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TITLE

Technology 2020: 5G, AI, Voice to Help PR Pros Deliver Better Experiences and Stories

With **CES 2020** beginning today in Las Vegas, many communicators start the year thinking about technology. Thoughts range from devices and tools that promise to make their jobs a bit easier to technology that will allow PR pros to create better experiences for target audiences.

In addition, PR pros think about tech-laden devices that will be thrust onto the market, requiring communicators to educate the public about their value, and, in some cases, explain away fears. PR pros also are concerned, and in some cases worried, with how technology could change or eliminate their jobs.

CES: MORE THAN A GADGET SHOW

While CES began as a consumer technology show, it's developed into something much grander. In many ways it sets the world's tech agenda, at least during January.

While presidential advisor **Ivanka Trump's** scheduled appearance today during a CES keynote session about the future of work should generate plenty of coverage, tech-laden gadgets promise to generate many of the show's headlines,

Many of those gadgets will be relevant to communicators. The question, though, is how much more capable the communications devices on display at CES will be than what's available today, says **Dan Brown**, senior PR director at **Walker Sands**. The leaps and bounds we've seen in mobile phones, for instance, "aren't as great from one generation to the next as they used to be," he says.

5G IS HERE, FINALLY

On the other hand, Brown anticipates 2020 will bring technological leaps. And several technologies and trends will matter to communicators.

For example, he says, 2020 will be remembered as a time when 5G, the wireless technology, "will actually be in the world" in a significant way. After years of people talking about the promise of 5G, devices relying on the technology will be omnipresent at CES, he predicts.

As Brown speaks to us from Chicago, one of the cities with the country's largest concentration of 5G coverage, he says "just a handful" of PR pros around him are carrying 5G phones. By year's end, he believes, about 50 percent of them will have 5G mobiles.

Still, he cautions, that it's not clear, at least now, how much of the work communicators do this year will make use of devices with 5G technology. The point is that the technology is growing and gaining acceptance.

DELIVERY VEHICLE, VOICE TECH, VOICE SEARCH

That said, one way 5G technology is important to communicators is that it's a great facilitator. For example, 5G will enable PR pros to deliver multimedia content, including video, much easier and faster to share with target audiences, Brown says.

In addition, he anticipates growth in voice technologies this year, which will influence communicators' work. Shipments worldwide of smart speakers were expected to nearly double from 2018 to 2019, growing from 114 million units to 206 million, according to **SAR Insight**.

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Editor, Seth Arenstein, sarenstein@accessintel.com
Graphic Designer, Yelena Shamis, yshamis@accessintel.com
Senior Content Manager, Sophie Maerowitz, SMaerowitz@accessintel.com
Senior Content Manager, Justin Joffe, jjoffe@accessintel.com
Content Manager, Nicole Schuman, nschuman@accessintel.com
PRNEWS Publisher, Tom Larranaga, tlarranaga@accessintel.com
SVP, Marketing Group, Dan Hanover, dhanover@accessintel.com
Divisional President, Kerry Smith, ksmith@accessintel.com
Chief Operating Officer, Heather Farley
President & CEO, Don Pazour

Group Subscriptions – clientservices@accessintel.com
 Additional Copies & Article Reprints – [Contact Wright's Media](mailto:ContactWright'sMedia), 877-652-5295; info@wrightsmedia.com



Published monthly by Access Intelligence, LLC
 9211 Corporate Blvd, 4th Floor
 Rockville, MD 20850

Client Services:
 Phone: 888.707.5814 · Fax: 301.309.3847
 e-mail: clientservices@accessintel.com

New York Editorial Office:
 40 Wall Street, 50th floor, New York, NY 10005
 Phone: 212.621.4890 · Fax: 212.621.4879

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Voice: 50% of Online Searches in 2020

People with **Google Home** and **Amazon Echo** smart speakers “are listening to podcasts on them...and their capabilities are growing, all of which make them another great delivery mechanism for communicators’ messages,” he says.



Ryder Meehan
 Co-founder/CEO
Upgrow

Speaking of voice (no pun intended), voice search is expected to have a breakout year. **ComScore** predicts that 50 percent of online searches will be performed with voice search this year, says **Ryder Meehan**, co-founder/CEO at **Upgrow**. In addition, about 30 percent of all searches will be done without a screen in 2020, research firm **Gartner** says.

“These are bold predictions,” Meehan says, “and there is no doubt the shift toward voice search is a game-changer.”

For Meehan, the way SEO creates more instant-answer content and the importance of earning the #1 rank, which is read to the user, will be “an exciting opportunity.”



Meredith L. Eaton
 N. America
 Director
Red Lorry Yellow Lorry

Red Lorry Yellow Lorry N. America director **Meredith L. Eaton** agrees. With more and more people using smart speakers and virtual assistants to find information via voice, PR pros must optimize content to rank for voice search, she says. Incorporating voice technology into their strategies could occupy a large part of communicators’ time this year, Eaton adds.

SILOS COMING DOWN

Technology also will influence communicators’ roles. In 2020, tech will continue to assist in tearing down departmental silos at some organizations, analysts say. This will require marketing and communications to merge in streamlined collaboration to better facilitate their multi-channel outreach effort.

The way **Entertainment Software Association** SVP, communications & public affairs, **Andrew Bowins** sees it, cloud technology and automation will continue to play a greater role in facilitating collaboration between marketing and communications this year. This will further blur the lines between experiential marketing and experiential communications, facilitating more seamlessly synchronized “wow” moments for audiences.



Andrew Bowins
 SVP,
 Communications & Public Affairs
Entertainment Software Association

He sees communications technologies creating a digital workspace that every team can jump into headfirst.

“So many innovations already have gone mainstream that will help communicators connect, inspire and tell stories in the coming years,” Bowins says. Great storytelling remains the “gold standard,” he says, “but AI, XR (experiential reality) and cloud technology are giving new canvases to bring our stories to life.” 2020 will be a “breakthrough year” that will challenge the way communicators “apply our craft.”

IN COMMUNICATORS’ HANDS



Dan Brown
 Senior Director,
 PR
Walker Sands

As for technologies that communicators will use or are already employing on the job, Bowins believes the key is seeking tools that multitask.

“I love the conversion of gadgets now that keep me mobile and able to work, play, connect and be entertained on one device,” he says. To that end, the iPad Pro and iOS are “hands down” the gadgets of choice for Bowins.

Eaton looks for tools in all areas, but is especially keen on those that help with measurement and reporting, many of which incorporate elements of machine learning or AI. She’s optimistic about seeing “big improvements in 2020” in these two areas.

HELP WITH MEASUREMENT...

“As the technology becomes more sophisticated, PR pros won’t have to spend as much time manually checking data and results,” she says. Coverage monitoring, for instance, may “finally start to understand the difference between a true editorial result versus simply a syndication of a press release.”

Similarly, monitoring **LinkedIn** also has been more challenging since it closed the site’s API to measurement and reporting tools. Eaton, though, remains hopeful. “With this being such an important platform, especially in the B2B space, there will be a huge sigh of relief from marketers worldwide once that gets sorted,” she says.

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...AND WRITING

Eaton also is upbeat about AI-infused tools that can ease the burden on writers. "I think, however, it will be a long time – if ever – before AI will replace the creative human element that PR pros bring to headlines, pitches and bylines."

Brown agrees. Historically, technology was feared as something that would replace humans. Usually it ended up creating more jobs than it replaced, he says. Similarly, Brown expects AI to supplement not replace communicators. AI will give PR pros more time to be creative and strategic, he says. He points out that much of what is called AI actually is automation.

Still, for writing that is more formulaic or based on standard data – from earnings reports to sports scores – Eaton sees AI feeding into PR pros' toolkits more in 2020 and beyond. Already some newspapers are turning to AI to write simple stories, such as wrap-ups of sports events.

