

It's also exciting that the world's smallest PR teams are having an impact equal to the world's largest. Earned media is coveted and companies are trusting PR to come up with ideas that are carried across disciplines. We're living at a time when we get to be relentlessly creative.



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

PRNEWS: What qualities are most important for today's communicators?

Esther-Mireya Tejeda: We need to be quick and authentic. The speed at which information moves is at an all-time high, and it is increasing with the growing importance of social media, podcasts and other direct-publish platforms. To be effective communicators, we need to react to business issues as they arise, quickly and effectively. We no longer have the luxury of time. Narratives will be shaped and stories will be told without us if we are not present when they are happening.

It is not enough to simply be nimble, however. We also have to be authentic. Along with the increase in speed comes a rise in accountability. Audiences everywhere expect that businesses will perform in ways that are honest and transparent. What we do and what we say as business leaders and communicators is held to a much higher standard than ever, and so we need to ensure truth in our work.

It is an unfortunate old trope that PR professionals are spin artists. In reality, especially now, we are tasked and expected to be gatekeepers and truth-tellers who ensure businesses are accountable, and live up to the standards that they have promised.

SPEAKERS FROM THE SOCIAL SHAKE-UP



Lindsay Bumps
PR Media Maven
Ben & Jerry's

PRNEWS: Who are you most interested to hear from during the Shake-Up?

Lindsay Bumps: I'm excited to hear from influencers. I'm curious to hear what works well for them, what they want more of and how Ben & Jerry's can be more impactful with our influencer program.



Nicole (Carlone) Losi
Director, Social Media
Kent State University

PRNEWS: What changes do you expect regarding managing crises on social media and how are you preparing for those changes?

Nicole (Carlone) Losi: As the digital and social space continues to evolve, we'll see more brands investing in social media listening tools and using a variety of social media platforms for crisis communication. Through social listening, we're able to discover problems before they become crises.

We can prepare by staying up-to-date with platform changes and by making social media an integral part of our crisis communications strategy, not just for responding but for monitoring as well.



Kelly Stone
Senior Director, Global Social Media
Comptia

PRNEWS: What should communicators be thinking about in terms of social media measurement?

Kelly Stone: To win the game of social media, practitioners need a sure-fire way to translate analytics into money, both earned and saved. Executives may not necessarily understand the difference between impressions and reach and views, but they'll respect how you've impacted the bottom line. At the end of the day, we're all trying to make a living. Speaking the common language of money makes you a valuable asset to your organization.



Danielle Brigida
Acting Deputy Director of Digital Strategy
U.S. Department of the Interior

PRNEWS: How can you be successful on social media with a modest budget?

Danielle Brigida: Engage the community. Remember the community can be one of your strongest assets when it comes to generating ideas and creating content. You may not have a large budget, but if you have time to empower and engage your community, you can see amazing results. As we know, a large part of social media is about community. Interacting with the community is one reason I'm looking forward to the Social Shake-Up. I'm always interested in hearing about new, creative ways to share the beauty of the natural world. I'm excited to be amongst practitioners at Shake-Up who bring a different skill set than I do, that I can learn from! ■

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Brands Urged to Make Operational Changes That Lower Risk Before an Issue Becomes a Crisis

[Editor's Note: This month our regular "Stealable Slide" feature offers the crisis-management advice of one of the deans of the subject, **Kevin Elliott**, U.S. director, risk+crisis communication practice, **Hill+Knowlton Strategies**. The slide below was presented during **PRNEWS' Crisis Management Summit** in Miami Beach in early March.]

We looked at research last fall from **Pentland Analytics** that argues a crisis, when handled well, actually can bolster a brand's reputation and lead to financial gains (see PRNEWS, Oct. 2018). The opposite is true—a crisis handled poorly can lead to financial damage. With so much at stake, you'd think most companies would take significant action to mitigate risk. Not so.

HIDDEN LESSON

The slide below illustrates this point; however, the lesson comes from what's *not* shown on the slide. It's what happens (or doesn't) *before* the trajectory on the slide begins.

For example, let's say a company conducts its annual risk assessment. The company finds seven areas of risk. "It's great that the company is looking at risk," Elliott says, "but you come back one year later and they've done nothing to fix those seven risk areas...and now they've added three more."

In some cases, Elliott says, companies think they're preparing when they hire crisis-savvy personnel or devise an elaborate crisis-response plan. Elliott welcomes such prepara-

tion, but urges companies also "do things operationally" to mitigate risks they've found during their risk assessment.

"Most crises don't happen overnight...there usually are warning signs," he says. Attacking risk mitigation via operational changes may help avoid reaching the flashpoint, which is the first stage seen on this slide (lower left). So the work done before the flashpoint is what Elliott believes is most crucial.

Realizing how badly a crisis can hurt a company's bottom line argues that "you can't afford *not* to invest to reduce your risk" areas, he says.

THE TRAJECTORY

The slide's graphic depiction of a crisis is an approximation. Sometimes the shape of the curve is flatter, in other instances it's sharper. "You never know...sometimes news dribbles out daily, lawsuits occur and then one day something else hits the news and the media forgets about your crisis," he says.

