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SURVEY

Communicators Working Harder, But 85% Envision Post-Pandemic Rebound and Rise in PR's Stature

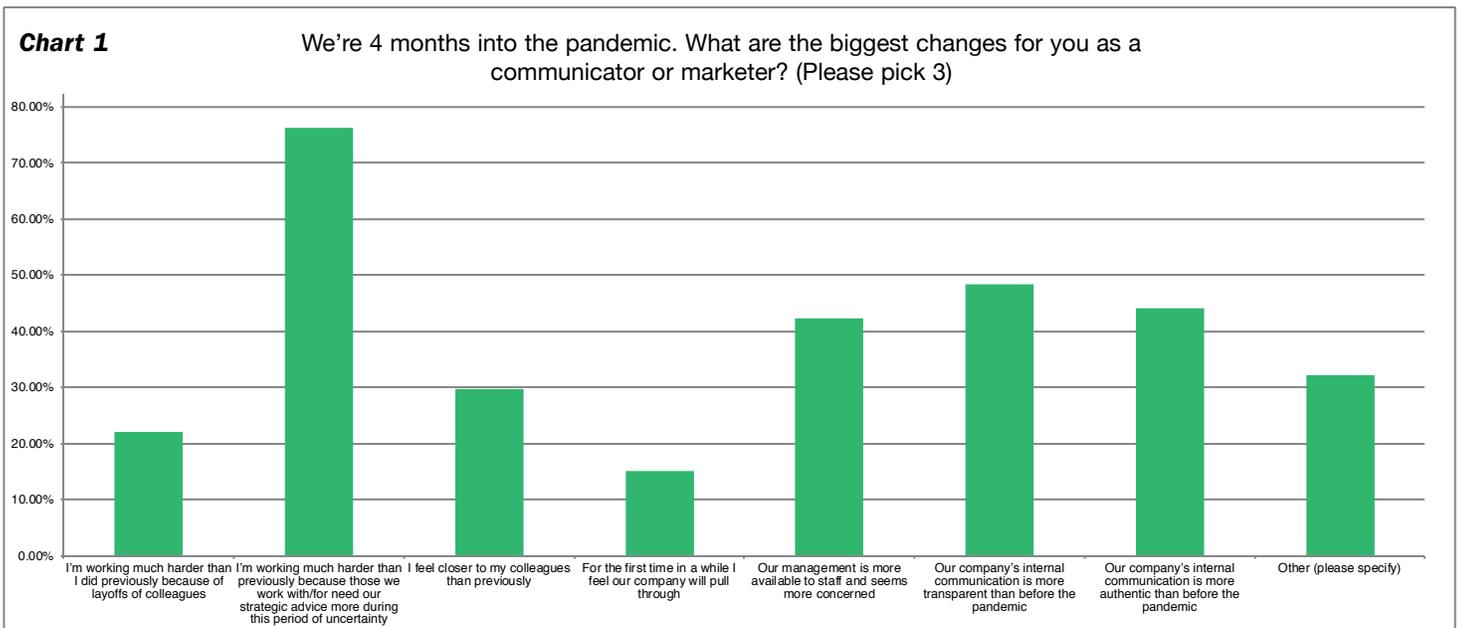
As loyal readers of PRNEWS know, we periodically gauge the industry's mood via short surveys. In our latest (below), we turned around the data within 10 days. Yet several important issues broke during that period, including resumption of **Major League Baseball** and the game's virus issues, as well as **Google's** July 27 announcement that its 200,000 full-time and contract staff have the option to work from home through June 30, 2021. In addition, coronavirus cases spiked in several southern and western US states.

It is difficult to say whether or how these might have influenced the 120 PR pros who took part in our latest survey. Still, a survey is a snapshot in time. And when this survey was live (July 13-24), these issues were not in play.

WORKING 'MUCH HARDER,' BUT UPBEAT

One of the big takeaways from our new survey is that in the time since our June survey, PR's verve has dimmed only

Continued on page 2



Source: PRNEWS, August 2020 (120 respondents)



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UPCOMING EVENTS AND DEADLINES*

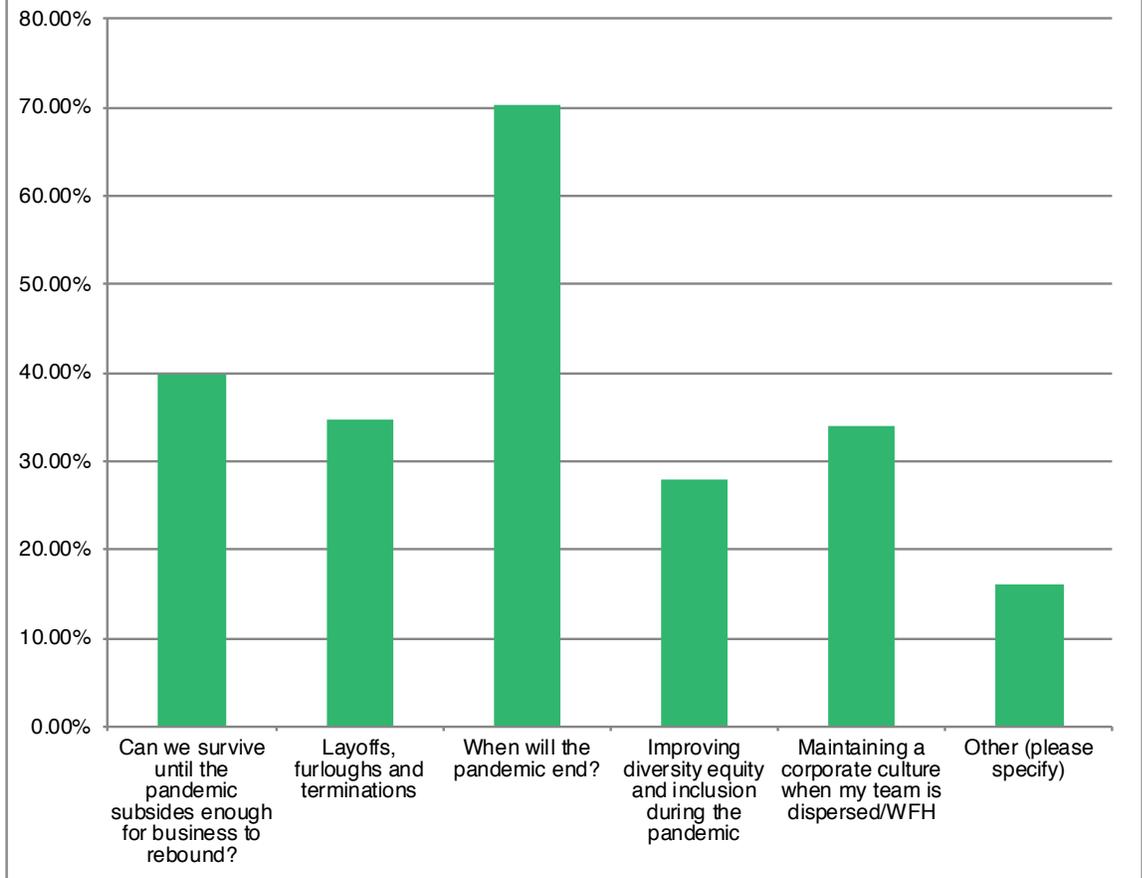
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 AUGUST 25, 1-2PM ET

CALL FOR ENTRIES DEADLINE: TOP WOMEN IN PR
 AUGUST 27

Continued from page 1

Chart 2 What are your biggest professional concerns? (Please pick 2)



slightly. In June, we found PR moderately optimistic about the future, despite there being no end in sight for the pandemic. Our latest survey finds the same attitude, though there's a twist, which we address below.

The new survey finds PR pros working "much harder" during the pandemic (chart 1), yet the reasons for this are positive. 72 percent said the extra work results from businesses needing additional help during the pandemic. By contrast, just 22 percent said they're working harder to fill in for laid-off and/or furloughed colleagues.

"Working harder because" those we represent "need our help more—you bet," says Meredith L. Eaton, N. America director at the firm **Red Lorry Yellow Lorry**.

Adds Marisa Long, EVP, **Inspire PR Group**, "Our industry is important in helping [companies] navigate unprecedented challenges."

Like Eaton and Long, Crystal Cooper Mathis, who heads marketing at wealth firm **SignatureFD** in Atlanta, agrees communicators are working harder. Communicators, she says, "have had to figure out new ways to increase communication with clients."