TRANSLATION TECH HELPING PR

Another area where communicators can take advantage of tech advances is translation. PR pros who want to release a story in multiple languages won't have to spend time working with local-language partners to fix tone, meaning and grammar, Eaton says.

Meehan is anxious to see data-driven user targeting expand beyond digital marketers into the PR space. "People increasingly have banner blindness and less trust in advertising," he says. Using hyper-focused audience targeting "with a highly relevant PR message is the only way to break through."

He's also curious about the progress conversational marketing will make this year. Conversational marketing calls for "engaging customers in real-time, understanding what they want, and intelligently connecting them with solutions."

Historically, it was done via live chat or phone support. It's "rapidly moving toward chatbots, with AI and machine learning," Meehan says. For marketers, he believes this will mean "higher customer satisfaction and better web conversion rates, with reduced cost of support."

FINDING THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY

For Meehan, the technologies and tools PR pros embrace should ultimately help them gain speed and improve efficiency.

Continued on page 10

What's Your Tech Diet?

When we talk with tech-aligned PR pros, we often wonder how their lives, at the office and home, are infused with technology. We asked ESA's Andrew Bowins and Ryder Meehan of Upgrow.

"I actually need to go on a tech diet," Bowins jokes.

"My typical day starts with checking two iPhones, switching to my iPad Pro to take in the news from multiple curated sources, then I flip through the news channels to see how the stories have played out," he says. But it's not over. Then I head over to Twitter to see how people are talking about the news." He also admits to looking on Twitter "to catch up on Hollywood gossip."

Meehan, meanwhile has a bevy of tools he uses during a typical day in the office, including but not limited to: Slack for communications, Asana for project management, Apollo.io for cold outreach and pitching at scale, HARO (helpareporterout.com) for press placements, Buffer for social media management, Everhour for time tracking and TikTok for something he calls 'Ryder Time.'

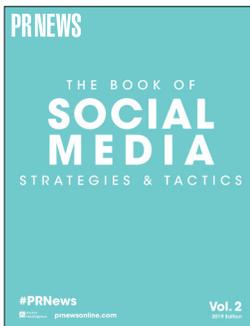
"I'm a huge sucker for the latest tools," Meehan admits, "and my monthly software subscription bill reflects it. But I feel it's more than justified in added efficiency!"

It's little surprise that Bowins, who's advocated against what he calls "content pollution" on social media and the web, is in favor of unplugging as a way to better integrate tech into your life.

"Reduce your time on screens, pick up the phone and talk to people instead of texting," he says. "Limit the information overload; turn off your devices. Leave time to think and dream up ideas" instead of going to Google and asking it to search for answers.

"For communicators, this is key, we need critical thinking, conversation and understanding of the audiences we seek to engage with," he says. That should be done in the old school way, "through relationships."

Bowins counsels a return to the basics and then, "after you have had a digital detox, re-engage with the tools, gadgets and software that help you achieve your goals." This will help you break the bad habit of being locked to a screen. ■



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How Communicators Can Overcome The Struggle to Measure Media ROI

[Editor's Note: This is the third in a series of **Intrado Digital Media**-sponsored articles about measurement. The first two articles in the series appeared in the November 2019 and December 2019 editions, respectively, of PRNEWS.]

With apologies to **Charles Dickens**, “It was the best of times” for media relations. “It was the worst of times.” For some communicators, it’s never been easier to pitch media, owing to digital technology and social media, which allows them to reach media easier. There also is a plethora of media outlets to target. The downside, of course, is that the result in inboxes overflowing with data.

For others, though, the plethora of data is a headache. What’s are the *right* metric to measure? The main issue for this group is that it’s impossible to get a placement in major media. This is mostly due to the all-**Trump**-all-the-time coverage that dominates media. And, the narrative continues, if you’re not mentioned in a major outlet, such as **The Wall St. Journal** or **The NY Times**, what’s the point of pitching?

That shortsighted outlook aside, an issue for companies that continue to see value in the importance of earned media is how to measure it.

Let’s say a company, perhaps with the help of a PR firm or in-house media relations team, obtains a page-one article in a major media outlet. What does that placement accomplish? Does it translate into sales or potential sales? Did the article, assuing it’s favorable, enhance the credibility of the company with banks or potential employees? Unfortunately, a few months after the article runs, some companies are unable to answer these questions with data.

LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN EARNED MEDIA



Christa Conte
SVP, Head of
Digital Commerce,
NA/NYC Office
Lead
Hotwire Global



Ben Chodor
President
*Intrado Digital
Media*

As you can imagine, this could lead to a lack of confidence in earned media, the collateral damage includes media relations jobs, in-house and at agencies.

“As great as a page-one story in *The Wall St Journal* is, many companies are unable to track [the placement] back to

sales, ROI or even just marketing and lead gen,” says **Christa Conte**, SVP, head of digital commerce, NA/NYC office lead, **Hotwire Global**.

For **Intrado Digital Media** president **Ben Chodor**, the issues surrounding measuring media ROI include the lack of measurement standards. “Unlike many industries, PR doesn’t have a standard set of metrics, so what defines campaign success for one company might be completely different from

another,” he says. This means the biggest problem is trying to decide “what is important when it comes to PR outcomes.”

TOOLS ISSUES

Another issue is that tools are unable to keep up with the constant change in the industry. This, Chodor says, pushes some PR pros “to avoid measurement altogether.”

An additional tools-related problem is that limited tools force PR practitioners turn to multiple solutions. This can result in PR pros looking at data in siloes. “This means [PR pros] never get to see the bigger picture of their work,” Chodor argues, or the worth of integrated efforts. This argues for tools that give communicators access to all of their information in a single dashboard, eliminating the need to log in to multiple platforms.

There’s also very little “challenging” occurring in PR today, Conte argues. Media relations pros should be pushing companies to understand *why* a particular media mention or article is useful.

Too often, though, earned media ROI isn’t measured properly and that leads to confusion about its worth.

USEFUL METRICS

Some of the metrics that can help contextualize the success of a media effort include share of conversation, message pull-through, quality of a quote or mention and engagement. These metrics, tied to a campaign over time will “let you really look at the data and have solid conversations,” Conte says. She disdains vanity metrics, such as AVEs, quantity and share of voice.

Chodor agrees, noting quantity of coverage isn’t a valuable metric for many brands, ditto the number of impressions. “The C-suite is looking for impact PR and needs a specific way to measure it,” he says.

When companies measure media ROI, they tend to focus heavily on metrics such as increases in sales, web traffic, lead conversions, social media mentions and conversations. While these are important, they can cause a company to “overlook critical information,” such as whether or not a particular piece of news content resulted in conversations among potential buyers and influencers, Chodor says. Another overlooked metric, he argues, is how consumers are reacting and responding to the content.

NUMEROUS CHOICES

The media metrics companies can track are numerous. Chodor notes companies should look at data in vertical markets and audience segmentation. “Choosing the most relevant available metrics and learning how to use that data (to increase sales, brand awareness, competitive advantage, etc.) is critical to building more strategic plans going forward and allows PR to more honestly report on its results.” he says. In the end,

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Boneheaded Benchmarking: 2019's Worst PR Flubs Offer Plenty of Lessons



If there's a theme to this year's worst communications moments it is that CEOs and corporate culture are at the root of most PR crises and related problems.

Not all CEOs are narcissistic maniacs, but as you'll see in the charts below, ego gets in the way of trust and a good reputation. Even if ego isn't the main culprit, the people in charge establish the culture and that's what led to the crisis.