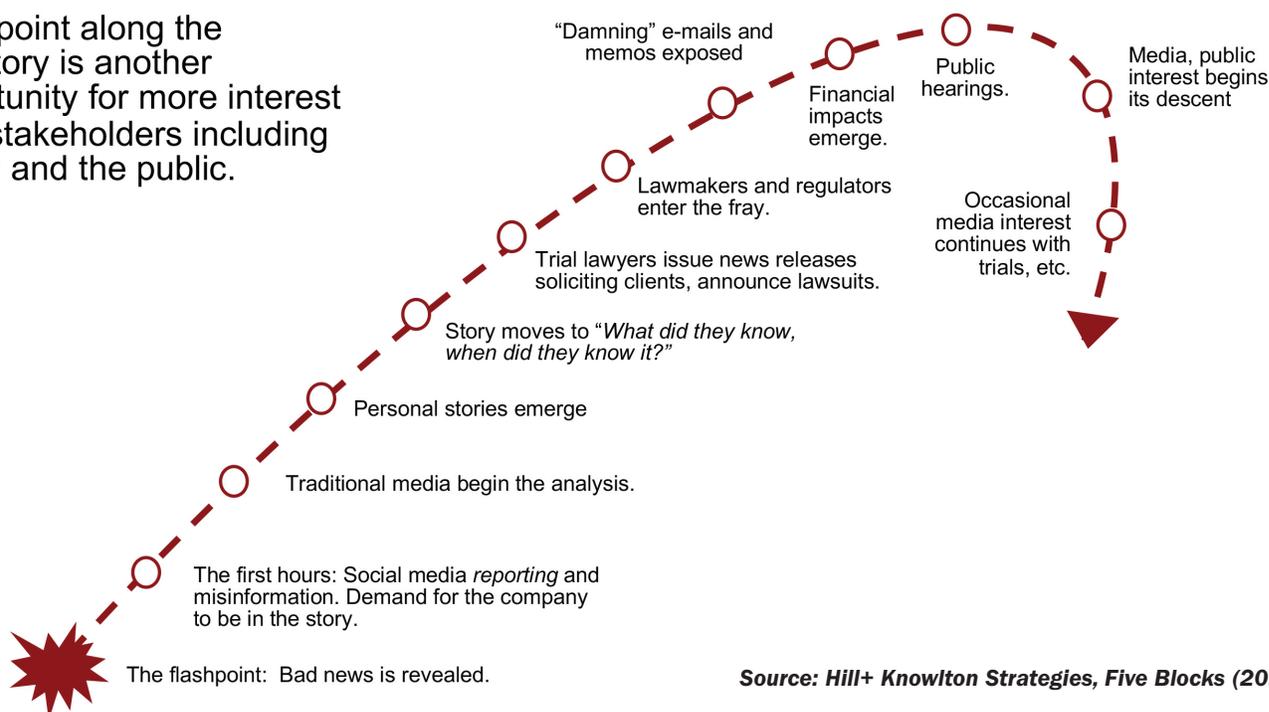
Still, looking at the slide, Elliott points out that the narrative, or trajectory, of a crisis can move at lightning speed since social media is propelling it. "It's moment to moment...in the old days it could be days or weeks before a story came out." As the crisis advances and you move up the trajectory, "the question becomes what did the company know and when? And it really comes fast." He agrees with us that the Boeing 737 Max 8 crisis can be charted using the trajectory on this slide.

Continued on page 15

Trajectory of a crisis



Each point along the trajectory is another opportunity for more interest from stakeholders including media and the public.



Source: Hill+ Knowlton Strategies, Five Blocks (2019)

Rushed to Market: Boeing Stands Firm on 737, Samsung Delays High-Tech Phone



One of the tenets of crisis communications is that no matter how well you manage your first crisis, past misdeed(s) often find their way back into the media mix during whatever subsequent crisis (or even minor headache) befalls you.

As a reporter, I mentioned past crises because I thought they added context to my stories. In addition, journalists and investors love looking at prior missteps. They offer clues as to whether the current problem is an unfortunate mistake or part of a larger pattern that often indicates an issue with your culture. (Cue references to **Wells Fargo**.)

Take the recent case of **Samsung**, which began shipping its new Fold phone to influencers and journalists to review in mid-April. Many of the units failed within a few days, which, of course, reviewers described online in vivid detail.

And, as would be expected, many of the stories referenced the disastrous launch of the Galaxy Note 7, which caused so many fires that every airline passenger heard dire warnings about the dangers of carrying a Samsung phone on a plane.