Pre-pandemic, SignatureFD often met clients

in person. These meetings were "crucial" to its business, she says.

Not only are PR pros working harder, research shows they also are logging more hours. For some communicators, office hours lose their meaning when they're working at home. Working from home "has its benefits," Eaton notes, "like being able to more easily take calls across varying time zones."

On the other hand, there's a danger of being always available and getting burnt out. "Striking a balance with work and life while working remotely is crucial to being on top of your game and providing the best advice...during this demanding time," Eaton says.

POST-PANDEMIC REBOUND

The subject of PR's upbeat attitude is addressed in chart 5. An overwhelming majority (85 percent) are confident that PR will return to its former size and that the pandemic has heightened strategic communication's status.

When we asked a similar question to a larger group of communicators (200 respondents) in our June survey, we received essentially the same positive response: 88 percent said PR would bounce

Continued on page 13

Hearst, 'Ellen Show' Crises Highlight Need to Align Brand with Reality



In recent weeks, as many consumer brands have revealed their inability to manage communication in troubled and uncertain times, it is surprising when media companies, whose business is to be on top of things, get caught flatfooted responding to breaking news or trending themes.

Even more telling is the damage media brands suffer when reports appear that show a stark contrast between a brand's image and the conditions under which its products are produced.

ELLEN AND 'BE KIND'

The Ellen DeGeneres Show came under fire for a tone-deaf tweet about the George Floyd protests and a toxic company culture. Reports have up to 10 current or former staffers alleging they were subject to bullying and racism.

Similar charges could be, and have been, made against any number of celebrities, though they make headlines sporadically. Perhaps DeGeneres's *Be Kind* positioning made these allegations a more engaging story.

Still, stories around the DeGeneres show and its host's less-than-authentic public persona—allegedly she's not as nice as she seems on screen—percolated

A March 2020 tweet by Kevin T. Porter seeking the “most insane stories you've heard about Ellen being mean” (which promised to reward stories with a donation to the **LA Food Bank**) generated nearly 18,000 retweets and comments.

PERSONNEL ISSUES, TOO

In April, there were loud rumblings from staff about poor communication around pay and conditions during the pandemic. Some claimed they were fired for taking medical or bereavement days. Others charged insensitivity and racial bias.

And we know there will be more to come given tweets and comments like: “We want your help! If you have more information or a tip regarding workplace culture on the Ellen show or in Hollywood, contact krystie.yandoli@buzzfeed.com, or reach us securely at tips.buzzfeed.com”

But the stark contrast between Ellen's manufactured image of being kind and charitable and charges of racism and

intimidation at her show's company made **BuzzFeed's** July 16 exposé particularly explosive, and potentially profit damaging.

As we've seen with other media companies, advertisers are quick to jump ship if they think a celebrity's image doesn't comport with the advertiser's public positioning.

At our press time, July 30, several things happened: Ellen sent an apology letter to staff and **Warner Bros.** confirmed its internal investigation and said some allegations were true. As a result, “several staffing changes” are imminent, as are “appropriate measures” to ensure working conditions improve. BuzzFeed also published another article detailing a host of sexual shenanigans involving some of the show's executive producers. Several of them denied the allegations.

The **Hollywood Reporter** and the **New York Times** obtained Ellen's apology to staff the day she sent it.

According to the Times, Ellen wrote in part, “On day one of our show, I told everyone in our first meeting that The Ellen DeGeneres Show would be a place of happiness—no one would ever raise their voice, and everyone would be treated with respect. Obviously, something changed, and I am disappointed to learn that this has not been the case. And for that, I am sorry. As we've grown exponentially, I've not been able to stay on top of everything and relied on others to do their jobs as they knew I'd want them done. Clearly some didn't. That will now change and I'm committed to ensuring this does not happen again.”

TOXIC CULTURE AT HEARST

A far older media conglomerate, **Hearst Communications**, also made headlines recently for its toxic culture. Late last month, Hearst Magazines president Troy Young was ousted after the New York Times laid out charges of sexually offensive behavior and a toxic culture.

MEA CULPA

(In the interest of transparency, I know way more about

Continued on page 4



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Hearst culture than the average person. Not only was my first real job out of college at Hearst's **Boston Herald American**, my grandfather was general manager at Hearst, back in the 1930s. In a not-unrelated consequence, my mother, two great aunts and an uncle were editors at Hearst magazines or newspapers.)

From the stories my mother—a 40-year Hearst employee—told me, the fact that a sexist toxic culture pervades the Hearst organization to this day comes as little surprise. As a beautiful, witty, upcoming young editor, my mother was

frequently brought along to dinners with advertisers and subject to unwanted advances in order to win the deal.

As it turns out, today the problems are so bad that Hearst employees are voting to unionize as I write. Even management expects that the union vote won't go its way.

There are at least two lessons in these episodes. The first involves brand damage. When your brand stands for one thing—titles like **Cosmo**, **Marie Clare** and **Esquire** are full of stories of empowerment; The Ellen DeGeneres Show is all about *Be Kind*—but your corporate culture stands for some-

The Ellen DeGeneres Show

Criteria	Grade	Comments	Advice
Extent of coverage	D	The good news about having a toxic culture scandal in the midst of a pandemic and an election year is that the mainstream press is too distracted to keep the story in the news for very long. Social media is another story. "Ellen is mean" posts are everywhere.	In times of heightened awareness of racial bias, if you don't want to be called out for hypocrisy, do A LOT of self-examination, and make sure your image and culture are aligned. If they aren't, fix them. Fast.
Effectiveness of spokespeople	C	The fact that Ellen herself has stayed out of the media is an excellent move, given her ability to generate positive and negative responses on social media. Another good step was the three executive producers' statement. It expressed remorse well and took blame, shielding DeGeneres. In addition, Warner Media's independent investigation should help shorten the length of this crisis.	The challenge in dealing with a controversial celebrity in a crisis is keeping him or her quiet, so as not to add fuel to the fire. The more the people in charge take responsibility and positive corrective action, the sooner the crisis goes away. Investigations that are seen as truly independent help.
Communication of key messages	C	While the executive producers' statement sounded like it was written in a war room with lawyers overseeing it, action to further the investigation bolstered the veracity of their words.	Your key messages are worthless and will go nowhere if you don't take prompt action that proves you are going to do what you say in your statements. An independent investigation should be top of your list and underway within days.
Management of negative messages	F	The problem is that the most recent story is just one of hundreds of rumors that have circulated for years. As a result, the negative messages already are imprinted on the public's collective brain. Management should have paid more attention a lot sooner. Given the number of journalists asking the public for tips, the negative stories are going to keep on coming.	At the first whisper of meanness or toxicity in your organization, communicators should immediately begin monitoring job forums like Glassdoor and other places where employees vent. If the numbers of complaints increase, act ASAP. Also assume that if there are one or two social conversations, it is likely that there are a lot more and plenty of journalists will be looking for them.
Impact on customers	C-	For a show like Ellen's, with lots of loyal fans and advertisers, chances are good that the impact may be slight—at least until charges or lawsuits are filed. If egregious behavior becomes the story of the day, watch for advertisers to take their budgets elsewhere.	No advertiser wants to be associated with a toxic media show, unless it continues to help them sell product, and even then, if the toxicity is too bad, they will run (see Barr, Roseanne and ABC). Survey your stakeholders and biggest sources of revenue early and often to find out how they are feeling.
Impact on employees	F	Media already is reporting conflict between Team Ellen folks and the current and former staff. For those who have experienced the toxicity, it is clearly a difficult place to work, but in a pandemic that has shut large swaths of the entertainment business, they don't have much choice. It will be very difficult to bring the two sides back together. Issued at press time, Ellen's letter started that process.	In a situation involving employee complaints, there will be differing opinions, which can quickly lead to a divided and divisive employee culture. Make sure all employees can see a common goal and are working in the same direction. Internal communication will be critical in an attempt to pursue a path forward.
Overall score	D+	It could have been worse and, as we said, it's probably not over. Ellen has a ton of baggage and many, many people with stories still to emerge. Her tweeting missteps around George Floyd's death didn't endear her to anyone, so the less the spotlight is on her, and the more the focus is on the independence of the investigation that Warner is conducting, the better.	In our celebrity-driven culture, having a celebrity as your spokesperson may be the worst thing you can do. Independent, data-driven investigations are far more effective at lowering the temperature and solving the crisis.

thing very different, it causes stakeholders to lose trust in who you are.