The other lesson learned from 2019's most ignominious PR episodes is that the only effective crisis response is swift and dramatic *action*. Words alone are never enough to rectify a mangled issue and/or loss of public trust. ■

CONTACT: kdpaine@painepublishing.com

Company	Crisis	Overall Grade	What we learned
Boeing	Boeing is on the top of everyone's worst list this year, mostly because the story just keeps getting worse. After deflecting blame to the pilots of a Malaysian flight that went down killing all onboard, Boeing continued to defend the 737 Max. About 6 months later, a second plane crashed, again killing all onboard. Soon, word of additional pilot complaints and whistleblower reports of Boeing prioritizing shipments above safety surfaced. Families of victims filed lawsuits overseas and in U.S. courts. Now its largest customers are rethinking or cancelling orders, and the FAA has indicated that the 737-Max won't be approved to fly until mid-2020. There is little question in critics' minds that the culture at Boeing contributed to the crash. Workers were told to ignore problems and rush through procedures, according to whistleblowers. Airline engineers apparently knew about the failings of the plane's safety alert system (MCAS) within months of the first delivery and a year before the first crash. Now the CEO is out, and blame has shifted to the FAA for trusting Boeing's safety reports. Whether passengers will fly in a 737 Max ever again is anyone's guess.	F	If your culture is prioritizing production and profits over safety, a crisis is inevitable. From a communications perspective, when workers are more concerned about safety than leadership is, a whistleblower complaint is just around the corner. If you can't influence the culture, find another place to work and think about joining the whistleblowers.
Purdue Pharma	Purdue makes the list again in 2019, because it made a bad crisis worse, by the self-dealing actions of its leadership. As lawsuits proliferated, investigators discovered that the Sackler family had first shifted billions of company assets out of the corporation and into their personal accounts. Then they filed for bankruptcy. Even more telling, museums and other non-profits that had been the beneficiaries of Sackler largess attempted to distance themselves from the scandal by refusing future donations or returning previously donated funds.	F	Once again, greed is the enemy of a good reputation, and once the public believes you are toxic, no amount of money or good deeds will restore trust.
Deutsche Bank	Most corporations that are about to mark 150 years in business would spend the months before making plans for a year-long celebration. Instead, Deutsche Bank's communications teams spent 2019 dealing with massive layoffs, rumors about its impending demise and dealing with fines and scandals around Russian money laundering. The bank already has spent the last few years shedding unprofitable business, but decades of bad decisions don't get fixed overnight. After announcing a €4 billion loss for the first half of the year, the stock price dropped 8 percent in a day and a fringe website declared a "Deutsche Bank Death Watch." Rather than ignoring what was essentially a conspiracy theory, the bank's social media team responded, only to touch off a tweetstorm of its own. It didn't help that despite yet another "new turnaround strategy" the stock price continues to decline, and shareholders remain skeptical.	D	Years of mistakes take just as many years, if not more, to fix. Don't try to gloss over them. Bite the bullet, be as honest as the regulators will allow, deal with the punches and hope that senior leadership knows what it's doing.

Continued on page 6



Company	Crisis	Overall Grade	What we learned
Prince Andrew	When you're accused of palling around with a convicted sex offender, and not very used to public interviews, agreeing to a sit down with the BBC is certifiable madness. So the fact that Prince Andrew dodged questions and gave odd answers and appeared evasive as heck on camera, should come as a surprise to no one. The fact that the Queen essentially had to fire him from official duties as a result was probably a surprise to him, but not to most of his subjects.	F	When faced with charges of impropriety, appoint an independent investigator, fire all those suspected of violating the rules, hire a forensic accountant, and change policies to prevent future misdeeds. DO NOT issue jargon-filled press releases that essentially say, "We're working on it."
Tesla	Elon Musk is a communicator's nightmare, so it shouldn't be surprising that Tesla makes this annual list for the second time. Whether being interviewed getting high, lying to stockholders on Twitter or mistreating his employees, there appears to be no end to his bad behavior. So it was fitting and hilarious when the recent launch of the much-acclaimed Tesla Truck turned into every event manager's nightmare. In an attempt to demonstrate the unbreakable nature of the vehicle, Musk ordered an employee to throw a metal ball at the window, which promptly broke. Accusing the employee of throwing the ball too hard, Musk told him to throw it at another window, which also broke. Just watch the video: https://www.cnn.com/2019/11/22/tesla-smashes-bulletproof-pickup-trucks-windows-with-a-metal-ball.html	D	When you already have a sullied reputation, no one is going to give you the benefit of the doubt. Make doubly sure that any statement, event or demonstration is foolproof before you even begin.
Adam Neumann & WeWork	This year's top crises could be dubbed the top ten of "Egomaniacal CEO screw ups." As if Elon Musk wasn't bad enough, we have Adam Neumann, founder of WeWork. After WeWork's IPO collapsed, the company teetered on the brink of bankruptcy. But that didn't stop Neumann from continuing to issue bizarre statements that did little to calm investor fears. Soon he was out, leaving behind a lot of disgruntled employees willing to talk to the press. Now the new folks in charge are trying to fix the image with - you guessed it - a full-page ad.	F	There are several lessons to be learned from all of this. 1. Beware start-ups founded by messianic leader-types. (How quickly we forget... can anyone say Theranos?) 2. Check the balance sheets and culture before signing that employment agreement. And if you're trying to fix a problem, do the work first, THEN take out an ad if you must. When it comes to repairing a crisis, deeds work, ads don't.
Facebook	In 2019 Mark Zuckerberg left his goofy, hoody-wearing geek image behind and decided to join the ranks of the egomaniacal CEOs. Like Adam Neumann, he believes so firmly in his vision of the future and the role his companies will play in that future that he has lost all sense of what his words and actions are doing to public perception, specifically with legislative bodies around the world. The only difference between Zuckerberg and Neumann, in communications terms at least, is that Facebook went public BEFORE the CEO went nuts.	F	No matter how high your stock price or how strong your bottom line, society demands checks and balances. Sooner or later people will show up at your gates with proverbial pitchforks, and since they can't set your palace on fire, they'll go to the nearest legislative body and enact laws to keep you in check.



Company	Crisis	Overall Grade	What we learned
Samsung	<p>One of the most basic tenets of crisis communications is that no matter how well you manage your first crisis, past misdeed(s) always will be brought up in whatever subsequent crisis (or even minor headache) befalls you. The reality is that journalists and investors love looking at prior missteps for clues as to whether the problem is just an unfortunate mistake or part of a larger pattern that indicates a problem with your culture.</p> <p>Samsung began shipping its Fold phone to influencers and journalists to review in mid-April. Within days many of the units had failed, which, of course, reviewers described online in vivid detail.</p> <p>And, as would be expected, many of the stories referenced the disastrous launch of the Galaxy Note 7, which caused so many fires that for years every airline passenger heard dire warnings about the dangers of carrying a Samsung phone on a plane. The root cause of that disaster was a rush to capitalize on reports that archival Apple's new phone wasn't anything very "new." https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-09-18/samsung-crisis-began-in-rush-to-capitalize-on-uninspiring-iphone</p> <p>So it wasn't a surprise to journalists that once again Samsung had rushed a product, Fold phone, to market. This time rivals Huawei, LG and Motorola foldable phone announcements drove the urgency. The outcome for Samsung was equally disastrous. Millions around the globe shared dozens of negative YouTube videos and other reviews. Subsequently Samsung announced that it would delay the official launch of the Fold to September, and even then the reviews were still pretty bad.</p>	D	It's clear that Samsung has yet to learn the basic lesson of tech PR -- if you prioritize a PR win over getting the technology to work, you will lose -- in this case about 60 percent of your profits.
Uber & Lyft	<p>I know we're tired of pointing to Uber's failures, but after the disaster of Travis Kalanick the ride-sharing firm brought on a CEO, Dara Khosrowshahi, who clearly is trying to improve the image -- to the tune of a reported half million dollars in ads. The trouble is the public may not care and there's no sign that it's working. https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2019/9/5/20849632/uber-public-relations-crisis-qanda</p> <p>And then rival Lyft turns out to have similar problems. After a lawsuit was filed charging that the company failed to protect passengers from sexual abuse, Lyft issued the usual "Safety is our top concern" statement and 20 more women went public with similar charges. This is more of an issue given that Lyft has long been seen as a more socially responsible company than Uber -- offering free rides to the polls on election day, and in times of crisis -- and leveraged that image to capture a healthy share of Uber's disgruntled customers. The problem is that the safety systems Lyft touted aren't actually working. So, like Uber, it'll need a lot more than nice statements to restore trust. A first step is transparency. In early December, Uber issued a report about safety in its vehicles. It noted it received 5,981 reports of sexual assault in 2017 and 2018 in the U.S. Among those, there were 464 reports of rape.</p>	D	Lesson: You can't buy trust with ads.
GE	<p>GE has had a rough couple of years with its stock price hitting an all-time low this year. And then fraud accusations surfaced late in September. The CEO immediately invested \$2 million of his money in the company's stock. While that may not have made much of dent in his assets, it sent a bold and reassuring message to investors.</p> <p>Also included in GE's response were supportive comments from independent board members, including the head of the audit committee, who assured the media that GE was cooperating fully with the SEC. The end result was most of the news coverage of the "fraud" had dwindled by the end of the week, but it was still an ignominious year for a company that for decades was one of America's most admired.</p>	C	Bold actions to reassure your stakeholders are probably the only effective response to a self-inflicted crisis.