Samsung

Criteria	Grade	Comments	Advice
Extent of coverage	D	Due to the international nature of its business, anything Samsung does or says gets international attention. However, by pulling the phone off the market and delaying the launch it managed to limit the duration of the coverage.	Assume that if you are planning to announce a “ground breaking, state of the art” product, it won’t be ready until six months after your preferred date. Announce the technology, but do not ever promise a product.
Effectiveness of spokespeople	C	What spokespeople? Samsung responded to complaints with written statements. 24 hours after reports of failing Folds emerged, Samsung issued a carefully worded response. In the Tech world 24 hours is a lifetime. It took Samsung five days to admit it was planning to delay the launch indefinitely.	Every reporter knows that carefully worded statements are written with lawyers looking over the PR team’s shoulders, and therefore the trust factor is low. If you want to rebuild trust and credibility, put a real, credible, authentic human being in front of the media.
Communication of key messages	B	The only redeeming facet in this debacle was that most of the coverage included the message that the Fold is what phones would look like in future and that Samsung had cool technology even if it broke.	If you’re launching a revolutionary product, there will always be two different messages. One is all about innovation and how cool you are, technologists and industry analysts convey this best. The other message centers on benefits to consumers. Real customers convey this best, especially those who have used the product and experienced its benefits.
Management of negative messages	D	Not EVERY story referenced the exploding Galaxy Note 7, but many did, particularly the fact that both launches were “rushed” to meet the demands of management.	Expect that every misstep you’ve ever made will be dragged up in every subsequent crisis you experience.
Impact on employees and potential employees	B	When trying to attract tech people, publicity for technology is probably not a bad thing. Chances are it could attract people who can help overcome the problems.	Helping attract and keep talent is a key part of the communications job these days. Thus potential employees should be considered a key stakeholder group in any announcement and/or crisis.
Impact on investors and customers	F	Samsung raised customer expectations through the roof with its announcement last November and then again during a sneak peek in February, so no doubt there will be many customers who now may consider a different brand. However, at the current price point, it’s probably not too many. On the other hand, investors are very disappointed and the hit to Samsung’s forecast and profitability was covered widely.	In a highly competitive marketplace, there’s always an alternative. Being aggressive may seem like a smart thing to do, but if you can’t pull off the execution you’re not just facing a PR disaster, you’re likely facing a financial and marketing one as well.
Overall score	D-	Whether it was the PR team, the IR folks or the CEO, whoever rushed delivery of the Fold needs to be held accountable for this disaster. And if these people were at the company during the 2016 disaster, they should be fired.	In today’s environment, where customers, reviewers and investors all are reading the same blog posts and tweets, and sharing the same comments, you better be able to execute on your promises or you’ll end up with a lot of cracks in your image.

(We wrote about that case in an Image Patrol column in PR News back in September 2016.)

After the Note 7 phone was recalled, Bloomberg revealed that the root cause of the disaster was a rush to capitalize on reports that arch rival Apple's new phone wasn't anything very "new."

So it wasn't a surprise to journalists and investors that once again Samsung was rushing a product to market. This time the urgency was a series of foldable phone announcements by Samsung rivals **Huawei, LG and Motorola.**

The outcome was equally disastrous. After millions around the world shared dozens of negative **YouTube** videos, Samsung announced that it would delay the official launch of the Fold.

As one reviewer on **ifixit.org** wrote: "Why make a device with a fragile OLED layer, so little tolerance between screen and spine, and so many ways for dirt and moisture to get in? Hubris? Testing with robots instead of real humans, with pockets and fingers and different ways of opening and closing things? These are questions that may go unanswered, even if we learn the cause of the defects."

iFixit specializes in taking phones apart to determine their ability to be repaired (as opposed to replaced and recycled). Samsung pressured iFixit to take down its video review, since it showed the locations of the phone's flaws. As a result, just as the negative press was beginning to subside, social media exploded with further hostility to-

Continued on page 10

BOEING

Criteria	Grade	Comments	Advice
Extent of coverage	F	Pretty much anywhere in the world with an airport, this story has been front-page news for months.	If you are an international company, make sure that world media are included in your crisis communications plans. And if you want a crisis to go away ASAP, take ownership of the issue and fix it.
Effectiveness of spokespeople	F	If there were an award for worst performance by a CEO in a crisis, Boeing's Dennis Muilenberg would be right up there, perhaps even beating BP's Tony Hayward. Muilenberg made the classic error of waiting for lawyers to allow him to speak and then sticking to key messages even when facts contradicted them.	In today's low-trust, high-skepticism environment you need a spokesperson in a crisis that is authentic, empathetic and credible. If your CEO doesn't meet those criteria, find someone else.
Communication of key messages	D	If nothing else Boeing is consistent in its "we care about safety" message, it just isn't convincing anyone, especially not when board members leak to the press that safety was never discussed in its meetings about the 737 MAX.	You can repeat a message ad nauseum, but it doesn't mean people will believe it. In any crisis, while it's a good idea to have a main message, if the news contradicts that message, you may need to adjust accordingly.
Management of negative messages	F	Negative messages dominated during the first few days after the Ethiopian Air crash, with countries grounding planes, pilot complaints surfacing and black box recorder data revealing pilots' struggles in the cockpit. As often is the case in a crisis handled badly, negative messages continue to drip out daily as the media has gone digging for more news.	When no one believes you, media will quote all your opponents in addition to you, especially if some of those being quoted are in "high trust" categories like airline pilots.
Impact on employees and potential employees	F	No employee likes to read and hear bad things about her employer every day in the news. What's worse for Boeing are stories coming out about problems in the plants and the cultural issues that rushed planes into production without adequate safety checks or regard for pilot training.	Talented millennials care a lot about the culture and ethics of companies. The fastest way to scare them away is a public scandal. In a tight labor market, it may be difficult to hang on to people if your employees are embarrassed to say where they work.
Impact on investors and customers	F	Boeing's stock has yet to recover from the Ethiopian Airlines crash and shareholders have filed a class action lawsuit in the wake of tanking market value and shareholder losses, alleging the company concealed safety risks. Passengers, who normally don't pay much attention to the type of aircraft they're flying, now are checking to make sure it isn't a 737-Max, which will cause problems for the airlines in the future. And given that Boeing's customers have already lost some \$600 million in revenue from the grounding, they're unlikely to be very supportive.	Shareholder lawsuits and customer complaints aren't unusual in the wake of a crisis, but when the amount of money at stake for your customers is the hundreds of millions, your customer recovery efforts need to be rethought.
Overall score	F	Boeing is managing this crisis as if it were still operating in the grand old days of air travel, when airlines took the heat and no one knew or cared what kind of plane they were flying, and it wasn't so easy for reporters to get access to the stuff you wanted to hide.	If you have a crisis management plan that hasn't been updated in the past two years, get it out, dust it off, and look at it through the skeptical eyes of today's customers and media.

ward Samsung for trying to force iFixit to remove the negative review.

