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INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Internal Communications: The Key to Handling Issues Before They Become Media Events

There's no such thing as truly internal communications. As **ESPN SVP** of corporate communications **Chris LaPlaca** said four years ago, "You have to expect that what you communicate internally will be in the newspapers tomorrow."

There's a variation on LaPlaca's adage in the digital age. All sorts of communication can land in the media, including employee messaging.

An example of this scenario played out at **Google** last month. An employee wrote a memo about why she'd not return to Google after her maternity leave. A company that likes to brand itself as progressive, Google, she alleges, mistreated and threatened her for being pregnant. The memo attracted 10,000 readers on internal forums at the company, **Motherboard** reported.

GUIDELINES ISSUED

This incident and other forms of discontent may have prompted Google leaders to issue a set of community 'guidelines' for employees late last month. In short, the guidelines urge staff to avoid spending company time arguing about social issues and politics. In addition, the guidelines said Google monitors will police company message boards and forums. The possibility of punishment is mentioned in the guidelines.

One of the outcomes of such dissent, of course, is that media reports about them circulate to millions. These stories about allegedly dissatisfied employees are tantamount to a digital version of airing a company's dirty laundry.

Other high-tech firms like **Facebook** and **Amazon** have taken reputation hits when employee dissent spilled into public

view. Similarly, **Wayfair**, **Buzzfeed** and others have had employee discontent make headlines.

DOCTOR, HEAL THYSELF

Often communicators attend to such situations. Ironically, PR recently has been at the center of similar incidents. Some **Edelman** staff members protested when they learned, allegedly in the media, that the agency was working for a controversial client. After several media stories emerged about staff discontent, Edelman dropped the account.

Similarly, work for a politically controversial client continues to have **Ogilvy** in its claws. It's been messy.

The situations with Ogilvy and Edelman raise myriad ethical questions for PR. In this essay we will focus on how to manage internal issues before they become media stories. In short, PR pros we queried advocated strong internal communications.

WORK NOW BEFORE IT BECOMES AN INCIDENT

"Companies can often avoid tricky situations with good internal communication and employee engagement that happens before staff find out about a sensitive situation from the media," says **Meredith L. Eaton**, director of North America for **Red Lorry Yellow Lorry**.

Veteran communicator **Gary Grates**, CCO at **W20 Group**, says that "building a culture of mutual respect is critical to mitigating issues before they spiral." A clear, clean set of corporate relationships between staff and senior leaders can help "avoid negative feelings that often get spilled out externally," he adds.

Continued on page 2



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Continued from page 1

Routine Monitoring of Staff is Critical

When staff learn about a controversial situation from an external source, it makes management appear as if it has little regard for how employees perceive the brand. “Many companies place a priority on how customers see their brands,” but how employees view your brand is just as important, says **Laura Emanuel**, VP, director of PR at the **Brownstein Group**.

CONSISTENT STAFF CHECK-INS

Good companies consistently monitor the attitudes and preferences of their target audiences. They should do the same with employees. “Not sure if employees will take well to a business decision? Ask them how they feel before you make it,” Eaton says. Town halls, surveys and employee focus groups are useful tactics to gauge attitudes.

“Despite the cohesiveness of your brand values and the strength of your team, recognize that factors can change along the way,” necessitating regular check-ins, Emanuel says.

It’s important for companies to build trust “based on connectivity between leadership and the workforce,” Grates says. This is done through “listening, understanding, and sharing information, opinions and perspectives.” Such activities help “clarify the organization’s position and decision-making model...workforce knowledge and confidence” will increase too.

Eaton recalls how one of her early employers surveyed the company before engaging with a controversial brand. Employees were heard early and the PR firm heard employee sentiment. Ultimately, “the decision was made on mutual trust and respect.” Some firms, she notes, allow employees to opt out of working on accounts with controversial clients.

AUTHENTICITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Holding open discussions in PR firms about taking on a controversial client is unlikely to be an easy proposition, however. Still, “Secrecy inevitably will fail,” says **Rum Ekhtiar**, founder of **Rum & Co**. Instead, PR leaders should be as authentic and transparent as possible in these cases. “Deliver the information thoughtfully and be ready for tough conversations,” Ekhtiar adds.

UPDATING VALUES

Just as employee attitudes change, company values can morph too. Accordingly, a regular and thorough inventory of company culture and values is important. For Grates, “Revisiting organizational policies and decisions often...is a byproduct” of a strong internal comms regime.

The situations mentioned above “are a great reminder that companies have to ‘walk the talk’ and align their values and actions,” says **Hinda Mitchell**, president, **Inspire PR Group**.

“A strong mission statement for employees to coalesce around only works if the company lives them each day,” she adds. “Misalignment between actions and values can wreak havoc on a company’s culture.”

Ultimately, if a company chooses to work with a controversial client, “it’s important to listen to employee feedback and help employees understand your decision,” Ekhtiar says.

Listening also is key should a situation spiral out of control. “The number-one thing a company must do...is listen. And then find ways to support employees or take further action around their concerns,” Mitchell says. She believes most employee protests are not shots at the company. Instead, she says, they’re employees urging companies to align their actions with values. ■

HISTORY

BY JARED MEADE, MUSEUM OF PR/PRESIDENT, NW OH CHAPTER, PRSA

It’s Time to Recognize Latino Communicators’ Contributions

[Editor’s Note: This series about PR’s history is part of PRNEWS’ 75th anniversary celebration.]

Mention **Edward Bernays**, **Ivy Ledbetter Lee** or **Dan Edelman** to communicators with an appreciation for PR’s history and you’ll see their eyes light

up with recognition.

But, chances are, if you mention **Donald Padilla**, **Julie Mendez** or **Diana Munatones** you’ll receive bewildered looks.



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The UAW and GE: Silence Breeds Mistrust, Action Conveys Commitment

It's been a long, hot summer for two of America's most well-known institutions, **GE** and the **United Auto Workers (UAW)**. **Harry Markopolos**, a researcher known for revealing the **Bernie Madoff** Ponzi scheme, accused GE of an **Enron**-like fraud.

The UAW faces federal scrutiny amid damning revelations of fraud and corruption. GE managed a very quick recovery. It seems to face a less-tarnished future than the UAW. Not surprisingly, the reason behind the two different futures is communications.

THE UAW

The UAW scandal began in 2017 with a tax fraud investigation of **Fiat Chrysler** and UAW leadership.

Investigators discovered that some UAW leaders had bought more than \$40,000 in clothing, jewelry and other personal items using a credit card for a Chrysler training center. At the time, the UAW's response was that this was an isolated local problem. Then, in January 2018, a former Chrysler Group VP pled guilty to his part in what turned out to be a \$4.5 million corruption scandal to win favorable treatment from the UAW for Fiat Chrysler.

In July 2019 UAW officials began to be charged, starting with a former aid to a UAW VP who agreed to a plea deal. Not long after, former UAW VP **Norwood Jewell** was sentenced to 15 months in prison for accepting more than \$40,000 worth of travel and meals from Ford/Chrysler.