The second astonishing element is that this is happening three years after the first #MeToo hashtag went viral, in the wake of a social justice awakening and after many celebrities and media types were outed for bad behavior.

Call me a terminal optimist, but wouldn't you think that after the wave of exposés, any chief communications officer or in-house counsel would have conducted a thorough internal review of policies and culture in the organization and

ferreted out and dealt with potential issues?

Granted, Hearst is privately held and, therefore, not accountable to investors examining ESG scores before investing their money. Still, in light of the damage that a toxic culture can do to employees and reputation and the time it takes to recover, you'd think executives would be quicker to act. Especially at this moment. ■

CONTACT: kdpaine@painepublishing.com

Hearst Magazines

Criteria	Grade	Comments	Advice
Extent of coverage	F	The fact that Troy Young went from being promoted to head of the magazine division two years ago to stepping down in disgrace last month is the sort of story the media loves. Accordingly, it made headlines in everything from Women's Wear Daily to Jezebel, never mind NPR and the usual sources.	Even in an election year when pandemic news is taking up all the oxygen, a media crisis can still generate headlines. Hoping that a story will continue to fly under the radar makes for poor strategy.
Effectiveness of spokespeople	F	Quotes from Young denying the allegations as well as those from Hearst executives relative to Young's departure could have been written by an AI-powered bot. Young made the classic denials and Hearst executives sounded exactly like every other wishy-washy statement a guilty corporation ever uttered.	At this point, after years of #MeToo combined with the Black Lives Matter protests, mealy-mouthed statements about starting a process and having a discussion have no credibility. Given these times, you should plan for this eventuality, be prepared to act, launch an independent investigation and don't make any statement that doesn't include a plan to fix the problem(s).
Communication of key messages	D	The media consistently cited the irony that content in the magazines of which Young was in charge as being all about women's empowerment and other positive attributes. So, at least the product-positioning was accurate.	The actual message that Hearst leadership should have conveyed was support for Young's victims. In a self-inflicted crisis, supporting victims, communicating corrective actions and issuing an abject apology often are the only responses that work.
Management of negative messages	F	The fact that the sexism and bullying were reported BEFORE Young was promoted was particularly damning. Thus, victims' voices were heard much more frequently than messages Hearst might have tried to communicate.	The degree to which you can keep negative messages out of the media is inversely proportional to the length of time the bad behavior has been occurring. The longer you try to hide a crisis, posts will linger on social media for journalists to discover.
Impact on employees	A/F – depending on your perspective	The impact may already have happened as employees voted on joining a union at our press time—and the vote is expected to send a clear message that management culture needs to change. Young's departure surprised and delighted employees. It was very telling that they didn't expect it to happen.	Before COVID-19, when unemployment was at a record low, organizations were going to great lengths to attract and retain top talent. Those times are gone for now, but trained, trusted employees are necessary to keep businesses going and you still need to keep them engaged and on the same page with your priorities.
Overall score	F	Hearst's handling should be taught in university PR classes as an example of how NOT to handle a crisis.	About the worst things you can do in a crisis are to fail to act, blame the victims and issue mealy-mouthed apologies.

Trendjacking in PR: Timing, Social Listening Crucial to Getting it Right



The practice of trendjacking, or pushing out content based on a concept making the rounds in the press or on social media, is not new. Brands have been inserting themselves in trending conversations, for better or worse, since **Twitter** hashtags launched in 2007.

In 2020, a typical instance of trendjacking goes like this: A PR professional or marketer sees a hashtag in the Trending tab of Twitter’s Explore page. He or she weighs whether the key word or phrase applies to their brand. If so, they quickly create a piece of content to throw into the mix. If the content is executed in a nuanced way that adds a new dimension to the trend, as opposed to simply mimicking it, it likely has potential as earned media.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

As with many elements of PR and social media communications, timing is key. If the PR professional is jumping on a trend in an email pitch, the ideal moment is after a story breaks, but before journalists have begun running second-day coverage.

Some years ago, marketing strategist and author David Meerman Scott created a graphic illustrating the ideal time for brand communicators to pounce on an emerging trend.



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Justin Buchbinder
Social Media Director
FINN Partners

How many hours does a PR pro have to jump in? Anything longer than one day, and you’re probably sunk, says Justin Buchbinder, social media director at **FINN Partners**. “A trend is likely only strong and worth being trendjacked within the first 24 hours. And the sooner, the better.”

To help PR pros move quickly, Buchbinder advises having an approval structure to fast-track posting of timely content.

“Having someone monitoring trends who can quickly send a notification up the chain of com-

mand” will help ensure that you are trendjacking, instead of “jumping on a hashtag that’s already come and gone,” he says.

MISSING THE MOMENT

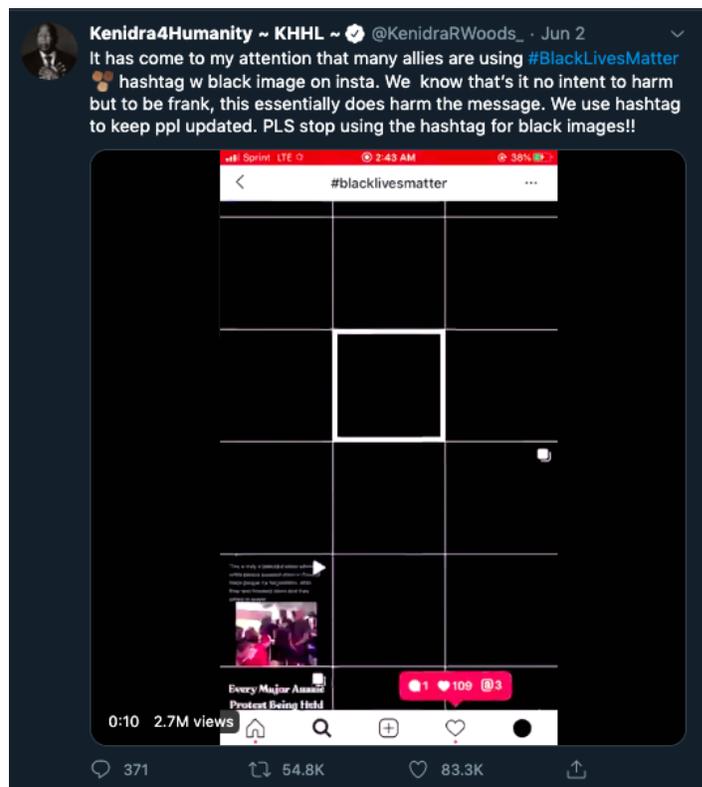
More than a decade after the advent of hashtags, trendjacking may be evolving into a longer-term play. In the wake of social unrest, brands have begun chiming in on issues unfolding over a course of weeks or months rather than days.

The reignition of the Black Lives Matter movement and subsequent calls for police reform have occasioned a gradual rollout of purpose-driven messaging from brands.

For several weeks in late May and early June, following now-former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin’s killing of George Floyd, social media messages expressing solidarity poured in from corporations and nonprofits.

White text against a black background served as the visual vernacular for brands calling for an end to racial inequality and police brutality. Some of these messages, however, fell flat. On June 2, activists launched Blackout Tuesday, calling for a pause during the workday to mourn Floyd and countless other murdered Black Americans and discuss policy solutions.

Stemming from the music industry’s #TheShowMustBePaused effort, the activity quickly spread on social media. Organizations, brands and individuals posted black squares



in lieu of their usual content, often using the #BlackLivesMatter or #BLM hashtag.

Unfortunately for organizers of Black Lives Matter protests, the effort turned out poorly. The blank posts buried crucial logistical messages about marches, rallies and community outreach, in effect jamming the very signal that needed amplification. As a result, the action was widely seen as a failure. Brands that took part in it absorbed negative press coverage and lost audience goodwill.

SOCIAL LISTENING AND ITERATION



Amandine Robin
SVP
Pernod Ricard
USA

Another recent brand-attracting trend in the social justice vein is the #StopHateForProfit movement. The **NAACP-** and the **Anti-Defamation League-**led initiative calls for advertisers to boycott **Facebook** until the company addresses hate speech and misinformation on its platform.