It's clear that Samsung hasn't learned a basic lesson of tech PR—if you prioritize winning over getting the technology to work, you'll lose—in this case about 60% of profits.

BOEING

In many ways **Boeing's** problems were the mirror opposite of Samsung's. For years, Boeing kept a relatively low PR profile, it didn't need or want a lot of publicity because it's the consummate B2B company; it delivers some 800 planes yearly. It's made most of its money from the world's military establishments—who are notoriously tight lipped about their suppliers. And even in the military and civil aviation crowd, Boeing typically was less visible than higher profile competitors, such as **Lockheed Martin** and **Airbus**.

Most of the press Boeing received was either financial or trade, so when hundreds of mainstream reporters were beating down its doors for quotes, comments and updates after two crashes of its best-selling plane, the company was comparatively slow on the uptake.

FIRST CRASH

Last October, when **Lion Air** flight 610 crashed moments after takeoff, killing everyone on board, Boeing initially deflected blame to the pilots and the airline's procedures. It issued a standard "thoughts and prayers" sympathy statement, and then went on to defend its new plane, specifically the computer-driven system that automatically corrects the angle of the plane on takeoff. As is often the case in aviation disasters, allegations were hurled from all sides.

The thing is, claims that the airplane was rushed out before it was safe and that pilots were not extensively trained on it (or trained at all) kept appearing, particularly in the aviation trade press. In November the **Airline Pilots Association** pressured the **FAA** to issue further warnings. The steady drip, drip of negative news spiked a bit when the cockpit flight recorder was found and analyzed in November. It told the story of flight 610's short but harrowing journey, as pilots fought angle of attack software from takeoff, resulting in ride that rose and descended repeatedly until the aircraft dove headfirst into the Java Sea at a speed of 500 miles per hour.

LAWSUITS AND ANOTHER CRASH

In December the family of the first officer on the flight filed a suit against Boeing, claiming negligence. A series of suits from survivors of some of the passengers followed. Significantly, these latter claims were filed in U.S. courts.

Then on March 10, 2019, **Ethiopian Airlines** flight 302, also a Boeing 737 Max 8, crashed, killing all 157 people aboard. Initial indications were that the cause was similar to that of the Lion Air flight.

Initially, Boeing again issued a series of brief statements expressing sympathy and standing by its aircraft. Then, after a week of virtual silence, the CEO, who in most companies is the face of a crisis, finally made a statement.

It's notable the statement was issued *after* media reports

surfaced that the Boeing CEO had been on the phone frequently with **President Trump**, urging the FAA not to ground the 737 Max fleet.

On March 13, though, airlines around the world began to ground their fleets. At that point Boeing issued a statement promising a software fix by April. While coverage began to drop off, Boeing remained in the headlines significantly more than normal, and the crisis was anything but over. It wasn't until March 18th, 8 days after the crash, that Boeing started to try to control the narrative, but by then it was too late.

MORE NEGATIVE STORIES

Negative coverage increased one week later when whistleblower calls to the FAA surfaced around safety approval. Pilots were furious over Boeing's lack of communications and training. Investigations began into what appears to have been a cozy relationship between Boeing and FAA regulators. Moreover, the relationship appears to be decades old.

As a result of the Max fleet's grounding, thousands of flights were cancelled, and Boeing faced consumer ire for the first time in its history. Social media was full of "Boeing-grounding travel disruption" stories, and travel booking sites added filters to enable passengers to exclude Boeing 737 Max planes when they made travel plans.

While passenger traffic doesn't tarnish Boeing's bottom line it hurt quarterly results for Boeing's biggest commercial customers. Analysts predict carriers will lose some \$450 million in revenue as a result of the grounding.

BOEING CEO TOES THE LINE

Just after the second crash, Boeing's CEO **Dennis Muilenburg** continued to insist that the plane's design was not flawed, and pilot error was a factor in the crashes. Meanwhile, critics contend that the fundamental design of the 737 Max was in fact flawed and the software that caused the crashes was created to solve the design issue.

There is little question in critics' minds that Boeing's culture contributed to the crashes. To meet the annual goal to deliver 800+ planes, workers were told to ignore problems and rush through procedures, according to whistleblowers, and the problem doesn't end with the 737 Max, but also is plaguing the 787. Another claim is that Boeing marketed the 737 Max as an aircraft that didn't require extensive pilot training, which is costly.

Most recently, news surfaced that some airline engineers knew about the failings of the plane's safety alert system within months of delivery, and one year before the Lion Air crash. Boeing and the FAA concluded that the absence of the safety alert was not a safety issue. Now blame has shifted to Boeing's board of directors, who apparently focused only on how soon the 737 Max would help the company's bottom line. Stories appearing in the media as we put this column to bed allege the board failed to ask questions about safety. "Safety was just a given," one former board member said. ■

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Outside the Vault Thinking: Capital One Engages Customers by Talking About Purposeful Travel

[Editor's Note: We enjoy hearing about innovative ways of communicating. In our November 2018 edition we featured a case study about a law firm, **Kelley Kronenberg**, whose award-winning recruiting videos featured casually dressed attorneys speaking about love and other non-lawyerly subjects. Along these lines is this month's case study where a major bank, **Capital One**, attempts to communicate with customers about their passion for travel.