How to Create a Narrative That Builds Relationships

[Editor's Note: This is part I of a two-part series.]

If a tree falls in the forest, do we hear it? When a story is created, but our customer doesn't see it or appreciate it, does it matter? We can agree the forest of digital media is crowded. This condition places a premium on how we create our story. And, as important, how we ensure that the story is heard and current and future customers act on it.

This article is a continuation of a PRNEWS series that introduced and explained the ABCDE model, which focuses on how we create and tell stories. As you might recall, the model developed during years of PR pros working at the U.S. State Department. The PR executives and marketers were tasked with instructing diplomats in storytelling, augmenting their abilities to explain the country's foreign policy narratives to diplomats abroad. ABCDE refers to Audience, Behavior, Content, Delivery, and Evaluation [see PRNEWS: July 2019 (**Pearson**), October 2019 (**Knight**) and December 2019 (**Tazzia**)].

An equally important part of reaching our audience and achieving business goals relates to how we bring this full model to life. We address this in a model called CEIT, or Content, Engagement, Interaction and Transaction.

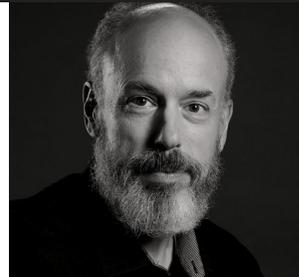
If you think of ABCDE as a model to construct a great story, the CEIT model helps us CE-IT (see it) through.

Let's explain.

RECOGNIZING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

We live in a world where we are dependent on our organization's abilities to understand and leverage the connections, adjacencies and dependencies between Strategy, Content, Interaction, Transaction, Analytics, Optimization and Compliance in order to form a fully integrated marketing plan (Figure 1).

And yet, most marketers are unable to contextualize their strategies, objectives, tactics and measures



across marketing and functional teams/disciplines. In addition, most organizations struggle to keep up with new marketing approaches and technology paradigm shifts. This is particularly so at large, matrixed organizations.

CONTEXTUALIZING OUR ACTIVITIES

The simple contextualizing framework shown in Figure 1 allows marketers and their organizations to visualize where roles and activities fit. It also allows them to see where adjacencies and dependencies are and to integrate multiple inputs for the development, execution, and optimization of an end-to-end (E2E) integrated plan.

We can reference the framework to prepare an initiative brief and ensure we have thought through the necessary touchpoints, success metrics, and pertinent information that teams will need to prepare their inputs for the E2E plan. Here are five key learnings from our experience with the CE-IT model (Figure 2).

- ▶ **1. Clarify & Translate Goals:** It's critical to start with clear business needs and goals that are then translated (not repeated) into marketing goals for each supporting team and external partners. The business or creative brief clarifies what success looks like so expectations are aligned between all stakeholders from the start. If the team should consider a variable (e.g. budget, timing), it must be included in the brief. There are no short cuts.
- ▶ **2. Lead Inclusive Launch Meetings:** A project/initiative launch meeting should be inclusive, with all stakeholders and external partners in attendance. This allows every

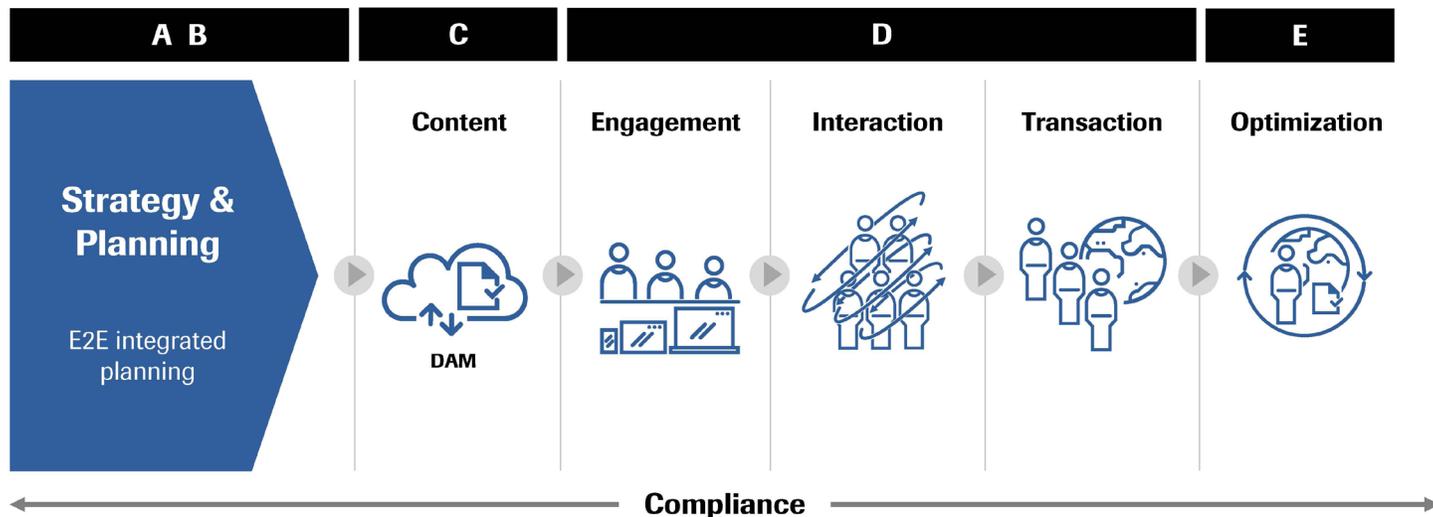


Figure 1. A Framework for Contextualizing Marketing Activities: This simple framework allows marketing teams to visualize roles, activities, adjacencies and dependencies, leading to the development and execution, and optimization of an E2E integrated plan. The ABCDE model is overlaid on this graphic. DAM represents digital asset management. Source: The authors