Amandine Robin, SVP of communications and corporate social responsibility at **Pernod Ricard USA**, says she leaned into social media listening as her brand decided how to approach #StopHateForProfit. The action was initially set to expire August 1.

Instead of simply posting around the hashtag, Pernod Ricard iterated on the trend, launching a social-listening app that allows users to report hate speech.

“To avoid the pitfall of ‘paying lip service,’ brands have to take real, demonstrable action to confront the issues at hand,” Robin argues.

This heartfelt approach could well be the next evolution of trendjacking, which initially came to prominence in the form of humorous takes. [For reference, see #TheDress or Oreo’s post-Superdome blackout tweet in 2013.]



Margaret Wong
Digital Media
Specialist
U.C. Davis School
of Veterinary
Medicine

Pernod Ricard’s app will use crowdsourcing to “surface as much...hate speech on social media as possible, making it easier for social media companies to learn what is happening on their platforms, and take appropriate action,” says Robin. “We want to facilitate that process, leveraging our influence to create an internet that is safe for all.”

While trendjacking efforts tend to target a broad swath of internet users, another route is to keep the focus narrow and vertical-specific. Margaret Wong, digital media specialist at **U.C. Davis School of Veterinary Medicine**, says she keeps a count of recurrent trends relevant to veterinary science.

“We keep a list of hashtags in mind...that is topical to our industry and make sure we include them to maximize our reach,” when crafting tweets or content, she says. Like Robin, Wong leverages social listening and industry analysis to generate content ideas. She adds, “Even if you think you’re



well-versed in the trends of your industry, it’s worth keeping an eye on other people in the industry to make sure you’re not falling behind.”

The School of Veterinary Medicine also keeps a calendar of agnostic holidays, which are perhaps celebrated more online than in person in a pandemic-stricken nation. Wong takes tailors these hashtags to her audience, for instance using the #FourthOfJuly hashtag “to talk about pet health and safety during firework shows, since more dogs go missing during the holiday than at any other time of year.”

The bottom line: Whether your brand is looking to jump on a trend for fun or to make a lasting social impact, be sure to use social media listening, be mindful of timing and, as always, know your audience. ■

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Trendjacking Best Practices

- ✓ Check Twitter Trends regularly for relevant hashtags.
- ✓ Move quickly once you determine what trend to jump on.
- ✓ Have an approval process in place to fast-track trendjacking efforts.
- ✓ Do research to make sure you fully understand a trend before commenting on it.
- ✓ Consider whether your trendjacking plan has potential for lasting social impact.

Source: PRNEWS

Brands Urged to Make Internal Changes That Support and Empower DE&I to Succeed

[Editor's Note: We spoke with Crystal Cooper Mathis, director of marketing and communications, **SignatureFD**, and Toni Harrison, CEO of **Etched Communication**, about launching DE&I communication in the midst of the reignition of the Black Lives Matter movement. Answers were lightly edited.]



Crystal Cooper Mathis
Director of Marketing and Communications
SignatureFD

PRNEWS: What is the first thing a company needs to do to start its journey to a more diverse and inclusive organization?

Crystal Cooper Mathis: Look inward. There are a lot of organizations making announcements about million-dollar donations to diversity organizations, but when you look at their teams or leadership tables, they are predominately white.

The saying *be the change you want to see* is tried and true for a reason...How are you broadening your hiring pool to reach qualified candidates of all races and ethnicities? How are you removing unconscious bias from interview processes? Are you paying your diverse staff adequately based on its skills? How are you creating an environment that welcomes diversity? Are you offering proper diversity training to the whole team? What about inclusion? Are you nurturing and celebrating the advantage that diverse perspectives offer?

Toni Harrison: Successful diversity and inclusion initiatives involve more than adding hires from disparate cultural backgrounds. The organization's internal environment has to be structured to support and empower diverse perspectives at every level.



Toni Harrison
CEO
Etched Communication

Cultivating an environment where employees are comfortable sharing openly is far from straightforward. Seek outside support to manage a neutral process for a greater chance of internal buy-in and external roll-out.

PRNEWS: How does an organization determine where, and how, to focus its effort?

Harrison: Given the severe lack of diversity throughout PR, one likely commonality in most agencies and PR business units is that employees who are in the minority haven't felt empowered to speak up about their experiences with racial tension or cultural divisiveness.

Leadership must make a priority of obtaining unfiltered insight into the sentiments and experiences of employees who are underrepresented.

Evaluating nuances of internal culture is effective for determining where to focus initial diversity and inclusion effort.

Cooper Mathis: Take a look at the pool from which you pull

candidates...Figure out how you can tap into a more diverse pool, whether through an organization, an internship program, executive firms or just scouring **LinkedIn**.

Be sure to hire candidates based on qualifications...Quotas perpetuate a notion that Black and Brown candidates should be hired for something other than their qualifications. They engender prejudice among current team members... Hire the best candidate.

Create an environment that is ripe for accepting all backgrounds. Welcome ideas from diverse backgrounds...Consider everything on the table for re-consideration.

Measure your efforts continually...Just as companies chase bottom line increases, so must they chase D&I. D&I is not something to be considered only when it's convenient. It should be seen as a business imperative.

PRNEWS: How do you get buy-in from your executive team on DE&I programs, both internally and externally?

Cooper Mathis: This is easier now. Even the most conservative companies are touting their allyship for Black Lives Matter... Organizations must stop asking Black and Brown people to prove their disadvantages...Do the work. The data is there... Diverse organizations that cater to diverse audiences and hire diverse candidates are smart businesses. The Black dollar is powerful and strong.

PRNEWS: How do you help leaders get their DE&I messaging right, while also being a key part of the audience who needed to hear from the same leaders?

Cooper Mathis: I'm very lucky to be in a position where I work with the powers that be, so I have a seat at the table. That is not to say conversations aren't hard. But as the head of marketing, it is my job to be an advocate and protector of the brand and its values.

As a Black woman, I know what should be said. I marry these personas to do my job...The world is demanding the right moves, so it's about making sure you have someone on the team who can tell you what about those moves. It is my duty to use the influence I have to make the changes the world needs to see...I have no issue with saying, 'Hey, as the only Black person in this discussion, I think we should do X.'

Harrison: Collaboration and unity start with communication. In today's movement, silence speaks volumes...The difference between making strides and mitigating a boycott often starts with the PR representation at the table. Brands and companies are being held to a higher standard, and even the most powerful messages will backfire without actionable follow-up.

Acknowledging the need to be more culturally conscious with internal initiatives and external messaging while also

dedicating the necessary resources to advance efforts are necessary first steps on the path to meaningful change.

PRNEWS: How do you balance the need to 'get it right' while maintaining authenticity?

Harrison: Most boardrooms and established agencies don't have many faces like mine in executive leadership. Feeling empowered to speak up and share ideas is no easy feat. It's also never been more necessary.

So many Black Lives Matter statements meant for good were offensive or tone-deaf simply because there weren't Black perspectives at the table. In many instances, prominent companies had an all-white team issue a Black Lives Matter statement.

Authenticity is the fine line between gaining market share and mitigating protests, and it often rests with the cultural voice and perspective that's at the table. Hiring more Black and Brown faces to place in existing systems won't do enough to advance the monolithic PR industry.

PRNEWS: If a company didn't focus on DE&I, but now sees its importance, how can it communicate its new focus?

Cooper Mathis: To communicate authentically, it must be [of] authentic importance to the organization. Otherwise, once the spotlight is off, things will be business as usual.

Start building a team...that is passionate about DE&I. Hold diversity and unconscious bias training...Create values that are rooted in an inclusive organization. Hold every team member accountable to rooting their actions in those values.

PRNEWS: How do you acknowledge DEI issues without sounding as though you are jumping on a bandwagon?

Harrison: There's a fine line between embracing the movement

and exploiting it. The PR industry exists, in part, to sway news conversations and public sentiment. Our job involves influencing what audiences read, hear and see in the news so it can influence how they feel about an issue...and the behavior or action they will take as a result.

While this isn't a time for a company to celebrate or boast about its efforts, acknowledging the issues, committing to being part of the change and sharing action plans and progress updates are tablestakes.

Cooper Mathis: Donating to an organization is good. But, if that's ALL you do, you're riding a wave to avoid bad press.

And, avoid *we stand with you* statements without any notes of what you're doing to change. At this point, if all you have to say is we stand with you, then better to say nothing until you're ready to make changes.