BACKGROUND



Scott Stanzel
Managing VP,
Corporate
Communications
Capital One

What's a brand? It's the products and services a company offers. And it's the people who provide them. The brand also includes a company's values and corporate culture. In addition, it's the company's logo, the colors, fonts and images it uses to communicate messages.

In short, a brand is everything and anything connected to the company. This, of course, includes ads, sponsorships and various forms of communication between the company and its customers. It also includes content the company would prefer to avoid. Take the case of **Capital One Financial Corp.**

As the bank where **President Donald Trump** has accounts, Capital One was subpoenaed last month to hand over the president's financial records to the **House Intelligence** and **Financial Services** committees. Two weeks later, on April 29, the president sued Capital One in a NY federal court hoping to block the bank from complying with the subpoena.

Capital One is the tenth largest U.S. bank by assets (\$363 billion), according to **S&P Global Market Intelligence** (February 2019). It has 49,000 employees, and nearly 800 branches and 2,000 ATMs throughout the U.S. It is number 101 on the **Fortune 500** and ranks 17th on Fortune's list of Best Companies to Work For.

CREDIT CARD LEADER

In the final quarter of 2018, 75 percent of its revenue came from credit cards. While perhaps not iconic, the bank's "What's in Your Wallet?" tagline has earned a highly respected place in the cultural firmament.

In 2001, not long after Capital One introduced the "What's in Your Wallet?" brand campaign, the company made its first significant foray into college sports. It sponsored the Florida Citrus Bowl, which was renamed the Capital One Bowl.

To say Capital One was highly visible during the 2019 **NCAA** mens' basketball tournament would be an understatement. Its ads, featuring actor **Samuel L. Jackson**, former basketball player **Charles Barkley** and filmmaker **Spike Lee**, seemed ubiquitous. From 2009-2018, Capital One spent an estimated \$361 million to advertise the tournament, right

Capital One Financial Corp.	
Founded:	1988
Rank by Assets (U.S.):	10
CEO:	Richard Fairbank
Headquarters:	McLean, VA
Products:	Retail banking, credit cards, loans, savings
Employees:	49,300
Branches:	755 (including 30 café-style outlets)
ATMs:	2,000
Source: Capital One Financial Corp.	

behind the third-biggest ad spender, **Coca-Cola** (\$399 million), according to **Forbes**.

The exposure works. Nearly half the college basketball fans surveyed correctly identified the bank as a sponsor of the NCAA tournament, according to the fifth annual NCAA Sponsor Loyalty survey, conducted for **SportsBusiness Journal/Daily** in 2017. Only "ubiquitous sports sponsors," such as **Goodyear**, **Papa John's**, **Gatorade**, **FedEx** and **Coke** topped Capital One in recognition, Sports Business Daily reported in May 2017.

THE ISSUE

So, what's the problem? There are plenty of banks vying for attention in 2019. Added to that competitive landscape myriad disruptors are attempting to lure the estimated grab market share. Examples include non-bank lenders such as **Quicken Loans**, **Lending.com** and **LoanDepot**. Then there are myriad payment services such as **PayPal**, and mobile payment options like **Apple Pay**, **Amazon Payment** and **Google Wallet**. As former **Citigroup** chief of client experience **Heather Cox** presciently said in 2015, "People need banking, but they



Influencers singer Noelle Scaggs (left) and chef Marcela Valladolid (right) standing outside Café Reconcile, a non-profit that supports local businesses. They made the visit during a trip to New Orleans. Source: Capital One

don't necessarily need banks."

A question for Capital One is how, in addition to sports, can it boost visibility in the mind of the customer? In addition, what's the best way for it to engage with customers so that they will continue to view the brand as one they want to bank with?

STRATEGY

It's not news that banks are known for their financial products and services. Yet one strategy Capital One is using to bolster brand awareness essentially keeps credit cards and other products far in the background.

Instead, Capital One is joining conversations with customers about their passions. Last year, searching for things customers feel passionate about, Capital One settled on travel.

From there it conducted research to understand what travel means. Specifically it wanted to learn what its customers seek from travel. What it discovered was a bit surprising.

Of those taking trips for vacation or leisure, a significant majority (70 percent) was interested in finding a meaningful experience. [See the chart]. Rather than sightseeing for its own sake or simply relaxing, travelers want trips that change them for the better, the research showed. Sometimes that means trips that help them re-connect with friends and family. Other times it means trips that help them learn about and identify with local cultures. These cultural experiences include discovering local food, music and art, for example.

After discovering this passion for purposeful and meaningful travel, Capital One launched The Purpose Project to "join the conversation with our customers around purposeful travel," **Scott Stanzel**, managing VP, corporate communications, Capital One, says in an interview.



Chef Marcela Valladolid and singer Noelle Scaggs dice up vegetables for an avocado dish while on their trip to explore New Orleans.