YEARS OF CRISIS, LITTLE RESPONSE

In the past year the charges of corruption have continued to accumulate – including schemes to create shell companies to buy watches and other tchotchkes that UAW sold and gave away at events. Charges now include wire fraud conspiracy and money laundering. Several senior UAW officials are charged with pocketing millions in kickbacks and bribes from UAW contractors. Nine people have been charged.

Rather than do what most organizations under major scandal clouds might do – appoint an independent investigator, fire or suspend all those suspected of violating rules,

hire a forensic accountant, adopt a new code of conduct to prevent future misdeeds – the UAW has done almost nothing.

Instead, UAW leadership's focus has been on contract negotiations with the big three Detroit auto companies (**Ford**, **GM** and Fiat Chrysler). Those talks began last month. UAW members' contracts with the automakers expire Sept. 14.

LEADING THE TALKS

As if the negotiations weren't tense enough given potential debate over job security, wages, health care, benefits and vehicle products, the **FBI** and **IRS** raided the homes of UAW president **Gary Jones** (and his predecessor) Aug. 28. Other UAW-related properties were raided that day too.

Talks with the big 3 are proceeding. UAW says it's not changing negotiating strategy despite recent events. UAW's rank and file, however, seem understandably suspicious of the motivations of Jones, who oversees the talks, and his team. Will UAW members trust anything leadership says?

As of late last week, Jones had not been charged with a crime. The UAW insists there was no need for the raids on its leader's home because officials have "been cooperating" with the government's investigation.

GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY

GE has had a rough few years. The **Thomas Edison**-founded company was long seen as one of America's largest and strongest brands. Legendary CEO **Jack Welch** led the company's strong growth for 20 years and was one of the most admired leaders in America. Since his retirement in 2001, the company has had three CEOs, with one surviving just 12 months.

If the past few years were rocky, last month was even worse. GE's share price hit an all-time low when the fraud accusations surfaced, in early August.

Current CEO **Lawrence Culp** is the first GE chief hired from outside the company. On the job fewer than 12 months,

Continued on page 4



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his response to the fraud charges was forceful and clear. He immediately invested \$2 million of his money in GE stock. While that may not have made much of a dent in his assets, it sent a bold and reassuring message to investors.

Culp also suggested that Markopolos, the accuser, was “working with hedge funds that are financially motivated to generate short-selling in a company’s stock to create unnecessary volatility.”

Also included in GE’s response were supportive comments from independent board members, including the head of the audit committee, who assured media that GE was cooperating fully with the **SEC**. The end result was that most of the news coverage of the fraud dwindled within a week. ■

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UAW

Criteria	Grade	Comments	Advice
Extent of coverage	C	Outside of Detroit there has been relatively little attention paid to the corruption scandal. That news seems to have been crowded out by the president’s tweets and other stories, including those about the UAW’s contract negotiations.	If you are going to have a major criminal investigation going on, it helps to have the news come out when the mainstream media are more interested in what the president or other celebrities is saying about other stories. In truth, of course, relying on other news to overtake coverage of your crisis is a thin strategy.
Effectiveness of spokespeople	F	What spokespeople? Other than court testimony there’s been a paucity of statements from anyone at UAW, despite a steady drumbeat of negative news.	Find the most credible, articulate spokesperson in your organization and give him or her the latitude to speak as openly and candidly as the lawyers will allow. Never think a scandal will fade away if you talk about something else. It’s almost never that easy.
Communication of key messages	F	Talk about mixed messages! While the union was supposed to be protecting workers, all the news has been about how UAW leadership was lining its pockets at the expense of the rank and file.	There’s nothing that kills your reputation faster than acting in ways that are completely contrary to what you are supposed to stand for.
Management of negative messages	F	The UAW was surprisingly quiet in response to the allegations, so all news coverage was full of quotes from prosecuting attorneys.	The most negative messages you’ll ever deal with are the ones that contradict everything you are supposed to represent. If that’s what your target audience is hearing about you, your climb back to credibility will be long and arduous.
Impact on members and potential members	F	Many UAW members are just starting to hear about the scandal as union leaders and relatives head to jail. But, given the anti-union sentiment of government leaders, the UAW can ill afford to alienate any members, never mind whole swaths of them.	For any membership organization to lose the trust of its members is a death knell. There’s no faster way to lose trust than to engage in rampant corruption and spend union dues on vacations, gifts and other frivolities. Offering absolutely no concrete crisis response (other than remaining silent and hoping the whole mess goes away) is another nail in the coffin.
Impact on automakers	F	Because of the UAW’s lack of a strong response to the charges and jailing of its leadership, it enters negotiations in a weak position both with the automobile companies and its membership.	If you are an advocacy organization, you need to put the people and ideals you are advocating for front and center in all of your communications. If you appear to be working hard on behalf of the opposite side, you will never have credibility.
Overall score	F	UAW is a perfect example of how NOT to handle corruption and fraud charges against senior management.	If, heaven forbid, federal investigators start looking into the dealings of your senior leadership, be transparent, open, honest, and put as much distance between you and the people being investigated as possible.

GE

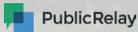
Criteria	Grade	Comments	Advice
Extent of coverage	F	Any company that is as iconic and global as GE inevitably will receive worldwide coverage if it is accused of fraud.	The bigger the target, the more likely you are to get hit. In other words, as you build your brand awareness remember that the more awareness you have, the more likely it will be hit if there is a scandal or crisis in your future.
Effectiveness of spokespeople	A	Culp's refutation of the allegations was immediate. The fact that he also took action and bought stock was the perfect response. The VP of investor relations Steve Winoker sent a note to investors detailing the company's accounting practice. It was hailed for its thoroughness and helped greatly.	Getting your CEO to make a bold statement followed by a dramatic action, like purchasing millions of dollars in stock, is one of the best crisis responses you can have.
Communication of key messages	B	GE's initial response was clear. While the explanation was a bit convoluted, by extending the response over several days it ensured that the messages got out there. Culp's widely publicized stock purchase conveyed the confidence that he had in the company.	There's nothing like buying stock to send a message that you believe in your company. If you can reinforce your messages with actions, they are much more likely to be remembered.
Management of negative messages	C	We may never know whether Markopolos' motivation was market manipulation or pure whistle blowing. He clearly was media savvy in how the announcement was handled and so his accusations were widely disseminated. Using the analogy to Enron, one of the most notorious financial fraud cases in history, guaranteed that headlines would follow.	Follow the money. If out of the blue someone begins to make accusations about your organization that you believe aren't accurate, you may want to look into the motivations behind the accuser. Accusing the accuser seldom diffuses a crisis, but understanding a cause may enable you to find a better way to diffuse the situation.
Impact on employees and potential employees	C	While it's unclear how current employees reacted to the crisis, the news that the company is or might be on shaky financial footing no doubt will have an effect on its ability to attract top talent.	No employee wants to hear bad news about the financial stability of his/her company and top talent tend to avoid working for a company that is portrayed as financially questionable. Keep both in mind as you design your crisis response.
Impact on investors and customers	F	Clearly the investors responded badly, as the stock price plummeted on the news. While it has gained back some ground, it remains at historic lows. As of now (Aug. 30, 2019), GE shares were around 8. In 2016, shares were at 31.	The stock market may not be the economy, and it is not always an accurate reflection of the financial condition of your company. However, sharp drops or peaks in your stock always capture media attention. Be prepared to respond.
Overall score	C-	We've said for years that taking bold action is the best response to a crisis. Culp's comments and stock purchase were perfect.	Words aren't enough these days. Follow your promises or denials with an action that the media and stakeholders will notice.