PRNEWS: What type of data do you suggest using to make a case for the impact of communications on DE&I?

Cooper Mathis: Money talks...Targeting the Black and Brown dollar is smart. And, having team members who can speak authentically to that audience is smarter. According to a study by **Nielsen**, Black consumers spend more than \$1 trillion a year, and they are 42 percent more likely than the rest of the country to respond to ads on mobile. Do. The. Math. ■

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A Fond Farewell

This issue marks the final PRNEWS that our long-time graphic designer Yelena Shamis produced. We thank her for years of outstanding service and wish her well in what comes next. We also say goodbye to publisher Tom Larranaga and Mark Renfree, our event content manager, and wish them the best. *The Editors*

MARKETING

Del Monte's Pandemic Marketing: Focus on Audiences and Monitor Changing State Guidelines

[Editor's Note: Elana Gold, CMO of **Del Monte Fresh Produce**, is one of a growing number of senior executives hired during the pandemic. Her hiring in late March and a bolstering campaign she's overseeing, *Can Do Done Daily* (CDDD), are emblematic of her view that communication, passion and hard work can overcome the direst of circumstances. As part of our pandemic interview series, we asked Gold about marketing at the 130+ year-old vertically integrated company during the coronavirus. We also asked about how she leads and brainstorms with a remote staff. Prior to Del Monte, Gold

held positions at **PepsiCo**, **Sabra Foods**, **Yum Brands**, **Novartis** and others. Her lightly edited responses follow.]

PRNEWS: Tell us about the state of Del Monte Fresh Produce regarding the pandemic. What are some of the marketing communication challenges?

Elana Gold: The challenges moving forward include changing the way we market in these unprecedented times, and ensuring we're keeping consumers top-of-mind during it all.

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I can mostly credit our product development team for that. It is constantly conducting market research to understand what consumers want and making sure we're serving them as best as we can.

PRNEWS: Do you have an example?



Elana Gold
CMO
Del Monte Fresh
Produce

Gold: Yes. Last year we learned millennial consumers were interested in incorporating more fresh vegetables into their diets at lunch, but cited cost and preparation as obstacles. So, we launched Better Break, a heat-and-eat vegetable bowl packed with fresh vegetables and protein that's ready in three minutes. It's been a hit. Our product development lab is constantly cooking up ideas along the same vein.

PRNEWS: What about operations challenges?

Gold: One thing that has been particularly difficult for the company is adjusting to continually shifting state guidelines. They are particularly difficult for us given how many communities nationwide we serve. However, constant internal communication with my team and staff at all levels has allowed me to stay informed and abreast of changes.

PRNEWS: What other adjustments have you made?

Gold: We know that consumers are rethinking the way they shop. Our team always has the shopping habits of our consumers top-of-mind, but especially now, which was part of the reason we decided to debut our e-commerce website. We want to ensure consumers that our fresh products are still easily accessible, even in the current situation.

PRNEWS: What takeaways have you gained in the last four months?

Gold: Anything can be done through good teamwork and strong communication. And passion, commitment and hard work allow any team to get through the toughest of times.

PRNEWS: That's upbeat. Speaking of upbeat, how did Del Monte Fresh Produce come up with the CDDD campaign?

Gold: We came up with the idea when we saw how hard our staff was working throughout the pandemic.

PRNEWS: Is this an attempt to associate faces with the iconic red logo?

Gold: Yes, we wanted to introduce some of the faces behind the brand, especially those working at operational levels, who often are doing most of the work on the front lines, from warehouse operations to merchandising—in some instances, even helping stock shelves at supermarkets.



Can Do Done Daily: An example of the employee-filled bolstering effort Del Monte introduced in July. Source: Del Monte

People don't realize just how much is involved with ensuring continued access to fresh fruits and vegetables, so this was something very important for us to highlight...It was important to showcase our staff's passion and commitment because it's something we're very proud of. We have so many hard-working staff who deserve to be recognized by having their stories shared.

PRNEWS: You started with Del Monte late in March. Owing to COVID-19, we're

assuming you've not spent much in-person time with your team. How have you learned enough to be able to mount a campaign virtually?

Gold: My onboarding process has relied mostly on the team's ability to continue to provide me with materials to read and peers to learn from. Video calls in particular have been key.

PRNEWS: How do you create a culture remotely? How about brainstorming?

Gold: Brainstorming and creating a team culture have been challenging, but I joined a team that already worked very well together, so I was very lucky. The team has been together for a long time and its members understand each other on a fundamental level.

One thing that has helped is that we try to make working from home fun. We have celebrated engagements, accomplishments and many birthdays via our video calls. Virtual happy hours have been a good way to keep the team engaged and also have helped brainstorming and team morale.

PRNEWS: What are some of the challenges for Del Monte Fresh Produce as social justice comes to the fore?

Gold: As a company, adapting and evolving with the ever-changing times will always be a challenge, although in this case, it's a challenge we're happy to meet. There is no room in our company for hatred, prejudice and bigotry. We foster a safe and respectful working environment for all of our team members in every location, regardless of race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation. We have a very diverse set of team members and we embrace our differences. ■

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Pandemic Leads Communicators to Adjust Messages and Delivery Modes

While the pandemic battle continues, communication remains one of the most essential functions at businesses around the world. Whether it's dealing with customer messaging or relaying information to employees, communication matters, perhaps more during the pandemic. We found communicators at brands, nonprofits and agencies making subtle and significant changes to messaging during this critical moment.



Angelica Kelly
Senior
Communications
Manager
Headspace

CONNECTING WITH AUDIENCES

For many companies, the pandemic turned traditional messaging on its head. For others, it provided an opportunity to lean more heavily into serving audience members, distributing a message of care and help.

At **Headspace**, a meditation app with more than 65 million users in 190 countries, the mental challenges of COVID-19 opened a door for communicators to support audience members. Angelica Kelly, senior communications manager, says whether the company communicates internally or to customers, it wants people to be “kind to their minds.”

“Externally, we want to be sensitive to the fact that everyone has different needs at the moment and is coping in different ways. We...want to step in where we can be helpful,” she says.

Headspace launched free programs to help bring relief to those suffering during the pandemic. It's offering a free year to those unemployed or furloughed in the U.S. and U.K., free access to healthcare workers in the U.S., U.K. and France, as well as teachers in the U.S., U.K., Canada and Australia.

Companies can find free Headspace for Work tools and resources to help employees. For everyone else, there's "Weather the Storm," a collection of meditation and mindfulness crisis content.

In addition to raising awareness about its free programming, Headspace took a harder stance on creating messaging around a commitment to science.

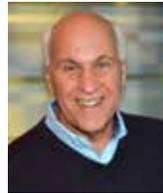
“In times of uncertainty, it's important to have a foundation based on evidence,” Kelly says. Headspace messages have included content from an in-house science team. “This has been an incredibly important part of building trust with our audiences,” she adds.

USING DIGITAL TO SERVE MEMBERS

Internal communication does not always mean distributing information to employees—although that's been one of the main priorities for communicators during COVID-19. While PR pros at **The Internet & Television Association** (NCTA) have worked to ensure leadership is transparent about return-to-office plans with its 90 employees at the trade association's

Washington, D.C., headquarters, near Capitol Hill, they also have prioritized messaging for another internal audience: the association's members.

“We've redoubled our effort to communicate with member companies...about the scenario playing out at the federal level,” says Rob Stoddard, SVP, industry & association affairs.



Rob Stoddard
SVP
Industry &
Association
Affairs
NCTA

“This includes substantial information about how...coronavirus relief packages are affecting our business, what we as an industry can, and should do, to address calls for equality and social justice reform, and how companies can step up in all these areas to serve the national interest.”

One effort has allowed NCTA to utilize more digital channels for distribution of information. The tool is an interactive U.S. map (available at ncta.com).

Accessible to member companies and the general public, it offers data by state about the resilience of broadband networks. Stoddard says data is updated regularly.

“People tell us they love tracking the volume of traffic our cable infrastructure has carried during the pandemic,” Stoddard says. “They've also enjoyed reviewing the effectiveness of the network in their state, in supporting the huge work-at-home surge in demand, which has increased more than 35 percent at times.”

Sometimes, all it takes is a crisis to accelerate innovation, including digital and advocacy efforts. Fortunately, the experience acquired during the pandemic will pay off well into the future for NCTA and its members.