Travel with a Purpose

70%	Said it is important to have a purposeful experience when traveling
83%	Desire a sense of discovery
82%	Want to describe their trip as more meaningful
66%	Consider becoming a more culturally aware global citizen when traveling for vacation
84%	Want to discover something new about themselves or the place they're visiting
78%	Of adults who've traveled to experience local culture plan to take another trip to connect with local culture
92%	Who've traveled to experience local culture also traveled to reconnect and spend quality time with friends and family

SOURCE: Capital One (2,192 Americans, Sept. 2018)

"We wanted to talk with our customers in a way that was authentic, but also really inspiring...and we wanted to test new formats for communicating," he adds.

TACTICS

Storyline: One of the goals, Stanzel says, was for his team to "create an authentic storyline about the power of travel to change us."

To fill out the project, which also included Capital One's marketing department, the teams made "some big bets" on purposeful travel. And, as noted above, the bank decided that engaging customers in discussions about purposeful travel didn't need to be tied directly to its financial products.

"We wanted to focus on telling a story, as opposed to selling a story," he says. "It was also a different way for us to present ourselves...to customers."

How much pushback did Stanzel get when the Project was proposed? Are conversations about purposeful travel part of Capital One's brand? The short answer is yes. But shouldn't a bank talk about financial issues?

"There's absolutely a time and place for being crystal clear with our communications about the value our products provide," Stanzel says. "I assure you... [the] direct sell...and pitch" is "ongoing." The Purpose Project, though, "is a different way to communicate and think about new ways to engage customers and test different storytelling channels."

INNOVATIVE CONTENT

Content Creation: The need to test new storytelling channels led Capital One to make another big bet. It partnered with

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AI Augments Humans with PR Measurement, but it's no Silver Bullet



SETTING THE SCENE

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is influencing our world in dramatic ways. It will continue to do so owing to increased automation, machine learning, and a greater focus on technology.

Our relationship with AI is complex, however, with periods of optimism and hype (and of course, great funding). Following these are AI winters, where disappointing outcomes result in greatly reduced funding.

REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

On returning to a period of hype, as communications professionals, we need to be prudent about what we can and cannot accomplish with AI.

The sub-field of natural language processing focuses on handling of natural language by machines with a human-level understanding of that language. This is a common application of AI within research and media measurement. It has enjoyed varying degrees of success.

This natural language data now gushes from many sources and seems more promising than before. Determining what is relevant and what can be ignored, where trends exist, how to leverage smart tools for analysis, where to devote time to draw relevant insights with the ability to stress test them, and ultimately tell a story is becoming increasingly more complex, though. Can AI help?

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE DATA

As someone who has been working with media analysis and research for more than 25 years, I remember when early social listening providers said that you no longer needed focus groups, that you could just look at social media. For those looking to introduce their new tools into an organization, this was a common sales ploy.

What they failed to understand/account for through this tactic was the full purpose of a focus group in terms of audience: questions you might wish to address, the color and fabric those conversations have, and so much more. Yes, listening tools were a benefit, but they were not the entire answer.

THE TOOLS OF OUR MODERN LIFE

Similarly, today monitoring tools are part of our everyday lives as researchers/analytics professionals. They trawl the internet, pulling in vast swaths of data from websites, news sources, social media channels, and forums, to name a few.

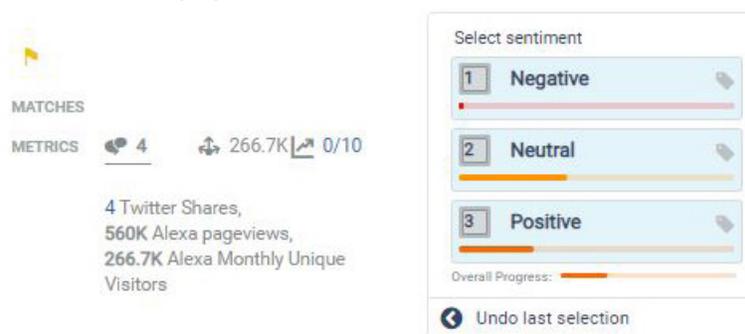
The volume of content is ever-increasing, far more readily available and in a much shorter time period. With structured search to collect content in multiple languages, the trick is to maximize relevant content while minimizing irrelevant material.

AI allows us to take this further, though it requires training to pick up further nuance. Sometimes it is hard to build

complex taxonomies (search formulae) to capture what you want to see while excluding material you are trying to avoid. Applying trained AI technology will provide a stronger result.

Let's take an example. One way to cut through the noise is to train a media-monitoring and analytics tool to recognize relevant content without the need for a strong taxonomy.

We can take this further to improve sentiment detection based on the actual content in context rather than using key words, filter nuanced and more complex concepts and identify key messaging, which may be more implied than explicit.



School Days: A look at a segment of Talkwalker's platform undergoing training using the company's AI engine. Source: The author

Clearly, it is more appropriate in some situations than others and requires sufficient data to learn the repetition needed to improve accuracy.

The intention behind this engine is to train it to code content as it's coming into the system with minimal updates and additional education. The level of complexity and nuance determines the length of time needed. Sometimes it can be a few hours; other times it can take much longer periods.

This technique requires reviewing a volume of data to teach the AI platform what is and is not relevant. It also requires ongoing attention to further develop the machine learning.

GOOD DATA

So the starting point must be good data. When computers were in their infancy, an **IBM** programmer and trainer coined the acronym *GIGO* – garbage in, garbage out. We need to start with good data and understand the universe of that data so that we are aware of potential limitations.