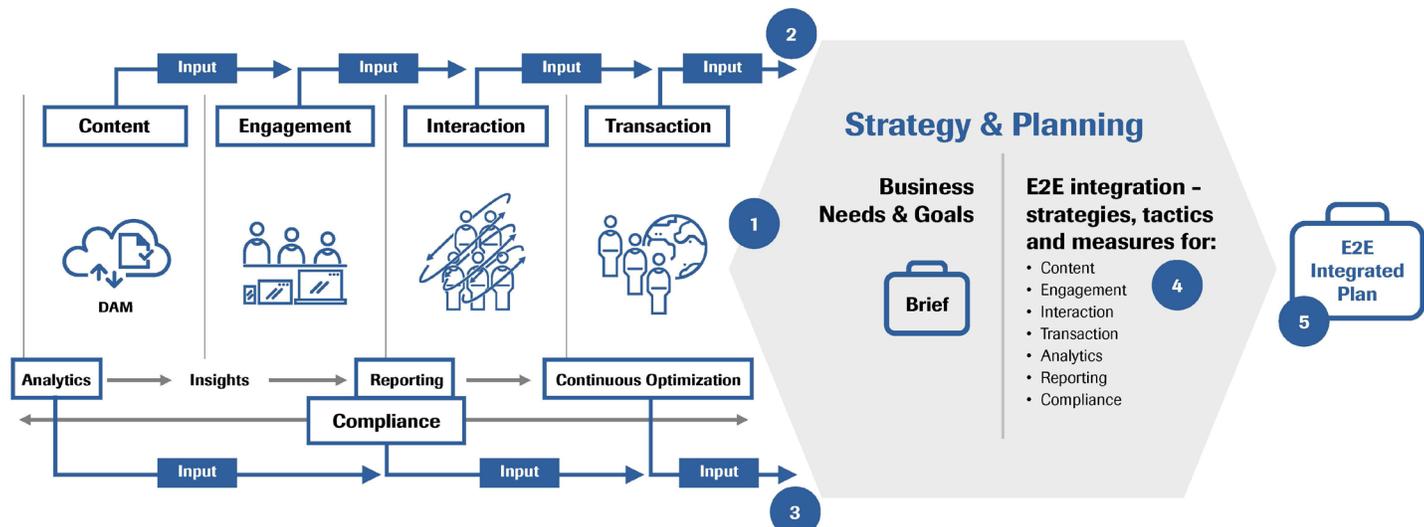


Figure 2 - Leveraging the 'Framework' for E2E Integrated Planning: A visual representation of the framework to prepare an initiative brief. This organization helps marketers think through the touch-points, success metrics, and pertinent information that teams will need to prepare inputs for the E2E plan. The 5 key learnings in this article are overlaid on this graphic.

team to hear the same message and seek clarification of anything that is unclear. This is a great opportunity to clarify roles and responsibilities and expectations. In addition, it is the time to discuss critical adjacencies and dependencies. Each supporting team, fully informed and invested in the project/initiative goals, now can collaborate to develop its strategy, tactics and measures. It's like being the coach of a sports team. Success is based on the entire sports team being clear on the plan of action.

- ▶ **3. Integrate and Align Individual Team Plans:** As each team determines the metrics that matter for its strategies and tactics, the analytics team is able to aggregate these inputs and develop an integrated analytics, reporting and optimization strategy aligned with tactics. Consistency also occurs related to compliance, specifically for each project/initiative. This is critical as the focus on privacy, data and security regulations continues to rise.
- ▶ **4. Be Agile and Adjust Plans Based on Input:** With all supporting teams' strategy and tactic inputs aggregated, the project/initiative lead can review, assess and ensure integration of all inputs. The project leaders also can question any areas of concern and adjust, if needed. All teams should be fully aligned and ready to execute the E2E integrated plan. This becomes a team-infused plan.

- ▶ **5. Socialize, Teach and Listen to Leaders:** The project/initiative lead must now ensure the plan is socialized with the appropriate stakeholders. Moreover, the lead ensures results of the plan are reported back, so that leaders understand the plan's progress and adjustments required. This places us on the path to continual improvement going forward.

THE WATCH-OUT: ENTRENCHED BELIEFS

Uh oh...those darn antibodies come out of the woodwork in organizations. An example is a peer who refuse to change.

The watch-out for organizations are blind-spots due to anchoring. There is considerable research that points to anchoring, which means we hold onto the past like a person gripping a pole in a hurricane. These implied constraints, or legacy mindsets, are the result of entrenched beliefs. They can keep individuals and organizations from moving ahead and recognizing critical shifts necessary to remain relevant in the marketplace.

Next: In the February 2020 edition we will offer insight about how to effectively drive your story daily.

Note: Ayaz Malik's concepts and views in this article are his own and are not made on behalf of Roche. ■

CONTACT: ayaz.malik@roche.com bobpearson1845@gmail.com

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though, the most important metrics for a company to measure are those “that matter most to its business,” Chodor notes.

Conte recalls a large auto company that created a framework to measure things such as to whether or not a new article included quotes about the company and the strength of the quotes. The framework also looked at where the company was placed in the article, the tier of the outlet and whether or not the company’s competitors were mentioned, among other things.

LACK OF LEADERSHIP BUY-IN

Another hurdle that media ROI measurement faces, Conte says, is “a lack of alignment with the larger leadership team.” PR and marketing often “are not at the table” when decisions are made to “increase a media program’s results 10 percent year over year.” These decisions, she says, sometimes are made without context or, importantly, the awarding of larger budgets. They’re then handed to PR to execute using the same strategy that’s been used for years, despite little growth.

This can lead to common issues. Companies “are not getting the expected ROI from their marketing/PR spend...they’re losing money because the competition is beating them...and they’re continuing to lose market share,” she says.

HOMEWORK BEFORE THE PITCH

One solution, she says, involves media relations pros doing their homework before pitching starts. “You have to step back, ask questions, do research and put more of a measurement framework in place.”

For example, if a company is successful getting that page one mention, is sales/marketing using it properly? In addition, is that prominent story in a major outlet useful in every case? Is the story reaching and influencing the company’s target audience?

Those questions can lead to a re-evaluation of the audi-

ence and the competition, Conte says. For instance, a company wants its message to reach CMOs. Is a major media outlet the best place to do that? “There are multiple other channels we can go out with,” she says. In the end, the key questions that media relations professionals should ask is, “What is the right message at the right time and in the right place?”

As is the case with so much in PR, executive attitudes can be an issue. As we noted at the start of this article, some believe the media universe is just five outlets large. There’s nothing beyond the Journal, the Times, **The Washington Post**, **The Boston Globe** and **The L.A. Times**.

“We feel that research can help us” dispel those attitudes, Conte says. “There’s a wide mix” of potential media that includes paid, earned, social and owned. “Smaller outlets...and trades are important, too.” To keep track of the plethora of media and content creators, Conte uses a mix of tools, including those from **Cision**, **Canvas8**, **NetBase**, **TrendKite**

Influencers, too, are a useful part of the media pastiche in certain cases. “It’s more than hammering away at the same five media” outlets, she says, adding that an integrated campaign likely is “going to be most impactful.”

Where and how to pitch, though, still turns on research and asking questions at the outset, Conte argues. First you need access to the company’s data. After that you ask, “Where is the company losing market share? What part of the sales process is the company having trouble with? Does the company lack a distinct voice?” If the company is a startup, it might lack credibility. In that case, working with an influencer can help.

In addition, with pre-pitch research in hand, if a pitch doesn’t land, “we’re able to say, ‘OK, let’s go with another pitch to another outlet.’” ■

CONTACT: christa.conte@hotwireglobal.com peter.kidd2@intrado.com

cy in their career and life. He admits, though, there will be instances when learning to use a new tool or piece of software will result in a slower pace for the user. The question is whether or not the time and money spent will be worthwhile.

SLOW DOWN TO GET AHEAD

“Expect to invest in a learning curve to set up and master the new technology as long as the long-term gains justify it,” Meehan says. Still, he believes technology ultimately is a win-win for PR pros. “If I find I’m spending a lot of time on a task or generally feel the task is redundant, I’ll look for a tech solution, and there usually is one.”

Adds Eaton, “Incorporating anything new takes time and commitment.” It’s easy to discard tech and fall back into old ways. But, she says, “With new tech comes the promise of new efficiencies, insights and results. So, stick with it until it becomes your new routine.”

“As an example of something I try to stick with,” she says, “I have [Amazon smart speaker] **Alexa** read me the day’s top

headlines while I’m getting ready in the morning. This can be a big time saver.”