THE RISE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS



Aidan M. Ryan
Strategic
Communications
Advisor
Goldberg Segalla
LLP

Every company, no matter its size, is experiencing a barrage of questions and concerns from employees. Aidan M. Ryan, strategic communications advisor at **Goldberg Segalla LLP**, says much of the heavy lifting is falling to internal communicators.

“We're seeing a necessary pivot toward internal communications, and that is a response to the challenges of maintaining productivity and morale, not only in a remote business environment, but in a social and political environment that has strained to a breaking point,” he says.

Ryan says he's worked with multiple companies on crafting messages around sudden closings and reopenings, layoffs and responses to the Black Lives Matter protests.



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“While it’s critical to communicate internally about operational concerns and workplace-safety issues, companies should focus on giving their people a sense of shared purpose, a signal that management is open to hearing questions and concerns, and a vision for the future,” he says.



Neil Ripley
Head of Corporate
Communications
Comscore

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

Often, the first thing cut when things get tight is communication and marketing. Instead, some brands are solidifying in-house teams to help shoulder the financial burden and retain staff.

When Neil Ripley, head of corporate communications, arrived at **Comscore** last summer, he began rebuilding the corporate communication function, shifting to put an emphasis on an internal team.

“There’s no getting around it: every dollar counts in this economy,” Ripley says. “The pandemic accelerated our transition, and we’re now exclusively in-house. Looking into next year, I’ll probably rely on trusted freelancers for strategy and content support rather than seek an AOR relationship.”



Michael Kaye
Global
Communications
& Public Relations
Manager
OkCupid

But for some brands, partnering with agencies provides a necessary cost-benefit.

For **OkCupid**, a brand with users in more than 110 countries, it needs to lean on these partners for help to expand in select overseas markets.

“As part of those efforts, we work with multiple integrated communication agencies across markets and have continued our partnerships with these firms,” says Michael Kaye, OkCupid’s global communications & PR manager.

And while traditional dating may have changed with the pandemic’s need for social distancing, there’s still no shortage of people looking for love. Kaye says the company is bucking the downsizing trend.

“We are actually continuing to grow at OkCupid, and are currently hiring for multiple roles, including several engineers, to better serve our global user base,” he says. ■

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MEASUREMENT

BY MARK WEINER, IPR MEASUREMENT COMMISSION, CHIEF INSIGHTS OFFICER, CISION

Proving the Most Accessible and Efficient Path to PR-ROI

Most PR practitioners conflate *generating a return on PR investment* with *proving PR value*. The two, however, hold very different meanings. ROI refers to a quantifiable financial return. Value is a subjective measure that changes from one organization to the next.

PR-ROI comes in three forms: connecting PR with sales (the sexy one); avoiding catastrophic cost (the big one); and efficiency (the most accessible). In this column we’ll focus on PR efficiency as a contributor to ROI. We’ll use a case study from software company **Adobe**.

OBJECTIVES

For years, Adobe’s executive team held that a higher volume of coverage across all media drove better business results than a lower volume of high-quality coverage in target media. Adobe communicators explored this perception through a data-informed, fact-based communication analysis. Objectives included:

- ▶ Assess Adobe’s relative performance against competition
- ▶ Measure key reputation attributes
- ▶ Provide Share of Voice on the quantity and quality of coverage vs the competition
- ▶ Uncover opportunities to reinforce Adobe’s advantage and mitigate competitor’s advantage

- ▶ Simplify monitoring and evaluation through consolidation, integration and research-based decision-making

STRATEGY

To achieve these objectives, Adobe implemented a media insights framework applying traditional and social media analysis methods. Data science methods supplemented the effort.

- ▶ Audience and media segmentation research
- ▶ Hybrid automated/human media analyses
- ▶ Attribution analysis

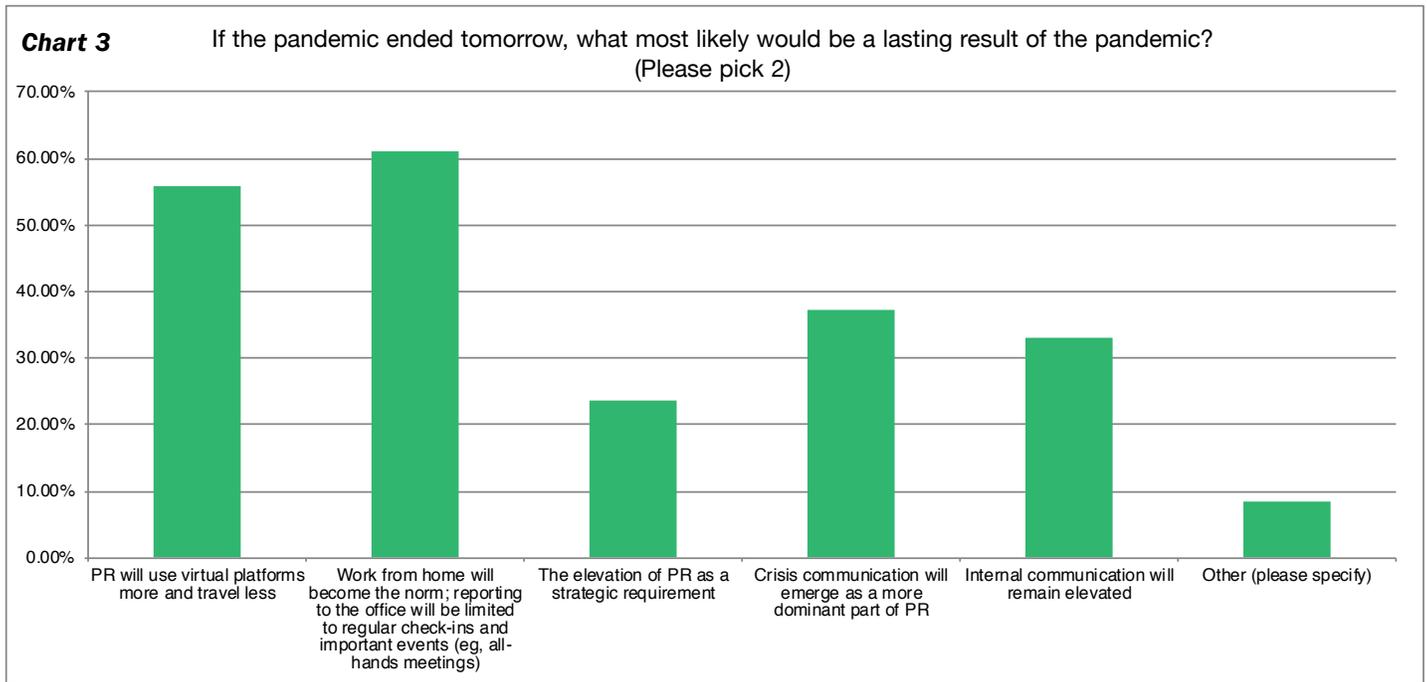
Research of Adobe’s Dr. Jennifer Bruce, a PRNEWS Measurement Hall of Fame honoree, confirmed that a core set of media outlets delivered the greatest ROI.

Rather than seeking to generate the highest volume of stories, the research revealed enhanced measures that combined outputs, outtakes and behavioral outcomes:

- ▶ Size of target C-suite audience reached vs. the competition (outputs)



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back to its pre-pandemic size and that the virus has highlighted the need for strategic communication, raising PR's prestige.

TWO ROADS TO 80+ PERCENT

While the collective total is similar (88 percent vs 85 percent), it is important to note the composition is reversed. In June, 51 percent said PR would return to its pre-pandemic size; in August, it's 28 percent. In June, 37 percent said the pandemic enhanced PR's prestige; in August, 57 percent thought so.