For instance, if we have not set out our parameters correctly, we may have too much erroneous data or be missing key content. If we are doing a global study and only looking at English-language material, our data will not reflect all key markets or market cultural biases, but will skew to the U.S.

If you are a food brand, you may detect a dietary trend in the U.S., but that does not mean it would be relevant in Brazil.

KEY BENEFITS

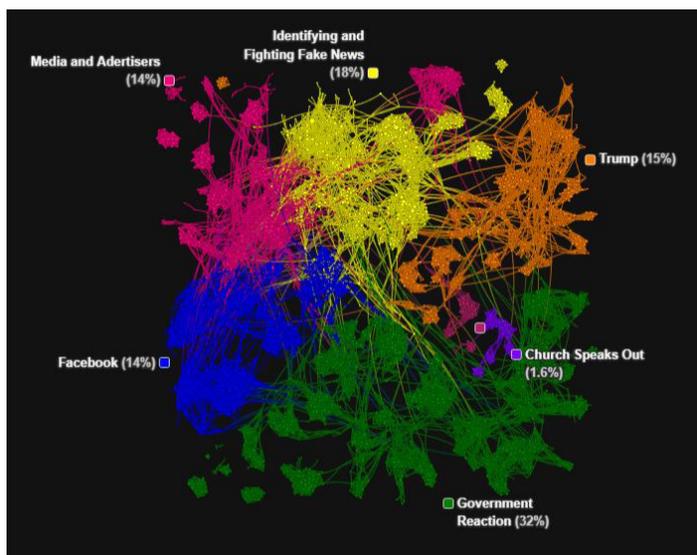
- ▶ AI enables us to look at large volumes of data in an intelligence way for meaningful business intelligence
- ▶ It provides a starting point, encouraging curiosity and creativity in mining data—overlying a level of human curation for context as well as address the “so what” and “therefore.”
- ▶ It recognizes trends – AI is good for identifying the patterns in data while humans can dig deeper for the relevance and application. It provides a rigor and consistency, with people providing the validation, implications and interpretation
- ▶ It identifies opportunities for content development based on past performance (of the brand and competitors)
- ▶ It offers data points to confirm or contradict hypotheses

THE WATCH-OUTS

- ▶ AI is here to help but data can be dangerous without interpretation
- ▶ Time is needed to quality check the data and refine processes, and recognize any data bias that may have been introduced in set up or from ongoing improvements
- ▶ AI is constantly developing; it is not static and needs ongoing refinement and development

A WORD ON SENTIMENT DETECTION

One of the beauties of automated sentiment detection is



AI at Work: Quid's AI software ingested blogs and stories to create this graphic representation of fake news mentions. Source: The author

“ Beyond the hype, we need to be prudent about what we can and can't accomplish with AI. ”

that it is consistent. It is either consistently right or consistently wrong, however.

AI improves on key word determination of sentiment as it provides a level of contextualization, but there is still a long way to go. Within many systems the sentiment is based on the entire article or post rather than an individual brand.

When considering this metric through automation, it is best positioned as a relative measure of change rather than an absolute value. For a more precise measure, it is better to apply a qualitative approach with human coding across a robust sample of the content to determine an absolute value.

A NOTE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF CURATION

Data curation is as important as ever, but technology certainly helps. It is an interesting observation that **Tim Cooke, Apple CEO**, chose to have humans select the top stories about the U.S. midterm elections in Apple News.

Similarly, **Facebook**, in addition to applying machine learning, has hired news credibility specialists to help determine fake news.

With time at a premium for most executives, curating a morning media brief allows them to obtain the news they need, dig deeper where relevant and avoid drowning in additional content. This allows them to focus on what is important to them for that day. Technology provides the starting point, identifying the potential content, and people with knowledge of the company, determine the selection for inclusion.

IN CONCLUSION

AI benefits our world, and it will only get better. But it is not a silver bullet. Simply put: it is not a replacement for the human touch.

As data volumes have increased and aspects of research have become more complex, AI allows us to manage the added complexity, helps us to be smarter and more thorough analysts, and, as consultants, it enables us to focus on what is important for companies, brands, organizations and clients.

And as it changes how we spend our time as researchers, it does not remove us from the equation. I like to think of AI as Augmented Intelligence; it augments what we do, and allows us to delve deeper into quantities of data to make greater sense of it. ■

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Tastemade, a global entertainment company that creates motivational and inspirational travel content. The new storytelling channel that Stanzel and his team experimented with is linear video. Capital One partnered with Tastemade to create a series of linear videos about purposeful travel.

Featured in the series is a quintet of influencers, or ambassadors, as Capital One refers to them. They included the actress **Zoey Deschanel**, celebrity chef **Marcella Valladolid**, **Brian Kelly** (aka **The Points Guy**), purposeful travel icon **Zach Houghton** and **Noelle Scaggs**, the singer and a self-proclaimed travel addict.

In the series, which can be seen on the Tastemade TV channel via platforms such as **YouTube TV**, **Sony PlayStation Vue** and **Facebook Watch**, these influencers explore their passion for purposeful travel. Each episode runs 25 minutes. The production quality is excellent.

INSIDE JOB

Soft Launch: Prior to going public with the Project, Stanzel and his team made a clever move: they soft launched the idea with Capital One employees, who are called associates. Blog posts featured stories from associates and executives discussing purposeful travel. The concept was a hit.