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More Than 50% Say Poor Tools Lead to Measurement Woes, 44% Blame Budgets

Old habits die hard. What about old ideas? In the digital age, it's said to be common knowledge that data is overwhelming communicators. Just about everything a communicator does can spew data. With so much data available, a significant question centers on what should be measured and what can be ignored.

Yet look at chart 2, which comes from a survey PRNEWS and partner **Intrado Digital Media** collaborated on during the summer. Asked to identify factors hindering PR measurement, only 18 percent of the 500 communicator-respondents picked "too much data." So much for conventional wisdom. Or maybe not.

Other choices on the chart indicate indeed there is confusion about measurement priorities. The root of some of that confusion is the massive amount of data.

For example, 35 percent picked "lack of clarity for prioritizing KPIs." A related response, 25 percent said there's disagreement within leadership about what to measure. In addition, 38 percent said "data is spread across too many places." Though none of those responses constitute a majority, they indicate communicators are having significant measurement issues, and a plethora of data is compounding the situation.

BUDGETS BLAMED

Less ambiguous are the budget-related responses. Nearly half (44 percent) pointed to budget issues as a factor hampering measurement. Similarly, 38 percent fingered "lack of internal resources" as the culprit. Chart 1 also has a budgetary interpretation—almost 60 percent of communicators said their companies don't pay for outside sources to help with measurement. Is that because measurement remains a low-budget priority? Are all those companies performing measurement in-house? Are they using free, native tools?

Back to chart 2, there's good and bad news for vendors. As you can see, the quality of measurement tools was the major inhibitor of measurement, at 52 percent. That's good news for vendors, assuming they can create better tools and communicate their improvements. On the other hand, the responses appear to indicate firms are reluctant to spend significantly for measurement tools.

In next month's PRNEWS, we'll include an article about the full survey, along with additional analysis from Intrado Digital Media.

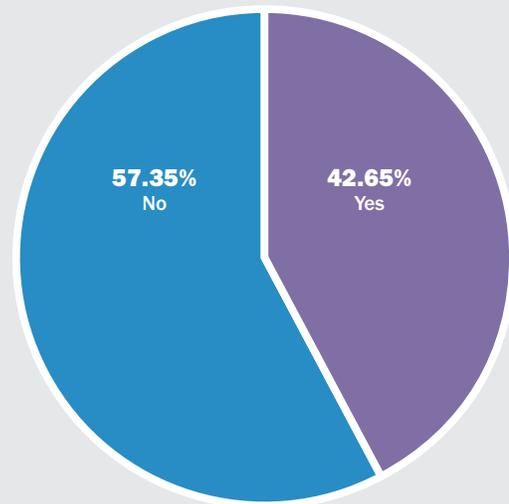
FH: GREAT PRODUCTS ARE HALF THE BATTLE

In theory, companies do their best to build outstanding products. Marketers communicate the strengths of those products. There's more proof that those steps might not be enough to sway consumers to purchase the company's wares, however.

"Engaged consumers" globally say that the quality of a

1

Do you use a communications or tech partner (agency/freelancers/solutions provider) to assist with the measurement of your PR efforts?



2

Which factors are hampering your measurement efforts? (Check all that apply)



Source: PRNEWS and Intrado Digital Media, 500 respondents (July 2019)

company's products and services shape less than half (47 percent) of their beliefs about the company. How a company interacts with society and the way its management behaves shape the rest, according to a **FleishmanHillard** study of 7,400 "engaged consumers" in Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, the U.K. and the U.S.

But the "2019 Authenticity Gap" study cautions against companies jumping into social issues with abandon. About 30 percent of the population, engaged consumers are most concerned about data security and data privacy (73 percent want protection beyond regulatory mandates), access to affordable and quality healthcare, violence against women and access to affordable and quality education.

Yet the survey also shows consumers are realistic. Consumers know companies can't fix everything. They expect companies to take stands only on a few issues. In particular, issues that they have some control over, such as data privacy/security, protecting the environment, reducing income and wage gaps and issues surrounding the minimum wage. The report can be found in the PRNEWS Resources Center.

YOUR STORY ON TV IN 2020

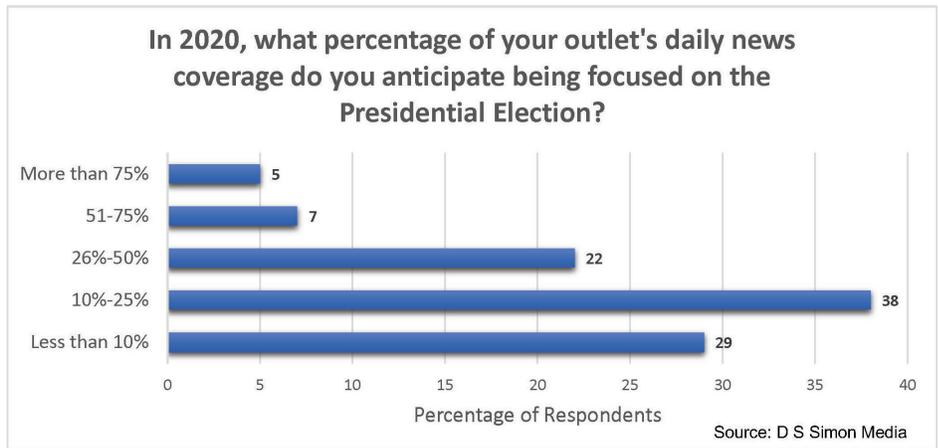
Part of the role of measurement is to test assumptions. Surveying is a great way to measure assumptions.

Your company is known for its great customer service, right? Survey your customer base. You might find the customer service of one of your competitors is perceived as far better than yours. Trade shows are the best places to sell your particular products. Again, a survey of your customers might find that buying products at a trade show is far down their priority list.

An apt assumption to test as activity around the 2020 elections begins to heat up is whether or not political stories will crowd out television coverage of nearly everything else. The conventional wisdom says yes. It will be nearly impossible to get your brand story featured on television during the election frenzy.

While it's true that cable news networks will probably be wall-to-wall politics during the 2020 election cycle (that seems to be the case already, doesn't it?), local TV news seems to be offering a more balanced news diet these days.

Indeed, results from a **D S Simon Media** survey of local TV news personnel (July 29-August 9) provided exclusively to PRNEWS, shows locals plan to devote about 26 percent of their morning news programs to political stories during the 2020 election cycle [upper chart].