PR HELPING TECH

Technology that fundamentally disrupts life and work will have its fair share of eager users and fearful skeptics. As such, it will require PR to educate the public about its advantages. “Advancements in AI, machine learning, voice, robotics and other forms of automation or autonomous tech will need to be tried and tested, with a great deal of PR support to win over adoption,” Eaton says.

5G, genomic research, smart cities, data privacy and implantables are other areas that will need PR support to quell fears and promote answers.” PR will need to focus on real and successful use cases” as well as put human faces on success stories, she says. ■

PRN Senior Content Manager Justin Joffe and Editor Seth Arenstein reported this story.

Western Union at 167: Cross-Functional Team Informs the World about its Payments Platform



Nicole Vogrin
Chief Corporate
Affairs/
Communications
Officer
Western Union

Not all our readers' companies are as old and well known as **Western Union**. Having an iconic brand can be a double-edged sword, though. Some people assume that a brand nearing its 200 birthday must be conservative and reluctant to change. In some cases, they're right.

This is not so with Western Union, its new chief corporate affairs and communications officer **Nicole Vogrin** tells us.

First, the 10-year veteran refers to the company as being "167 years young." As for its reluctance to change, she reminds us morphing is nothing new at Western Union. "We began delivering telegrams, remember." It stopped doing that in 2006. Seriously, Vogrin says, "Innovation and transformation are in our DNA."

WU now is in the payments-delivery business. Considering the scope of global commerce—most of us think nothing of buying goods from overseas vendors, via **Amazon** or another commerce site—it's a very good business. Behind Amazon and other global companies' transaction is Western Union's platform. "We think we're the most well-run and versatile payment engine on the globe," Vogrin says.

Thanks to digital technology and a healthy market, fees for transferring money between borders have fallen fast. In developed countries fees are barely 2 percent. As fees continue to fall, the \$2 trillion that traversed the globe in 2019 is expected to grow, per **The Economist**.

An exception to the inexpensive movement of money is remittances, or the practice of workers sending money home to relatives. Fees here are more than three times the cost of global payments, hovering around 7 percent.

And the amounts are mighty. Nearly 300 million migrants regularly send funds home. They sent an estimated \$550 billion to relatives last year, *The Economist* says. "We must really communicate and educate around our new businesses, particularly our remittance business," Vogrin says. It boasts 550,000 global locations. That's more than **McDonald's**, **Starbucks** and **Walmart** combined.

Below are edited excerpts from our interview with Vogrin.

PRNEWS: What communications tactics and strategies are you using to educate the public about the new Western Union?

Nicole Vogrin: We have a roughly 90 percent global brand awareness rate. Finding ourselves in this enviable position after reinventing our business model multiple times, is indeed a good place to begin.

Western Union has built its global brand by keeping a relentless focus on its customers and their evolving needs. While Western Union is known for its cash remittance business, it is a profoundly digital company, operating the world's

largest digital remittance platform.

Shifting some of the outdated perceptions about Western Union...is not a task the communications function could do alone. We developed a corporate affairs working group from communications, marketing and brand, public policy and the WU Foundation, among other functions. We brought this cross-functional team together in 2018. To ground our strategy, we conducted a stakeholder perception audit...with the **Reputation Institute**.

The working group has been a key force driving common positioning goals. It also led to the development of our inaugural Environment, Social and Governance report.

PRN: How have you raised awareness of your digital platform, which powers Apple Pay and some Amazon transactions?

Vogrin: Most recently, we've expanded our offerings by opening our global, cross-border, cross-currency platform...to partners including banks, governments and other businesses.

One example of such partnerships is our collaboration with Amazon. Amazon Pay Code enables its customers in 20 countries (and counting) to access the global marketplace and purchase goods online and pay for them with local payment methods and in local currency.

Implementing the strategy of opening our cross-border platform required a carefully orchestrated internal and external communications approach. As a result, I spend a meaningful amount of time to cascade and discuss strategy with my leadership team.

One tactic we used was our September 2019 Investor Day, where we outlined...how we intend to drive long-term incremental growth....We also shared a three-year financial outlook.

Our communications, corporate brand and marketing teams are working closely with our business development and sales teams to flush out communications plans supporting the go-to-market strategy for our platform solutions. Thought leadership will play a key role in these plans and serve as tools to reach and engage future platform partners.

PRNEWS: What about internally?

Vogrin: Internally, we started to prepare our broader employee base for this journey months before Investor Day. To engrain Western Union's strategy we're using visualization tools, such as strategy placemats. With so much change, it is essential to allow for a continuous dialogue. The communications team partners with HR and we leverage tools like **Glint** surveys to hear from our employees on a monthly basis to learn what we can do better. ■

CONTACT: lauren.pollock@fleishman.com

More Steps to Manage Your Reputation on Google, for Free

[Editor's Note: This is the second of a two-part series. Part I appeared in the December 2019 edition of PRNEWS.]

It's hard to predict what **Google** will do tomorrow, let alone in 1,095 days. As we noted in part I of this series, mastering Google is the best way to manage your reputation online. And I'm not talking about classic SEO, though that ranking undoubtedly has an impact on your reputation. These two articles deal with classic reputation management, which has nothing to do with SEO.

The search engine results pages (SERPs) are where most stakeholders will encounter your brand. We covered four ways to manage your reputation for free on Google in the first article. They were: Google My Business, the Knowledge Panel, branded search and 'People also ask.'

Below are numbers five to nine in our rundown of the nine ways to manage your reputation on Google, for free.

IMAGE SEARCH

Have you checked to see which images are returned when someone searches for your brand? In Q2 2019, Google images made up 20 percent of organic searches. That's a lot of visibility.

What appears on Google when someone types your brand name and clicks 'Images'? Do they see images? Logos? (Hopefully yours, not those of your competitors.) Are the images from your site? Perhaps they are images of your social profiles?

Maybe they are images of staff? If so, are they current staff or disgruntled ex-employees? Is that your CTO in a compromising position? Pictures associated with an environmental disaster your company was responsible for months ago?

It follows a logical pattern. The more publicity your company attracts, the more related images there'll be.

LOGO MARK-UP

Which company logo is returned in Google image search when someone types in your brand? You can instruct Google what you'd like returned using structured data.

If you don't take this relatively simple step, and the wrong logo is returned, then don't be surprised when it starts popping up in content related to your brand. Besides being an embarrassing situation for you, it will be a confusing experience for stakeholders.

OTHER STRUCTURED DATA

Continuing down the structured data route, it's important to understand you can make it crystal clear to Google what your company name, address and phone number are. In addition, you can choose which social profiles it should associate with your brand, the jobs you have available...the list goes on. Click here on Google's structured data development page (<https://developers.google.com/search/docs/data-types/article>), for a comprehensive overview of things that are worth marking up with structured data, and its impact on the SERPs.



FEATURED SNIPPETS

These are the prominent results that appear at the top of the SERPs for certain queries. As they are so prominently placed (known as 'position #0' in the SEO industry) they can have a massive influence on your brand's reputation. If you're tracking keywords related to your brand, then look at those that return featured snippets. Do you own the snippets relevant to you? If not, then think about how to restructure your content appropriately, so it appears instead.

META DATA

Know those old-school, ten, blue underlined links that pop up in the SERPs when you search for something? They can all be edited easily.

True story: a disgruntled ex-airline employee hacked the carrier's homepage meta data. The airline didn't notice for six months, but saw organic conversions dropped off the cliff. It turns out the site was no longer selling flights, but was offering, well, a product an airline would never sell. And this was what customers saw as soon as they conducted a branded search.

Even if you haven't suffered the wrath of an ex-employee, there are plenty of instances where a site gets hacked and the perps create thousands of pages advertising little blue pills etc.