(It still is, if a recent event your editor attended is evidence. On a Friday afternoon hundreds of headquarters employees gathered in a large space to celebrate The Purpose Project. They were treated to authentic food and drink of different regions. A super New Orleans band played as chef Marcella and The Points Guy mingled and clips from the linear series flashed on walls. A short program featured Marcella, The Points Guy and two Capital One employees discussing their purposeful travel stories.)

Confidence boosted, Capital One launched the findings from its travel survey at a press event in NY last October. It also debuted moments from The Purpose Project video series.

Media Push: Over the next several months, the influencers conducted media interviews and pushed out content on their social channels. In addition to the linear video series,



(Left to Right) **Brian Kelly** (“The Points Guy”), chef **Marcella Valladolid**, actress **Zoey Deschanel**, **Zach Houghton**, founder of the **Passion Passport**, and singer **Noelle Scaggs** kick off the Purpose Project at a NY event. Source: Jason DeCrow/AP Images for Capital One

a dedicated section of The Points Guy’s site offers Purpose Project travel tips, tricks and hacks. It also includes highlights from the video series and original content featuring purposeful trips The Points Guy staff has taken.

Capital One also did a media buy with **ABC’s** “Good Morning America” and worked with other influencers and partners to fulfill a PESO plan.

RESULTS

While the project is not even a year old, Capital One is satisfied with its reception and numbers, which include 10 million episode views of the video series and 80+ earned media stories across various verticals, including **CNBC**, **Huffington Post**, **Travel & Leisure** and **USA Today**. Purpose Project has also garnered more than 30 million social impressions (not including amplification on Capital One properties), according to Stanzel.

LESSONS LEARNED

- ▶ **Measure and Learn:** Stanzel says the team measured click-through rates on both the linear video series and the content showed on The Points Guy’s site. “We learned and adapted,” and saw increased viewing times as a result, he says. That was critical. “We think the stories resonated with people...even though it was branded content...it also gave them an idea who we are as a company in a different than a 30-second ad would.”
- ▶ **Passion Pays:** One of the other bets Capital One made was selecting influencers who had a passion for purposeful travel. “Asking them to engage...about their experiences with purposeful travel wasn’t difficult...it was very real for them,” Stanzel says. In addition, their participation added credibility to Capital One’s content, as well as consistency and memorability, he adds.
- ▶ **Understand Your Customers:** While few readers of this publication have Capital One-size budgets, there are lessons for a broad swath of communicators. “First and foremost you need to understand your customers,” Stanzel says. After all, the Purpose Project is centered on what Capital One discovered about its customers’ passion for meaningful travel.
- ▶ **Stay on Brand:** Certainly Capital One chose to avoid direct mention of its financial products. Yet Stanzel insists the Purpose Project is succeeding because “it represents who we are as a company.” It’s authentic to the Capital One brand, he adds. For example, its financial products are flexible enough to allow customers to engage in purposeful travel and create personal experiences.
- ▶ **Authenticity:** For Stanzel, regardless of who is speaking for your brand, “they must come off as authentic...and speak with the customer not at them.” If not, he says, “people will tune out...and very quickly.” ■

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Continued from page 7

In the Boeing case, Elliott makes a point about speed cutting both ways. Not only does news about the crisis pile up quickly, experts, or so-called experts, posit solutions at breakneck speed, too. “A lot of the time the solutions come before there’s enough information known about the crisis,” he says. Still, those opinions need to be monitored, if not reacted to, Elliott adds. Often at this point, a crisis, which might have been limited to industry followers, becomes a mass-media story and wall-to-wall coverage begins. Boeing wasn’t ready for that, as **Katie Paine** notes on page 10. Eventually intense media interest declines (top right of the slide).

Another lesson from this slide, he says, is that “every phase along the trajectory is an opportunity” for a company

“to communicate, to reach audiences, to rebuild trust in the brand...and eventually resume normal operations.” Ignoring what occurs along the trajectory or mishandling it, of course, provides opportunities for others to frame your narrative, which can prolong and deepen the crisis.

Another important point Elliott made during his session: Expect boards to be involved sooner and more directly in crises. With the public’s expectations of brands rising, its demand for transparency also will increase, he says. “Stakeholders will be reaching out directly to board members.” Brands should train board members to know how to react to this type of outreach. ■

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TAKEAWAYS

Takeaways from Media Relations Survey: Journalists Want Honesty, Personalized Pitches

In each edition of PRNEWS we highlight takeaways from select articles as well as important notes for subscribers. Remember, PRNEWS subscribers are entitled to a 33 percent discount on all PRNEWS events and webinars. Please contact **Carol Brault** (cbrault@accessintel.com) for information. In addition, we invite you to access the PR News Subscriber Resources Center, available to paid subscribers at: <http://www.prnewsonline.com/subscriber-resources/>

SELECT TAKEAWAYS

▶ **Media Relations** (pp 1-4): Journalists say they open a large number of the pitches and press releases they receive. It’s

- ▶ 60 percent of journalists admitted to Twitter shaming PR professionals.
- ▶ Issues that deter journalists most from opening pitches include: PR people who pretend to know them, but don’t, spammy sounding pitches, and badly written releases that make it difficult to find the news.
- ▶ Things that encourage journalists to open pitches: solicitations from companies they cover, pitches that include dollar amounts and are personalized. ■