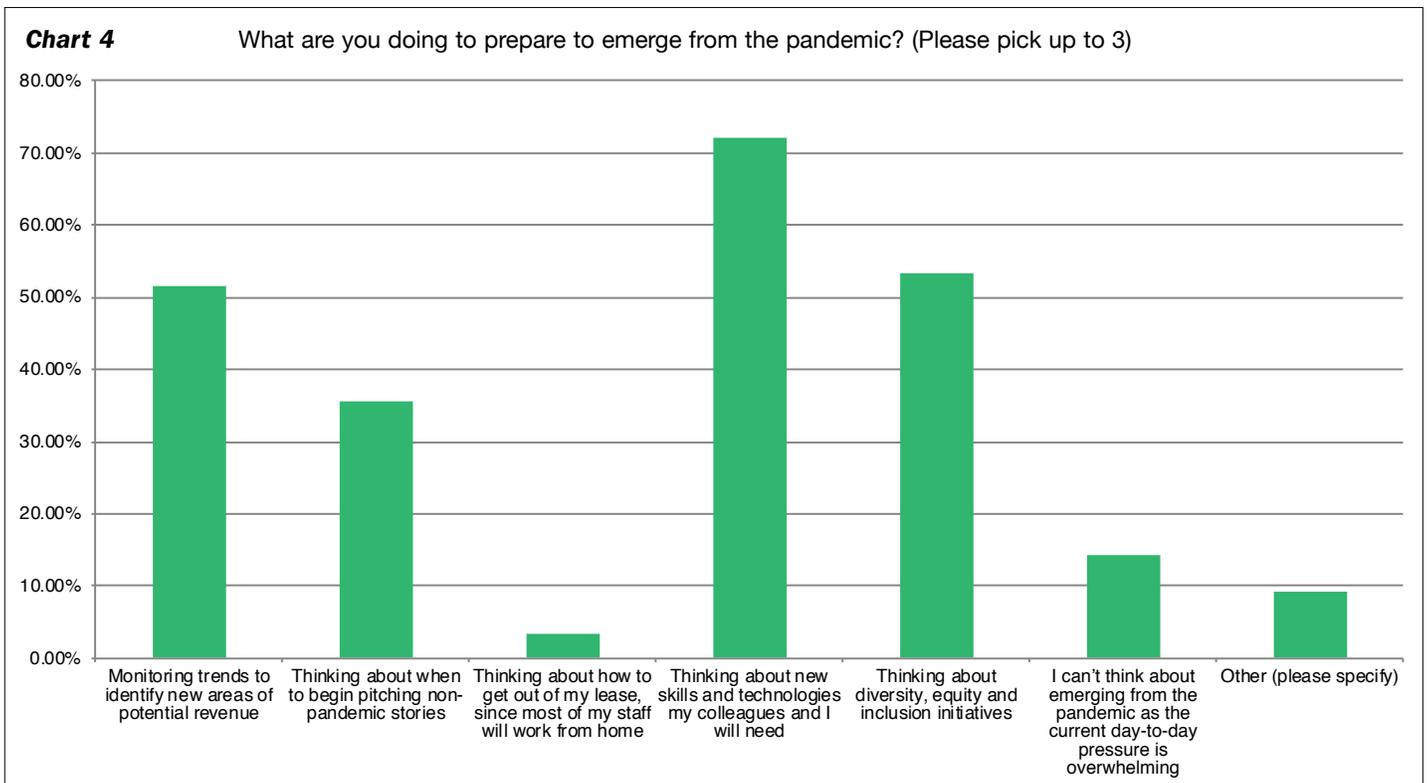
Commenting on PR's gaining prestige, Cooper Mathis says, "There was a sentiment that PR...was becoming a lost

art to more integrated strategies." However, "the combination of the pandemic with social unrest has created a significant need for internal and external communication." The world, she says, is "more attuned to what's going on because they're home and able to pay more attention to news. This focus comes with an increased need for smart PR counsel."

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION ENHANCED

Robert Hastings, CCO and chief of staff at aviation company **Bell**, says, "The pandemic has been a proving grounds for

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- ▶ Presence of Adobe's unique product attributes vs. the competition and generic attributes (outputs)
- ▶ Degree of target C-suite audience social engagement and amplification vs. the competition (outtakes)
- ▶ Number of target C-Suite visits from earned media to Adobe's website using advanced attribution analysis (behavioral outcomes)

The research revealed that 65 percent of the original target media list of 3,000 outlets generated only one story in the past year. A research-based variation of 550 media generated 76 percent of all quality coverage. With these findings, executives agreed to focus media outreach and measurement on media that delivered optimal results.

TACTICS

The Adobe communications team developed and executed plans to drive the desired results.

- ▶ Targeting analysis identified four C-level *purchase decision-maker* audiences: CIOs, CMOs, CDOs and CFOs
- ▶ Analysis of C-level media consumption reduced the proactive target list from 3,000 to 550 and then to 150
- ▶ Research identified the best proactive messaging opportunities as being: 1) importance to C-suite buyers and 2) unique to Adobe, thereby avoiding generic attributes that could help the competition
- ▶ Communication delivered customer-success stories to more credibly convey unique attributes, such as *peer-to-peer* endorsements among C-suite executives

To uncover efficiencies, Adobe consolidated monitoring and

analysis with a single source for international content aggregation, analysis, reporting, attribution and research-based consultation. The research and analysis team uncovered opportunities to drive better decision-making:

- ▶ Employed attribution analysis to identify media with the highest C-suite penetration based on job title, industry, company size and media-consumption patterns
- ▶ Developed keyword taxonomies representing each topic to ensure a balanced approach for benchmarking
- ▶ Identified relevant and specific product dictionaries, for broad topics like innovation and leadership
- ▶ Measured proactive and organic coverage for Adobe and the competition and what triggered the coverage

EVALUATION OF SUCCESS/ROI/RESULTS

When given a choice between quantity of media coverage versus quality of business engagement, the executives opted for higher-level C-suite engagement.

Adobe consolidated a number of media-monitoring services into a single source after determining that the chosen firm captured 82 percent of all content, while other sources combined captured only 37 percent. Through a single global methodology, Adobe reduced the number of research reports from 900+ to uncover time and cost savings of 25 percent. The centralized approach to monitoring and analysis reduced related costs and reporting turnaround times 67 percent.

The new approach formed the foundation for more fully integrated marketing and communication decisions. It enables correlation analysis between news coverage and internal data, such as Adobe.com visits, trials and purchase behavior. Adobe communicators now know, for example, the degree to which

media type leads to increases in website traffic and trials, and which do not. Return on investment continues to improve.

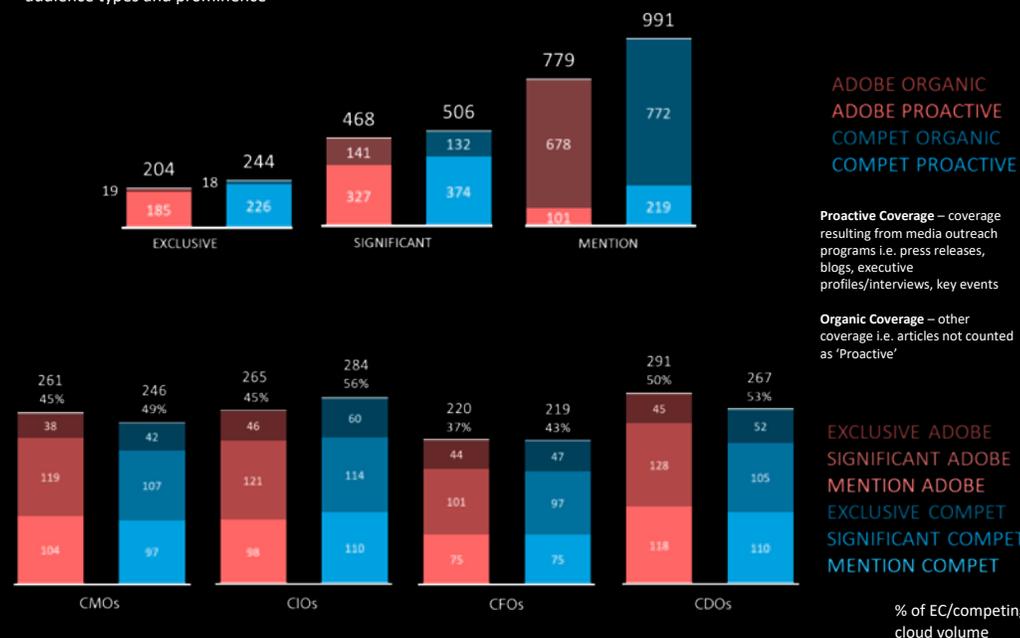
By revolutionizing its media monitoring and analysis framework, Adobe quantified the power of PR to empower the enterprise as forcefully as any other marketing channel. As a result, Adobe executives control the levers to guide the company to even greater success while PR's contribution to business results emerged as an important business driver. ■

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While reducing their media focus dramatically and achieving related efficiencies, Adobe generated a fair share of overall coverage at a fraction of the cost. What's more, Adobe generated more high-quality coverage among their primary target audiences: Chief Marketing Officers and Chief Design Officers.