Source: D S Simon Media					
DMA	FOX	CBS	NBC	ABC	DMA Average
New York	13.08%	6.81%	6.81%	13.35%	10.01%
Los Angeles	6.81%	4.60%	2.27%	4.54%	4.56%
Milwaukee	3.97%	2.27%	3.41%	3.97%	3.41%
Austin	5.11%	6.25%	4.54%	6.25%	5.54%
Orlando	7.95%	3.97%	2.27%	5.45%	4.91%
Station Average	7.38%	4.78%	3.86%	6.71%	5.68%

D S Simon surveyed 101 news directors, managers, producers and reporters at local TV stations via email. Their anonymity was protected.

The reason for the more modest political coverage, says D S Simon chief **Doug Simon**, is that local news directors realize political junkies will spend a lot of time watching cable news channels during the election cycle. Therefore, local broadcast news is smart to devote only a limited amount of resources to political coverage. This equates to opportunities for brands to get their narrative covered on local news programs, he says.

The bottom chart shows the amount of coverage local nightly newscasts devoted to political stories in the wake of the first presidential debate in July. That debate pitted a bevy of Democrat hopefuls. As you can see, coverage of political stories constituted less than 6 percent of all local network affiliate newscasts in New York, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Orlando and Austin.

As expected, cable news outlets **Fox News**, **MSNBC** and **CNN** were pretty much non-stop political coverage. The nightly broadcast network newscasts devoted nearly 40 percent of their programs to political coverage. Compared to the nightly broadcast news ratings, the cable news channels are niche operations. ■

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Communicators Using Enhanced Instagram Features to Bolster Storytelling, Engagement

Instagram has doubled its monthly active users during the past two years, sailing beyond the 1 billion mark in 2018. In addition, Instagram, unlike several social platforms, also has a relatively pristine reputation. And it's where younger demos live.

Later this month, on Sept. 19, PRNEWS will host a webinar: "How to Use Visual Storytelling on Instagram to Build New Audiences." To prepare for that session, this month's PRNEWS Roundtable addresses recent and future Instagram features that are influencing storytelling. The respondents in this roundtable also will be featured during the webinar.

[Editor's Note: Paid subscribers of PRNEWS are entitled to a 33 percent discount on this webinar. For more information, please contact: clientservices@accessintel.com]



Erica Byrum
Assistant Vice President, Social Media
Apartments.com

PRNEWS: What recent Instagram features have helped your brand or brand clients with storytelling and audience augmentation?

Erica Byrum: Instagram Stories, IGTV and Highlights are some of the top features we have been using at Apartments.com. With Instagram's algorithm updates, these features have given us more opportunities to improve our engagement, visibility, and diversify our content. They keep our brand at the top of the feed and top of mind. This year we have invested significant marketing dollars in running more than 9,000 TV commercials, 18,000 radio ads, plus campaigns across social media, paid search, display ads and email. Instagram has been a great platform for us to leverage our offline content to a new audience, which is on Instagram.

As a bonus, you can repurpose Instagram Stories content on **Facebook** to extend your reach as well as limit the need to create different content for both platforms. It's a great way to get more mileage out of each campaign and keep your social media pipeline filled. When visibility is the goal (and isn't it always?), Instagram Stories and IGTV can help get you there.

PRNEWS: What future Instagram feature are you most looking forward to exploiting to bolster your storytelling or IG presence?

Erica Byrum: Brands and consumers already have been using Instagram Stories to shop with the 'swipe up' feature and some have even caught on to using shoppable tags in the newsfeed. But those features are limited to businesses that have 10,000 or more followers.

Earlier in the year, Instagram released Shoppable Instagram Stories Stickers, which allow businesses with 10,000 followers or fewer the capability to drive traffic to their prod-

ucts and services through their stories. This is a game changer for smaller businesses now that they are able to tag physical products from their inventory or e-commerce platform. I'm excited to see how this feature might support selling real estate in the future.



Steve Denker
Sr. Director of Marketing
Turner Classic Movies

PRNEWS: What recent Instagram feature has helped your brand or brand clients with storytelling and audience augmentation?

Steve Denker: The opportunity to play horizontal video on IGTV is definitely a plus to brands like Turner Classic Movies. Particularly with our passionate and knowledgeable fans, who expect clips of movies to be displayed in the proper aspect ratio that the filmmakers intended. For audience augmentation, I'm keeping my eye on the continued Facebook integrations to maximize metrics, security and user/fan behavior.

PRNEWS: What rumored or upcoming Instagram feature are you most looking forward to exploiting to bolster your storytelling or IG presence?

Steve Denker: As a brand marketer at a fast-paced modern media company, having the ability to schedule Instagram content in advance and utilize Instagram's desktop publishing is a new feature I'm excited about. This will create efficiencies on my team and be highly effective with our fan-engagement strategy. While I'd considerate it unreal-time storytelling, the execution will align with our marcomm goals.



Nicole J. Shevlin
Social Brand Strategist
IBM

PRNEWS: What feature would you like to see on Instagram so you can augment your storytelling?

Nicole Shevlin: I would love to see feed posts with the ability to interact on the asset. For example, an interactive GIF on **Twitter** may translate well into the IG feed to gamify content. In addition, I would love to see the interactive Instagram Stories features, such as polls or questions, added as an option to supplement your feed asset/post copy. ■

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Biz Roundtable's New Model Rests on the CEO's View of Communicators



The statement **Business Roundtable** issued Aug 19 [see blue box, below], declaring that corporations share a fundamental commitment to all stakeholders, not just shareholders, represents a refreshing recalibration of what it means for organizations to demonstrate corporate social responsibility.

It is a bold and welcome move, and the Business Roundtable should be applauded for it. It also has important elements to consider regarding PR and communicators' roles in bringing that realignment to fruition.

GOING BEYOND STOCKHOLDERS ONLY

Since 1978, the association of almost 200 CEOs from leading U.S. companies has periodically issued Principles of Corporate Governance. Each one since 1997 supports the idea that corporations exist primarily to engage with stockholders "on issues and concerns...that affect the company's long-term value creation."

The new and revised proclamation, which commits the companies to deliver value not just to shareholders but equally to customers, employees, suppliers and communities, is a long overdue clarion call grounded in the concept of doing well by doing good.

It is reflective of what we as PR and communications professionals stand for and counsel everyday: the importance of increased social responsibility, trust, practicing what you preach and fostering "diversity and inclusion, dignity and respect."

But how will the company CEOs who signed the statement actually do it?

TAKE ACTION AND COMMUNICATE IT

It will be critically important for these corporations to demonstrate progress. They must show through action that they are following through on their promises.

As communicators and PR pros, it will be our job to help make sure they do. In addition, it also will be our job to en-

sure narratives are created and disseminated, illustrating that the promises in this statement are kept.

Today's media landscape is evolving rapidly, and is more social media-saturated than ever. The next crisis or triumph sometimes is only as far as a tweet away. In this volatile environment, ethical guidelines, including PRSA's Code of Ethics, set the standard for the professional practice of PR. The communicators' insight and relationships across the stakeholder ecosystem work to ensure the integrity of positioning that organizations promote.

We are on the front lines of these organizations' brand and reputation, and as such are well-positioned to, and must, speak frequently, directly and honestly with the C-suite throughout the development of strategy and the implementation of policy.