Bonus Tip: as of October 2019 Google enabled companies to limit how much of their content is returned in 'snippets' in the search results by using a new set of robot meta tags (instructions for Googlebot and the like). A snippet might be an instant answer, for example, where a paragraph of text is pulled from a web page and returned directly in the search results. There's a way to prevent Google from doing this (use the "nosnippet" tag).

Now, though, you can specify: a maximum text-length, in characters, of a snippet for your page; a maximum duration in seconds of an animated video preview; a maximum size of image preview to be shown; and which parts of a page are eligible to be shown as a snippet. There are more options to help websites preview their content on Google Search: <https://webmasters.googleblog.com/2019/09/more-controls-on-search.html>

DO YOU NEED TO PROTECT SERPS?

If you lack a dedicated resource managing your Google profile, you should rectify the situation. And I'm not talking about SEO, I'm talking about search engine reputation management. I've yet to encounter a chief Google officer or chief SEO officer with a team dedicated to managing SERP reputation. Yet the SERPs are where the majority of customers and stakeholders will first encounter your brand.

Are you happy to let Google's algorithms scrape together the information they think is right, or do you want to take control of your company's online reputation? ■

CONTACT: luke@toplinecomms.com

Elon Musk Loses 35 Percent of Engagement Yet Remains 2019's Top Technology Influencer

With **CES 2020** beginning today, we asked our data partner **Shareablee** to look at the technology influencers who were most active on social media during the past year, actually January 1, 2019, through November, 30, 2019. The data is provided exclusively to PRNEWS.

As a category, the tech influencers saw consumer engagement with their content grow 11 percent in 2019 vs. the same period in 2018.

Consumer engagement is shown in this chart as “actions.” Consumer actions represent the total of retweets, likes, comments and shares of the tech influencers’ content. For 2019, consumer actions across **Facebook**, **Twitter** and **Instagram** for the tech influencer category reached 301.6 million actions, up from 272.7 million in 2018, says **Herman Chen**, marketing chief at Shareablee.

Total consumer actions on Twitter increased 33 percent, from 67.3 million actions in 2018 to 89.3 million in 2019. For Instagram, total consumer actions with the influencers’ content rose 7 percent, from 180.7 million in the 2018 period to 193.1 million last year.

VIDEO TOTALS JUMP

If you expected there would be a great deal of movement in the video space, you were correct.

The cross-platform total for video actions for tech influencers increased 49 percent year over year, with a 50 percent increase for Twitter video actions. For Instagram, the rise in consumer actions with videos was 67 percent in 2019 vs. the same period in 2018.

As we’ve seen in other categories, the company or influencer with the largest audience isn’t always the chart leader. Here, nobody in our top 10 can touch **Bill Gates’s** audience of 67 million, yet the **Microsoft** co-founder ranks fifth on this list.

Bigger is not better when it comes to posting content either. The number of posts and videos is seen as “total content” on the chart.

For example, Gates posted 441 pieces of content during the 11-month period, and **Facebook** chief **Mark Zuckerberg** posted just 17 times. Yet each piece of

Zuckerberg’s content raked in 353,735 consumer actions on average. Gates’ posts pulled a respectable 12,075 consumer actions on average.

Chen brings up an interesting point: all three of the best-known names on the top 10 list went hurting in 2019. Total consumer actions across platforms were down 12 percent for Gates, 18 percent for Zuckerberg and 35 percent for the category leader, **Elon Musk**. It is unusual to see the leader in a category that gained consumer actions lose a significant amount and remain on top.

Incidentally, the fourth popular name on the list, Twitter chief **Jack Dorsey**, had a resounding year. Consumer actions across platforms for his content rose a whopping 111 percent and engagement with his Twitter video content grew 12 percent year over year. Not surprisingly, Dorsey’s Oct. 30 bombshell that Twitter would no longer accept political advertising was his top post. ■

CONTACT: herman@shareablee.com

Shareablee

TOP TECH INFLUENCERS: JANUARY – NOVEMBER 2019

Based on Total Actions

Data provided exclusively to PR News by Shareablee

Sources:   

RANK	TECH INFLUENCERS	TOTAL ACTIONS	TOTAL CONTENT	ACTIONS PER CONTENT	TOTAL AUDIENCE
1	 Elon Musk	47,663,428	431	110,588	35,445,737
2	 Marques Brownlee	45,968,008	1,027	44,760	5,302,470
3	 Lewis Hilsenteger	13,936,379	847	16,454	4,857,861
4	 Mark Zuckerberg	6,013,487	17	353,735	5,219,128
5	 Bill Gates	5,324,963	441	12,075	67,074,794
6	 Safwan Ahmedmia	4,016,151	998	4,024	455,956
7	 Jonathan Morrison	2,742,656	1,051	2,610	931,015
8	 Austin Evans	2,067,665	383	5,399	1,057,688
9	 Judner Aura	1,772,308	538	3,294	618,344
10	 Jack Dorsey	1,598,470	448	3,568	4,385,980

How Communicators Can Get Their Research Objectives Ready for 2020



Communicators share three desires: to communicate PR's value, to improve PR's performance and to quantify PR's unique business contribution. While it's too late to shape last year's results, we can study what we've done in 2019 and apply lessons learned to improve our business operations in 2020.

To get started, here are steps you can take now:

EVALUATE 2019 PERFORMANCE

The New Year beckons with fresh budgets and opportunity. To take advantage of this situation, we must assess what worked in 2019 and things that failed. To validate the wisdom of your decisionmaking and communicate in terms non-PR execs understand, you need to show that you bested your objectives, topped your competitors, and you improved year over year.

Wherever possible, evaluate performance in the language of business. Use revenue generation, efficiency and mitigation of risk, rather than what we'll call *PR speak*, for example: *clips, AVEs, buzz*, etc.

Consider an efficiency equation to show how you lowered the cost of performance. For example, if your 2018 budget was \$1,000 and you generated 1,000 positive placements, the cost-per-positive placement was one dollar. Let's assume your budget remained flat in 2019, but you generated 2,000 positive placements. In that case the reduced cost-per-positive placement shows efficiency and improved return-on-investment.

Research and evaluation work best when conducted continually to refine throughout the year. If you chose not to measure in 2019, assess PR performance now to set a baseline for 2020; then manage your programs toward an even better New Year.

ASSESS YOUR BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

Now's the time to consider your environment and plan accordingly. Evaluate journalistic reporting to understand both sides of an issue. Apply social media analytics to capture the voice of the public. Use surveys to weigh public opinion and improve your structured listening.

To reflect the direction of the organization, conduct an internal audit to explore any upcoming changes with key executives. Consider major product introductions; leadership transitions; changes among competitors and any potential regulatory actions. 2020 may require updated plans based on what you learn.

SET OBJECTIVES

To inform your 2020 objectives weigh 2019 evaluation and

landscape analyses. In setting objectives, consider the need for goals to be measurable, reasonable and meaningful:

- ▶ **Measurable objectives ensure clarity and alignment.** When objectives are quantifiable, you eliminate risk as to whether or not you met (or exceeded) them. Simultaneously, hard objectives focus attention, avoid wasted resources and drive peak performance.
- ▶ **Reasonable objectives** come from reconciling the inclinations of executives, the objectives of the business and PR's ability to answer realistically and within available resource boundaries.
- ▶ **Meaningful objectives** support the organization's priorities and the preferences of executives who lead it. Interview key internal stakeholders and aggregate their preferences to create a PR manifesto, gain agreement... then begin. Research provides dimensionality for better objectives setting, planning and execution.

REVISIT/UPDATE POSITIONING STRATEGY

While strategies may remain viable for years, changes in your organization, your marketplace or among your competitors may require you to reconsider your positioning and targeting strategy in 2020. Unlike paid and owned media, PR is semi-controllable only. As such, our approaches to targeting and messaging are inexact.