Key Publications | C-Suite Audience & Prominence vs Coverage Type

Adobe placed a higher percentage of unique attributes among C-Suite media at a fraction of the cost of monitoring and analysing all media coverage. When combined with qualitative analysis, findings identified the topics and key drivers of coverage for different audience types and prominence



businesses that embrace the power of strategic communication." He adds, strategic communication "will emerge stronger and more effective than before."

In June, we remarked that the industry's positive attitude about the future was remarkable given the state of the economy and the pandemic's scourge. That's still the case, especially considering the nation's record unemployment, PR industry layoffs, continued spikes in coronavirus cases in nearly 40 states and social unrest.

ROOM FOR DOUBT

While the majority of PR pros seem upbeat, chart 2 shows doubt is part of the equation. When we asked August survey participants to pick their top two professional concerns, the overwhelming choice (70 percent) was "When will the pandemic end?" (chart 2). Nothing else was close.

The second choice, at 40 percent, "Can we survive until the pandemic subsides enough for business to rebound?" tempers the upbeat attitude referred to above.

WalkerSands president Mike Santoro says, "I've talked to so many [PR] leaders who have broken down from the stress of having to manage during this time." He adds, "This has been the toughest time I've ever had as an agency leader." Still, he's hopeful. "Count me among the optimists," he says.

THE FUTURE OF WORK

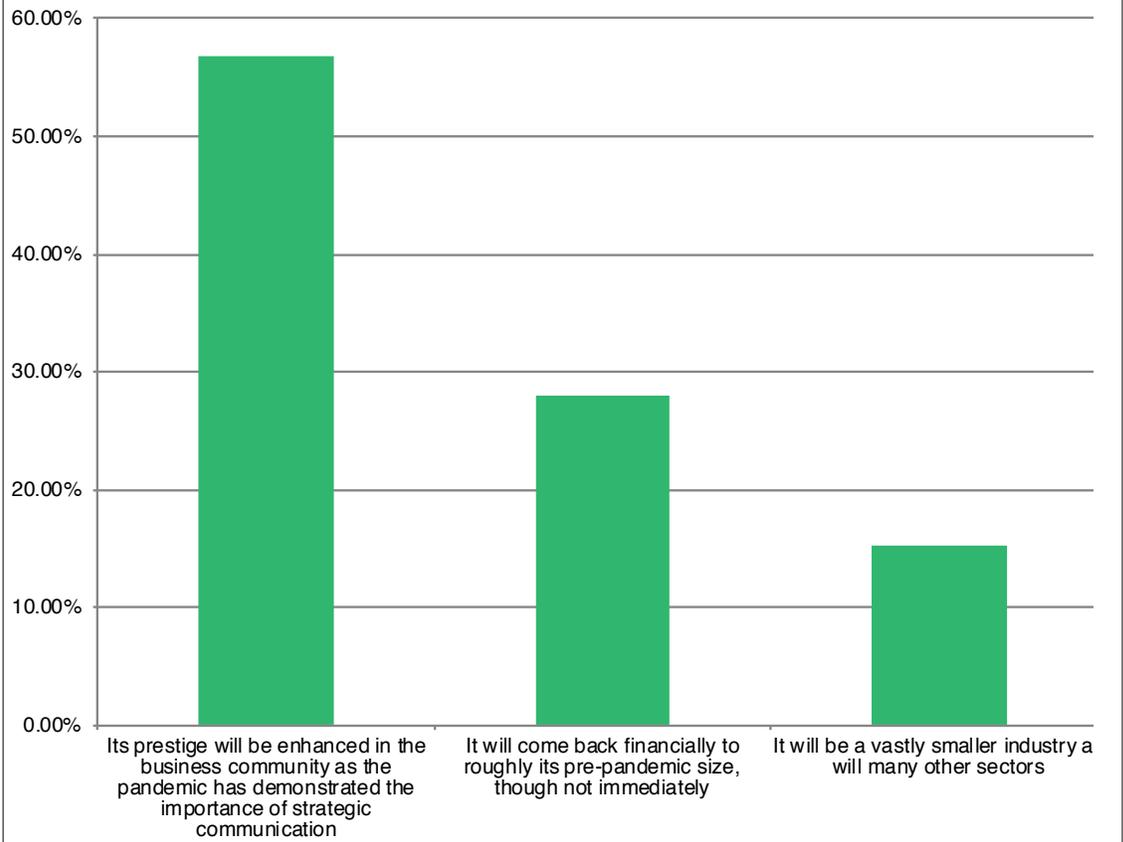
It was not a surprise to find respondents thought the pandemic's top two lasting effects will be that "PR will use virtual platforms more and travel less" (56 percent) and that "work from home will become the norm" (61 percent) (chart 3). In our June survey, 59 percent of respondents said they'd would be working from home.

SEVERAL SURPRISES

What surprised us in the present survey, though, was that just 3 percent told us they are considering breaking their leases (please see chart 4).

It is possible the response about leases was low because respondents are not involved in those issues. As you can see, the leading choice was, "Thinking about new skills and technologies my colleagues and I will need" (72 percent). For Santoro, though, "Any smart agency is taking all of these steps to prepare to emerge from the pandemic."

Chart 5 What are you doing to prepare to emerge from the pandemic? (Please pick up to 3)



DIVERSITY CONCERNS

It was not surprising to see that diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) was next, at 53 percent, besting "Monitoring trends to identify new areas of potential revenue" (52 percent). The May 25 killing of George Floyd and BLM protests have pushed DEI to a top-of-mind issue for PR pros.

"People have more time to pay attention to the actions companies are taking," says Cooper Mathis. "So, like it or not, all brands are on the hot seat," she adds.

Angela Chitkara, researcher, *World in 2020 Project*, says, "We cannot view DEI as a mere compliance exercise. Senior management must commit to DEI or it simply won't be integrated into the workflow and culture of a brand."

DEI received less attention in our June survey, which closed days before Mr. Floyd's murder. In June, 38 percent of respondents said they were not including DEI information in messaging; 44 percent said they were including it in both internal and external messages.

Note that video of two white men shooting Ahmaud Arbery, an unarmed Black man, surfaced days after our June survey opened, likely raising DEI in the consciousness of PR pros.

In addition, statistics showing the pandemic hitting Black and Brown citizens disproportionately were making headlines when the June survey was live. Those stories likely raised DEI to a higher position in the zeitgeist. For comparison, an April survey from **Peppercomm** and the **Institute for PR** found just 19 percent of PR pros saying they were incorporating DEI content in their internal communication. ■

DATA

Colleges' Instagram Output for July Rises 8% Despite Uncertainty Surrounding Back to School

Each August, PRNEWS celebrates the opening of universities and colleges. That tradition continues despite pandemic-fueled uncertainty. One might have expected US colleges to reduce their social content. In fact, the number of posts across **Facebook, Instagram** and **Twitter**, called *Media* on this chart, rose 8 percent vs. the same period last year, according to **Sharable** data, provided exclusively to PRNEWS. The most significant rise in social posts was on Instagram, which was up 14

percent year-over-year. The term *Actions* on the chart refers to consumer engagement with posts, which includes comments, shares and retweets.

Harvard's efficiency is impressive. Its four posts during the period grabbed 41,000 Actions. No other school was close.

Not surprisingly, most of the schools' social content was devoted to racial injustice in the US, the pandemic and issues surrounding international students studying in the US. ■

TOP 10 US COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ON INSTAGRAM

RANK	UNIVERSITY	ACTIONS	MEDIA	ACTIONS PER MEDIA	FOLLOWERS
		👤	📷	👤	👤
1	US Air Force Academy 	304,202	34	8,947	185,079
2	The Ohio State University 	202,068	29	6,968	251,983
3	Harvard University 	165,649	4	41,412	1,655,229
4	University of Michigan 	140,179	31	4,522	277,997
5	Texas A&M University 	115,779	10	11,578	256,531
6	Purdue University 	104,588	51	2,051	88,612
7	Massachusetts Institute of Technology - MIT (US) 	92,325	21	4,396	284,200
8	University of Washington 	89,271	24	3,720	134,755
9	University of Notre Dame 	89,138	11	8,103	152,420
10	University of Phoenix 	85,653	10	8,565	18,158

Source: Sharablee, 6/15-7/15