CONSUMER DEMAND

As the Business Roundtable's statement notes, there is increasing demand from consumers for leaders to demonstrate their credibility and willingness to engage in shifting social and cultural trends and movements.

A Feb. 2018 study from **APCO Worldwide** and the latest **Edelman Trust Barometer** come to similar conclusions about consumers' interest in seeing CEOs and companies take stands on social issues and lead the way on them.

As we know, PR and communications professionals play an integral

part in crafting and conveying those messages. As such, they build mutually beneficial relationships with all publics.

The downside, of course, is when, for various reasons, companies are inconsistent with the values they have espoused. This risks alienating consumers and damaging the company's reputation. "Therein highlights the key tasks of communicators in today's world – building and protecting the brand and building relationships with stakeholders," accord-

Continued on page 10

Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation

Americans deserve an economy that allows each person to succeed through hard work and creativity and to lead a life of meaning and dignity. We believe the free-market system is the best means of generating good jobs, a strong and sustainable economy, innovation, a healthy environment and economic opportunity for all.

Businesses play a vital role in the economy by creating jobs, fostering innovation and providing essential goods and services. Businesses make and sell consumer products; manufacture equipment and vehicles; support the national defense; grow and produce food; provide health care; generate and deliver energy; and offer financial, communications and other services that underpin economic growth.

While each of our individual companies serves its own corporate purpose, we share a fundamental commitment to all of our stakeholders. We commit to:

- Delivering value to our customers. We will further the tradition of American companies leading the way in meeting or exceeding customer expectations.
- Investing in our employees. This starts with compensating them fairly and providing important benefits. It also includes supporting them through training and education that help develop new skills for a rapidly changing world. We foster diversity and inclusion, dignity and respect.
- Dealing fairly and ethically with our suppliers. We are dedicated to serving as good partners to the other companies, large and small, that help us meet our missions.
- Supporting the communities in which we work. We respect the people in our communities and protect the environment by embracing sustainable practices across our businesses.
- Generating long-term value for shareholders, who provide the capital that allows companies to invest, grow and innovate. We are committed to transparency and effective engagement with shareholders.

Each of our stakeholders is essential. We commit to deliver value to all of them, for the future success of our companies, our communities and our country.

August 2019

ing to a 2019 study by The Holmes Report and Singapore's Nanyang Technological University.

CEO'S COMMITMENT TO COMMUNICATE

For corporations to change, however, an integral element of the equation must be the CEO's willingness and commitment to communicate and to value the PR and communications team. Without this, deep changes are not possible, whatever an organization's stated goals might be.

The Business Roundtable's statement is an encouraging

and welcome addition to the discourse on the importance of serving, and communicating to, a wide and diverse audience of stakeholders.

The declaration of principles, however, must translate into verifiable, measurable activities in order for real progress to occur. The words will spark action only if PR and communications professionals are increasingly, and continually, recognized as essential to realizing a CEO's vision for the future. ■

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INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

BY STEPHANIE JACKMAN, PR LEAD, SEISMIC SOFTWARE, AND MEREDITH L. EATON, DIRECTOR, N. AMERICA, RED LORRY YELLOW LORRY

Avoiding Short Cuts and Inside References: Managing a PR Client-Agency Friendship

PR pros and the company executives they collaborate with often become friends. After all, working closely on everything from brainstorming to crisis communications can be incredibly bonding. It's easy to see how friendships may develop.

But what about the reverse situation? What does the in-house PR pro do when a friend from within the company becomes an executive you're assigned to handle? Similarly, in the agency setting a conundrum occurs when a friend approaches your firm to represent her; she's now a client.

Knowing a great deal about the person you are working with, beyond the scope of a campaign, could be challenging. On the other hand, such a relationship could lead to tremendous accomplishments.

One of these variations happened to us. Our relationship went from colleagues to friends to client-agency. We've gone from one managing the other, to the other way around.

Here are tips for navigating such relationships. While the examples we use are from our client-PR firm experience, many are germane to in-house communicators who provide PR counsel to colleagues they already consider friends.

1. STRIKE A BALANCE

Knowing how to walk the line between friend and client, or friend and agency, is one of the most important things to master. Striking that balance and compartmentalizing to an extent will help keep your social life separate from work.

For instance, are the weekly team calls really the time to firm up brunch plans? Or to see if either of you heard about a mutual friend's career change?

Keep working hours for work, and off-hours for friendship. Also important: reserve certain forms of communication for work-related issues. Keep business emails business-related. Use other channels, texting or a personal email account, for social things. Some channels are less obvious. **Twitter**, for

example, can serve for business and personal topics.

2. DON'T SKIMP ON DETAILS

After working with someone for years, you share many experiences. It's easy to think, "You know how this works, you've been there too, so I don't need to explain it to you."

This may be true – in so far as that you don't need to patronize the other person to explain issues, such as why customers are important for PR, or, conversely, why customer testimonials are hard to secure. But, this is a dangerous mindset.

It remains important for a PR agency to show the reasoning, strategies and tactics behind a campaign. Similarly, the client should explain why it chooses to pursue one activity over another. If only to continue honing your practice and refining your strategic approach, that would be enough.

In addition, it's important to realize that the buck doesn't stop with you. Your plans for a campaign often are passed up the chain to practice partners who lack your joint knowledge or share experiences.

3. WORK ISN'T AN INSIDE JOKE

"Remember that time we tried doing that thing for that client and it worked really well?"

"Yeah. Let's do that!"

Conversations like this are easy to bring to a PR campaign with a close friend. And while it's great to use past experience to influence current strategies, you must think beyond your insulated world, as we noted above.

It's important to bring others into the fold and frame your



Meredith L. Eaton



Steph Jackman

experiences in the appropriate context. You don't want to risk alienating team members – agency and client peers alike – by treating the relationship like one big inside conversation.

4. KNOW YOU DON'T KNOW EVERYTHING

The client and the agency are business partners, but are not in the same business. True, that seems obvious, but it's another important point to keep top of mind.

In our case we each have things happening behind the scenes that we are unable to disclose to the other – only what's critical to help each other do our jobs and collaborate effectively. So, we need a certain level of trust, but also some degree of transparency.

We will both do better with more insight into what's happening – whether it's internal restructuring or difficulties getting ahold of certain media. After all, knowledge is power and we can only help the other overcome obstacles or brainstorm approaches if we're up to speed on what's going on, within reason...That's why you sign NDAs.

5. DO YOUR JOB

We know better than most how the other likes to work, or

what drives her up a wall, or what really impresses. And, we can certainly use that to each other's advantage, but it only gets you so far.

No matter what you've been through together, the work remains central. In addition, regardless of how much understanding or shared experiences, you still have a job to do. If you don't, be prepared to face the consequences.

That goes both ways. While the agency may be on retainer and up against a specific scope of work, the client must provide information, time and resources to enable the agency to move forward. If not, it could stall and become unproductive from both viewpoints.