But new technology, known as attribution analysis (PRN, Dec. 2019), tracks click-through from digital content through the rest of the customer journey. The technology enables a level of precision previously unknown in the profession. Consider whether it is time to:

- ▶ **Revisit Positioning:** Positioning refers to the perception of your company, brand or product in the minds of consumers. If disharmony exists between popular opinion and your current standing or your 2020 objectives, you may need to reestablish the brand in new and different ways. Optimal positioning is one that differentiates positively versus competitors on factors existing or potential customers consider most important.

Positioning research using media analysis, surveys and attribution analysis reflects the priorities of your target market; how you perform on what's important and how your competitors compare. Through this process, you discover or reaffirm the degree to which your message is compelling to the target audience, and is credible coming from your organization and drives behavior in the marketplace.

Efficiency Equations	
2018	\$1000 budget produces 1,000 positive media placements, cost \$1 per placement
2019	\$1000 budget results in 2,000 positive media placements, cost is \$0.50 per placement
A simple ROI example shows PR earning 1,000 media placements with a \$1,000 budget (2018). The next year, PR is more efficient, earning 2,000 placements with the same \$1,000. Source: The author	

► **Revisit Targeting:** Since it's bought or owned, marketing targets with greater precision than PR, which continues to lead with a combination of personal intuition and experience. Attribution analysis repurposes marketing technology to aid earned media and enables communicators to quantify media that generates click-through, engagement and behavior. Communicators now can pinpoint media that generates business outcomes. This is so even when these media outlets may run counter to conventional wisdom. For example, if your target audience includes high-net-worth individuals, you may find yourself targeting the **New York Times**. But *everyone* targets the Times, though, so to reach your target, you may consider smaller daily and weekly newspapers whose demographics match those of the Times, but whose appetite for your content could be greater. In addition, you might face much less competition in those outlets.

Through positioning and targeting analysis, attribution research reveals the demographics, psychographics and behaviors of your audience. It also details the degree to which the media you pursue represents your message credibly, thoroughly and in compelling, digestible form.

Knowing which combination of media and messaging drives audience behavior empowers a level of precision and

efficiency previously unknown. Even if you conducted audience research in 2019, such an assessment without attribution analysis may require a fresh start.

COMMIT TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Research and evaluation serve two purposes: to provide a report card to management that validates the wisdom of the organization's investment in PR; and to act as a tutor to assess your performance (what's working; what's not). This tutoring guides you to higher levels of achievement.

To succeed, the practitioner must remain open to the direction and guidance the research reveals. A report card answers, *How did we do?* A tutor tells you *why* and what should be done about it now.

In this way, research goes beyond data, charts and graphs to provide an evaluation. It uncovers insights that you can act on now. It also delivers a data-informed foundation for strategic guidance. Research, combined with openness, responsiveness and agility, supports creativity and experience to reinforce growth and accomplishment. In this way, we elevate PR as an essential business asset and uplift the role of the communicator to that of a trusted and strategic business advisor. ■

CONTACT: weiner@prime-research.com

HISTORY

BY JARED MEADE, PRINCIPAL, RAYNE STRATEGY GROUP

Joseph Varney Baker: The First African-American to Found a PR Agency

[Editor's Note: This is one in a series of articles about the history of PR as part of our celebration of PRNEWS' 75th anniversary. The series is a partnership with the **Museum of Public Relations.**]

Ask PR pros about priorities facing the profession and an overwhelming number of answers will involve the need for greater diversity. Though diversity is a critical issue in PR, as a profession we have done a subpar job of acknowledging pioneers of diversity in communications' history.

As we approach **Black History Month** in February, it is an ideal time to honor PR trailblazers. Communicators need to make sure these pioneers are included in PR textbooks so that they can serve as role models to students. For those of us in the industry, learning about these pioneers inspires us to do more for diversity and inclusion.

Joseph Varney Baker is one of those trailblazers who should be better known. Born August 20, 1908, in Abbeville, South Carolina, he attended **Abbeville State Teachers Training School**. In the 1920s, the teenager moved to Philadelphia, graduated from **Central High School** and eventually studied journalism at **Temple University**.

His storied career began as a reporter at the **Philadelphia Tribune**, the African-American newspaper. Eventually he worked his way up to city editor.

He also was the first African-American journalist to write for **The Philadelphia Inquirer**, which is the third-oldest surviving daily newspaper in the United States.

JOURNALIST BEGINNINGS

After leaving the Philadelphia Tribune, he worked as a PR consultant for the **Pennsylvania Railroad**. This led him to found a PR firm in NY, **Joseph V. Baker and Associates**, in 1934. The firm, the first African-American-owned PR agency, specialized in PR, marketing and advertising aimed at African-American audiences.

Based on available evidence, we acknowledge Baker as the first African-American founder of a PR firm. "We don't have Baker's papers, but we are searching for them," says **Shelley Spector**, co-founder of the **Museum of PR**. "We are proud that we have been able to save his memory, because he was nearly forgotten," she adds. Spector believes there's



Continued from page 15

a chance that evidence of African-American PR executives active prior to 1930 will surface. “Who knows, we might find more...because this history has never been ‘excavated’” before now.”

In the **Encyclopedia of Public Relations**, Marilyn Kern-Foxworth described Baker as, “A much-revered entrepreneur within both the black community and corporate America, Baker was seen as a formidable force in bridging the two constituencies.”

Incidentally, Kern-Foxworth is deserving of mention. When she graduated from **U of Wisconsin** in 1980, she was the first person of color to receive a doctorate in communications with a concentration in advertising and PR.

IMPRESSIVE CLIENT LIST

Over the years, Joseph V. Baker and Associates’ client list would include some of the biggest corporations including the Pennsylvania Railroad, **American Tobacco Company, Carrier Corporation, Hamilton Watch Company, the Gillette Corporation, Scott Paper Company, RCA, Procter & Gamble, Chrysler, DuPont, U.S. Steel, Western Union, NBC, the Association of American Railroads**, and major African-American entertainers.

Long active in politics, Baker was chosen in 1960 to serve as an assistant to then-VP **Richard Nixon**’s campaign staff when he ran for president against **John F. Kennedy**.

During his career, Baker also worked as the director of the Division of Negro Research and Planning for the Pennsylvania State Department of Labor and Industry,



PR Trailblazer: Joseph Varney Baker (1908-1993) was the first African-American to establish a PR firm.

then as director of Negro Work for the Republican State Committee.

As a man with a deep passion for PR, Baker worked to instill that same passion in others by serving as a mentor. He was instrumental in helping others get their start in the profession, especially African-American women.

One of his mentees, **Barbara C. Harris**, began her career at Joseph V. Baker and Associates. She was the first woman of color to handle major corporate accounts and eventually became president of the firm in 1958.

As with many PR pros, Baker was very involved in his community. In addition to his membership in **PRSA**, Baker was active in the **Boy Scouts**, the **Prince Hall Masons**, the **Philadelphia NAACP** and **Philadelphia Press Club**, among others.

FIRST BLACK PRESIDENT OF PRSA PHILLY

Baker was unanimously elected as the first African-American president of the Philadelphia chapter of PRSA, in 1958. In addition, he was the first African-American to earn the Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) designation.

Baker retired in the early 1980s. In 1990, the PRSA Multicultural Affairs Committee named one of its awards in Baker’s honor, recognizing his many achievements in PR.

The man once described as the “Dean of Negro public relations men” died at his Germantown, Pennsylvania, home on May 7, 1993, aged 84.

[**Note:** The Museum of Public Relations will host its 5th Annual Black PR History Event, Jan. 30, 6 – 9:30 p.m. at 85 Broad Street, Penthouse (corner of Broad and S. William St), NYC. The event will feature 100 years of African American media in an exhibit titled: “From the Civil War to Civil Rights: a Century of Social Advocacy through Public Relations.”] ■

CONTACT: jared_meade@owens.edu