WALK THE LINE

PR teams would do well to treat clients as friends, bringing the kind of relaxed, confident and open relationship that can take years to build. But, knowing how to walk the line is important. Reading the situation, understanding factors in play and knowing who else is involved influences how an agency-client friendship can play out. ■

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Continued from page 2

Sadly, while PR's history is filled with Latino practitioners, the contributions of these communications pioneers, while significant, are too often left out of higher education curriculum.

Padilla, Mendez and Munatones are just a few of the many Latinos who have made a lasting impact on PR. These unsung heroes dedicated their careers to PR and deserve to take their place among its most recognized leaders.

REMEMBERING THEIR STORIES

A native of Iowa, Padilla began his career as a printer's apprentice during high school. After WWII his career turned to television news, when he began working at what would become **Channel 11** in Minnesota. For a time, the station put him on-air, but he felt more comfortable working behind the camera and in newsrooms.

A **University of Iowa** graduate, Padilla's news career included positions at **The Cedar Rapids Gazette** and **The Des Moines Register** and **The Des Moines Tribune**. As a PR pro he was promotion director for the **Minnesota Statehood Centennial Commission** and co-founder and president of **Padilla and Speer, Inc.** (1971-1983).

Padilla received a bevy of accolades, including a medal from **King Carl XVI Gustav** of Sweden. He was twice honored with **PRSA's** meritorious service citation. He passed in 1992.

Mendez grew up in New York, and graduated magna cum laude from the **S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications** at **Syracuse University**. She started her career in **Edelman's** multicultural practice. Later she became a board

member of the New York chapter of the **Hispanic Public Relations Association**.

Known as a brilliant PR pro who spoke with authenticity and warmth, she moved from Edelman to **Tractenberg & Co.** There she was an AVP and lead in the multicultural division until her untimely passing in 2016, at 33.

Munatones started her career in 1973 at a **CBS**-owned-and-operated station in California as host of "Bienvenidos" and co-host of "It Takes All Kinds."

She became an associate producer for the Emmy nominated "Noticiero Estudiantil." Eventually she was the highest-ranking Latina in broadcast management as director of community broadcast relations for **KNXT** in Fresno and director of special projects for CBS, Inc.

Munatones served on **President Carter's** foreign policy advisory commission. She was communications director for the **LA Unified School District**. She passed in 2012 at 66.

Acknowledging the influence of Latino pioneers past and present is long overdue. By sharing their stories, we trust future generations will recognize their names and gain a greater understanding of how they shaped PR. ■

[**NOTE:** Padilla, Mendez and Munatones are just a few of Hispanic PR pros who'll be mentioned during a **Museum of Public Relations** and Hispanic Public Relations Association 3rd annual salute to Latino PR history, Sept. 12, 6:30pm, 85 Broad St, Penthouse, NYC, (corner of Broad, S. William St).]

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Gamification's Many Sides: How PR Pros Can Benefit and Avoid Pitfalls

For communicators, emerging concepts and terms in PR are often among the most misunderstood. From Artificial Intelligence and automation to blockchain and cryptocurrencies, vendors and boutique marketing firms that claim to have all the answers often misrepresent these newer ideas. Their hope, of course, is convince communicators to purchase what they present as proprietary solutions and convince us that they *really do* have all the answers.

One such often misconstrued term is “gamification.” **Merriam-Webster** defines it as “the process of adding games or game-like elements to something (such as a task) so as to encourage participation.”



Nick Pelling,
Engineer and
Author

Since British software engineer **Nick Pelling** introduced the word in 2002, it has widely been used in a marketing and PR context. Gamifying around a product launch, a brand awareness campaign or internal communications messaging not only encourages participation, but engagement, too. Adding the aforementioned “game-like elements” to your brand or message adds incentives for members of your target audience to interact with it.

THE EVOLVED DEFINITION OF GAMIFICATION

This is a far cry from what Pelling envisioned when he coined the term. “The things I was thinking about way back then were less to do with adding [medals] to websites than to do with the megatrends of the day—specifically, high-interactivity user experiences and digital content platforms,” he told PRNEWS in an email. “Both of which then made **Apple** the most valuable company in the world. :-/”

Pelling’s original definition of gamification certainly has evolved. In recent years, we’ve seen gamification at work with **McDonald’s**’ annual **Monopoly** contest, wherein game pieces come with certain menu items that can be combined to win big prizes.

We’ve seen it with **Amazon’s** exclusive, invite-only **Vine** program. Here, select customers are given free merchandise if they meet a quota for timely reviews on select products.

Gamification is at work in any quiz, contest or interactive ranking exercise that a brand or organization uses with its audience. And, as we noted above, it’s used often to entice employees to engage with a company’s internal communications.

SEEMS INNOCENT ENOUGH, BUT...

When used as a marketing or PR tactic, the gamification of a campaign seems fairly tame on the surface. When the gaming element of competition is applied, however, things get ethically hairy. PR can go a long way in generating awareness or engagement around a campaign by pitting products, services or values against others.



When used to encourage audiences to compete against each other or further controversial motives, however, game-based competition can quickly escalate and turn ugly.

Over the last several years, the **ACLU** has been monitoring China’s gamification of its citizens. China’s people are assigned “social credit scores” in what’s become known as Project Sesame.

MANDATORY GAMES IN CHINA



Karl Kapp,
Professor,
Bloomsburg
University

“Everybody is measured by a score between 350 and 950, which is linked to their national identity card,” the ACLU wrote in 2015. “While currently [it is] supposedly voluntary, the government has announced that it will be mandatory by 2020.”

“In addition to measuring your ability to pay, as in the United States, the scores serve as a measure of political compliance. Among the things that will hurt a citizen’s score are posting political opinions without prior permission, or posting information that the regime does not like, such as about the Tiananmen Square massacre that the government carried out to hold on to power, or the Shanghai stock market collapse.”

“It will hurt your score not only if you do these things, but if any of your friends do them. Imagine the social pressure against disobedience or dissent that this will create. Anybody can check anyone else’s score online. Among other things, this lets people find out which of their friends may be hurting their scores.”

While some think that concerns over Project Sesame have been blown out of proportion, others are concerned with the precedent that gamification of “social credit” sets for Chinese citizens.

GAMES FOR SERIAL KILLERS?

After the recent horrific El Paso shooting, conflict journalist **Robert Evans** noticed that the far-right message board the shooter frequented, known as **8chan**, had been a hotbed of radicalized domestic terrorists who hoped to one-up each other with kill counts. They referred to their kill counts as high scores.

In “The El Paso Shooting and the Gamification of Terror” (Aug. 4, 2019, **Bellingcat**) Evans includes screenshots of the message board that show the extent to which gamification can go horribly wrong. He arrives at a sobering conclusion: “The act of massacring innocents has been gamified.”

“Can gamification be used to manipulate and control people? The answer is absolutely yes,” **Karl Kapp**, a professor of instructional technology at **Bloomsburg University** in PA, and

Gamification Tips for PR Pros

Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivations must match and make sense for your goals

Make sure competitions are healthy; negative competition will reflect negatively on the brand

Avoid a win/lose dichotomy whenever possible, as it encourages negative behavior from audiences

Make sure points are awarded only when they're earned, offering points for simple tasks reduces the legitimacy of your game

Have a plan for losers of games, educate them, be kind to them, handle them with care and have a plan to make sure you don't lose business from the person who comes out on bottom

Source: *PRNEWS*

who is known as an authority on gamification, tells *PRNEWS*, “Because the whole idea of gamification is motivation and behavior change. If the motivation and behavior change that you want to encourage is not positive, then you can kind of make some inroads there.”

IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNICATORS

What can communicators do to make sure that we're encouraging the proper motivation and behavioral change when we gamify our campaigns? For that, we must look at the root of how gamification influences audiences and learn about its potential areas for ethical abuse.

BE MINDFUL OF INTRINSIC MOTIVATIONS

As with most things involving PR, the intentions of those launching the campaign largely dictate the effect that gamification can have on your audience. Kapp refers to these effects as “motivations.”

“When you're talking about gamification, there are two elements of it—intrinsic and extrinsic,” he explains.

“Extrinsic is [when], if I do something I earn some points, and if I own enough points I can buy something. But most of the time, the extrinsic motivation doesn't work by itself. You need something internal, an intrinsic motivator.”

“So if you're not intrinsically motivated to do harm to somebody, gamification is going to have a long, long road to try and actually change that behavior and may not be able to do it,” Kapp continues. “But if you're already inclined because of the social or cultural organization that you're in with, if you're hanging around in 4chan or 8chan...”

DANGER: THE NEED TO ESCALATE AND ‘ONE-UP’

Kapp explains that he has never seen gamification that was intended for good suddenly veer off in a weird direction. What's far more, common, unfortunately, is the need to keep that external motivation remain strong by escalating it.

“In order for external motivation to continue to work, you need to continue to up what that motivation is,” he explains. “Pay is a good example—if you're doing a job for five years,

you might be OK with a certain rate of pay, maybe no increase. But if you want to stay around five more years and you're not really finding the job fulfilling, that's when you want a raise. You have to keep upping the ante of external motivation to get people how to behave how you want them to behave.”

A ‘WIN-LOSE’ DICHOTOMY

So many celebrities and people in power triumph a Machiavellian worldview where success is measured solely in wins. This win-lose dichotomy has been weaponized against audiences in everything from politics to lifestyle marketing.

“That's the ‘winner take all’ mentality,” says Kapp. “It's not good in politics and it's not good if you're in marketing or PR either. You're gonna have some raving fans, but you'll also have some raving anti-fans.”

ABUSING THE WORD

Moreover, Kapp stresses that gamification is about much more than creating winners and losers. The word itself is misused. “It's abused a lot—a lot of people say they've gamified their product if you get ten points for logging in,” he says.

“But nobody cares—if the points don't mean anything, if there's no value behind them, no intrinsic motivation, then you're...wasting their time and making them feel that your app is childish.”

MIND THE LOSERS WITH BONUSES, RESETS

This dichotomy also sets up some of your audience to be at the bottom of the hierarchy—how do you handle those people and still keep them engaged with your brand now that they have been labeled as losers?

“Be aware of these unintended consequences,” warns Kapp. “If you gamify something, you're gonna have losers. What are you gonna do with them?” Depending on your PR goals, it might be wise to allow the losers to recover.

Kapp has seen people in a gamified environment who don't achieve what the majority does become frustrated, disengaged or checked out altogether. “They can end up hating your brand because you've put them in a situation where they feel like they've lost,” he says.

“Maybe in that case you reset the contest every week so everyone has a new chance to win.” Another tactic is to institute bonuses. This allows those low on points to do something that earns them bonus points.

“But if someone feels that they haven't been successful in a contest, more often than not they'll just drop out, angry or upset.” That, of course, can leave a bad taste in the mouth of your target audience. ■

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New Methods Emerge to Link Earned Media with Business Outcomes

[Editor's Note: This column is part I of a two-part series. Part II will appear in next month's PRNEWS.]

Every organization has an objective. Whether it is profitability, growth, sustainability or a mix of objectives. Enterprises must overcome the hurdle of integrating disparate business units so executives can understand how each department relates to each other. From there they can assess what's working, what's not and what should be done about it (and when).

Companies overcome this challenge by translating the unique languages of communications, finance, marketing, sales, production etc into a common tongue: data. It's the basis of business and boardroom decision-making.

MEASUREMENT STILL VEXES PR

PR and communications are not exempt. And yet, measurement continues to vex our profession and stunt its potential. This is due largely to communicators who choose not to measure, and the isolation of PR data among those who do.

Nearly 75 percent of chief communications officers and chief marketing officers don't feel that they are fully capitalizing on all the benefits of technology and data to modernize their communications programs.

ALIGN PR WITH BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

As professional communicators, we must align common practice with the business community's demands. If executives require information and context to determine which investments are most likely to produce viable long-term success, PR's earned media data stream must integrate with other business data. This will help the business arrive at a way to make more holistic investment decisions.

If PR performance is not quantifiable, integratable and insightful, it's almost impossible to demonstrate — and generate — a positive contribution toward the organization's objectives. In the absence of a robust calculable PR foundation, investments will continue to go to those who can and do provide the necessary data, and PR will continue to struggle.

There is good news — a new approach to fact-based earned media optimization reveals how a combination of advanced technology and expert talent can supplement existing methods. It will help revolutionize earned media, communications and marketing decision-making.

SEARCHING FOR METRICS THAT MATTER

While earned media and PR play an essential role in building the brand, generating revenue, creating efficiency and avoiding catastrophic cost, most practitioners and even leaders don't quantify their contribution. Vague, indeterminate measures like "buzz" or "breaking through the media clutter" may mean something within the PR community, but they are lost on the C-suite.

In the 2017 "Global Comms Report," 75 percent of senior executives said they feel the communications profession can do better at measuring and proving its impact on business objectives. Top executives need complete and meaningful communications intelligence, and so do we.

In a PR market intelligence analysis, research firm **Demand Gen Report** interviewed 169 management-level marketing and communications executives from B2B companies in North America. The study, "The Shifting Strategies for Earned Media," found respondents believe that earned media influences performance marketing.

MEASURING PR'S ROLE IN REVENUE

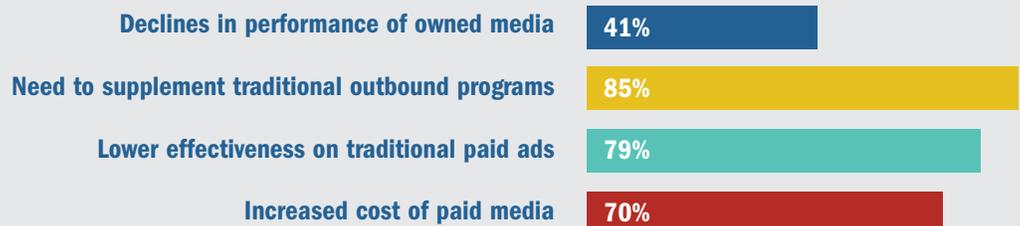
Most PR pros, though, are measuring earned media efforts via web traffic, clips, pickup, likes, and shares. The reason they do so is that it's difficult to quantify PR's influence on leads generated, conversion-rate tracking, revenue, or other meaningful measures of business impact. As a result, PR often remains on the periphery of the marketing mix.

While the survey showed that B2B marketers are starting to measure earned media investment against performance goals, it also revealed that marketers still struggle with how best to evaluate traditional and social media coverage.

The study found that while many B2B organizations would like to shift more of their budgets to earned media, they lack confidence in PR's ability to measure and communicate the ROI of earned media.



What are the drivers that have caused you to prioritize earned media? (Choose top three)



Source: "The Shifting Strategies for Earned Media," Demand Gen Report, 169 B2B executives (May 2017)

ROI Challenged: B2B execs want to bolster earned media but ROI difficulties hurt their enthusiasm.

CONNECTING DATA WITH BUSINESS RESULTS

To secure a level of primacy within the marketing and business-decision making process, PR must connect performance data with business results. Other disciplines within the organization already do this. Why not PR?

The most compelling examples are those measurement applications that quantify earned media's place within the sales funnel and PR's measurable impact on revenue generation.

Until now, PR drew a link to sales in two ways:

- ▶ **Marketing Mix Models:** Since mass market advertising and promotions dominate marketing spending (PR averages about 1 percent of the typical marketing expenditure for mass-market brands), and because modeling is expensive and data-intensive, marketing leads most modeling. As such, PR data, when it's included at all, is dependent on others to "invite" PR to participate. As a result, the data is outside of PR's control. In addition, the modelers often fail to understand PR's unique role in the marketing mix to represent it properly.

In summary: Modeling can be very useful, but it's also expensive and inaccessible for most PR budgets.

- ▶ **PR in Isolation:** There are cases, thought rare, where a sales spike occurs during a period when the only in-market activity is PR. With no other way to explain the sales surge, success is attributed to PR. But PR, as we know, rarely operates in isolation. We must account for other modes of simultaneous marketing output in every other instance.

In summary, "PR in Isolation" may be inexpensive, but it's extremely rare (since usually there are many other channels operating simultaneously whether you know it or not).

In both examples, PR performance is based on *derivative* rather than *direct* attribution. Models are based on an algorithm or formula. "PR in Isolation" is based on broad assumptions that: A) PR was operating without the support of other marketing vehicles and B) that PR is the only way to explain the increase (perhaps a competitor doubled its prices and its customers shifted allegiances to your brand).

The good news? PR can quantify its impact on business outcomes. Part II of this series will explain how. ■

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DATA DIVE

B2B Brands See Instagram Consumer Engagement Rise 9%, B2Cs Off 4%

Instagram is growing like a mushroom. It doubled its active monthly users during the past two years, eclipsing the 1 billion mark in 2018. On top of that it has a relatively young demographic. With our webinar on Instagram Storytelling approaching Sept. 19, we're throwing a curveball in this month's Data Dive. Instead of looking at data from **Facebook**, Instagram and **Twitter**, we asked our data partner **Shareablee** to focus exclusively on Instagram. As always, it is providing this data exclusively to PRNEWS.

As you can see, the charts list the 10-most active B2B and B2C brands, respectively, on Instagram during the first half of 2019. We intentionally asked Shareablee to focus on brands and omit influencers and celebrity endorsers, as Instagram has become home to such activity.

ENGAGEMENT JUMP

One of the few pain points with Instagram is that the channel's fast-rising popularity has resulted in intense competition between brands. There have been media reports that Instagram engagement is declining with the competition.

Yet data for top the 10 B2B brands registers

Continued on page 16

Shareablee

TOP B2B BRANDS IN THE U.S. : January – July 2019

Based on Total Actions

Data provided exclusively to PR News by Shareablee

Sources: @

RANK	BRANDS	TOTAL ACTIONS	TOTAL CONTENT	ACTIONS PER CONTENT	TOTAL AUDIENCE
1	 IMG Models	4,572,527	818	5,590	1,565,826
2	 Pantone	3,443,952	154	22,363	1,904,361
3	 Sotheby's	3,128,817	619	5,055	912,401
4	 Shutterstock	826,670	615	1,344	134,702
5	 HubSpot	253,847	202	1,257	170,950
6	 Oracle	169,808	155	1,096	173,127
7	 Buck Design	157,336	25	6,293	197,698
8	 SAP	115,551	172	672	95,941
9	 Amazon Web Services	51,031	158	323	34,282
10	 Kickstarter	49,998	164	305	241,577

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a modest increase (9 percent) in consumer engagement vs. the same period in 2018, according to Shareablee marketing director **Herman Chen**. In these charts, consumer engagement, or comments and likes, is called “actions.”

Also on the upswing vs. the same period in 2018 was the amount of Instagram content the brands posted. It rose 23 percent year over year, Chen says.

Often in this space we comment on the efficiency of a brand’s posts, or the number of consumer actions per post.

Look at the number two B2B brand **Pantone**. It averages some 22,000 consumer actions per post. By comparison, the top B2B, **IMG Models**, yields 5,600 consumer actions per post. IMG posted 818 times; Pantone posted 154 pieces of content.

An interesting note: Chen says the top 10 B2B brands produced only 9 percent of all Instagram content, but drove 52 of all consumer engagement. It’s clear quality counts.

B2C SEES DECREASE IN ENGAGEMENT

The decline in consumer engagement mentioned above was seen in the top 10 B2C brands. As you’d expect, the sheer amount of consumer actions is far greater for the B2C brands than for the B2B entities. Still, the top 10 B2Cs experienced a 4 percent decrease in consumer engagement vs the same period in 2018. On the positive side, the number of posts rose nearly 20 percent during the period.

The feast-or-famine nature of consumer engagement is seen on the B2C side too. Here, the top 10 B2C brands produced just 2 percent of all Instagram content, but drove 22 percent of all consumer engagement for the whole category, ac-

ording to Chen.

Knowing the heavy dose of influencers found on Instagram, it’s not surprising to see nine of the top brands in the chart belonging to the beauty and fashion sector. Only the luxury automaker **Porsche** resides outside the beauty and fashion categories. ■

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Shareablee

TOP B2C BRANDS IN THE U.S. : January – July 2019

Based on Total Actions

Data provided exclusively to PR News by Shareablee

Sources: ©

RANK	BRANDS	TOTAL ACTIONS	TOTAL CONTENT	ACTIONS PER CONTENT	TOTAL AUDIENCE
1	 Fashion Nova	211,237,780	6,522	32,388	14,756,458
2	 Huda Beauty	163,865,849	773	211,987	35,303,954
3	 Victoria's Secret	127,220,267	735	173,089	65,964,943
4	 Kylie Cosmetics	119,091,833	796	149,613	20,229,939
5	 Calvin Klein	91,017,430	1,223	74,421	16,969,978
6	 Forever 21	86,124,091	1,717	50,160	16,087,152
7	 Fenty Beauty	83,925,303	983	85,377	7,242,831
8	 Colour Pop	83,368,473	1,272	65,541	7,467,253
9	 Dior	71,816,501	987	72,762	24,801,968
10	 Porsche	71,610,224	312	229,520	15,372,612