

Earned, Owned and Paid—Journalism and Public Relations in the Social Era

By Lisa Denten, Teresa Dankowski, Gina Joseph, and Brandon Andersen

The public relations industry is no stranger to the powerful effects social media can have on publicity. These days, platforms such as **Facebook**, **Twitter** and **LinkedIn** are essential tools in a PR pro's arsenal. But how social media affects journalism and what that means for PR is uncharted territory. The ways in which journalists are using social media has become a big factor in how the two industries communicate and work together.

Cision and **Canterbury Christ Church University** recently conducted the third annual Social Journalism Study, charting the changes in how journalists and media professionals use

social media for work and in their communications with PR professionals. Factoring in more than 3,000 responses from journalists in 11 different countries, the study found an overall increase in the use of social media.

Journalists indicated that PR professionals are their second-most popular information resource when sourcing a story.

In the U.K., for example, social media is now an everyday professional tool with 96 percent of

5 Tips to Creating Great Content

- 1. Know your audience.** Content won't help you achieve brand goals unless you know whom you're writing for and what topics will resonate. Pay attention to demographics and create content your audience values—in turn they will share, engage and come back for more.
- 2. Try different types of content.** Don't forget that there is more than one way to reach your audience. Your brand might already be blogging, but have you tried webinars, videos, infographics, mobile apps or tip sheets? Different types require different levels of investment while also providing new ways to engage and deliver your call-to-action.
- 3. Flex your thought leadership.** Challenge yourself to write original content that positions your brand as a leader in the space. Offer your take on news and industry trends, provide how-to articles and show off your organization by tapping employees across different departments for their unique expertise or insights.
- 4. Repurpose what you have.** Chances are you already have content at your disposal—you just have to find it. Did you give an internal presentation that your audience could benefit from? Did you host a conference that could translate into blog posts or tip sheets? Repurposing existing material is an efficient way to keep content channels updated.
- 5. Give yourself the time.** You can't rush perfection, right? Don't create subpar content just to have something to publish—you will do a disservice to your readers and goals. Try adopting an editorial calendar for your content so you can budget for time and map out go-to topics before writer's block strikes.

journalists in the country using it on a daily basis. Use of blogs by journalists in the U.K. has grown from 58 percent in 2011 to 82 percent in 2013. Here in the U.S., 21 percent of those surveyed maintain a work-related blog, and 34 percent reply daily to comments received in relation to work on social media.

So what does this mean for the relationship between journalists and PR professionals?

One of the most discussed uses for social media is the ability to engage with people. Knowing where, how often, and the ways in which journalists are using social media can have a big impact on how PR professionals engage with those journalists. According to the Social Journalism Study, journalists themselves are becoming more open to engaging with the PR community via social. In fact, journalists indicated that PR professionals are their second-most popular information resource when sourcing a story.

Email still takes precedence, but many would indicate that they would like to see more contact through social media. In the U.K., the number of journalists who prefer to be contacted via social media is growing, with 30 percent of respondents choosing social media as their preferred source of communication.

To make a brand stand out in a sea of content, it's important to focus on offering solutions to problems an audience faces.

Social still isn't the Holy Grail when it comes to the PR/journalism relationship. While the number of social media skeptics—those in the survey who have low knowledge and generally negative attitudes towards social media—have declined overall, 20 percent of U.S. journalists agreed with the statement, “Social media will lead to the death of professional journalism.” This could be in part due to the saturation of so-

cial media in the U.S. compared to other countries.

Both journalists and PR pros alike are finding social media useful for publicity and promoting content. While there are no hard and fast rules for communicating with journalists on social, PR pros who do their homework will learn the best ways to interact and connect with the journalism community, which in turn can lead to successful publicity for their clients.

The Role of Brand Journalism in PR

Public relations professionals have traditionally relied on earned media—content pitched to and picked up by journalists—to deliver a brand's story to the public. Now, with the rise of social media, organizations have a means to communicate directly with their audiences without having to rely on a third party telling the story for them.

This shift is known as brand journalism. Organizations are now creating more content than ever in an effort to tell their stories and position their products in the best light—and for good reason.

Google's Zero Moment of Truth found that the average number of information sources used by shoppers doubled from 2010 to 2011. Shoppers need as much information as they can get their hands on until they trust that they are making the right buying decision. If your organization doesn't get its content in front of a customer, your competitors will.

But just creating content isn't enough. To make a brand stand out in a sea of content, it's important to focus on offering solutions to problems an audience faces.

It's easy to focus on what the brand wants to communicate—a new product launch or an exciting hire at the company. Instead, a brand must ask, “Why would this matter to our readers?” If the information is self-serving and does not offer value to the audience, then it is not worth writing.

Put Money Behind Your Story: 4 Ways Media and PR Can Tap Paid Opportunities

- Content engines, or content distribution networks, put your stories on top publisher sites as content that is recommended for the reader. Your content is delivered as recommended stories to audiences who are already engaged on a site.
- Promoted content is popular across social media. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn offer the opportunity for targeted and conventional ads with the added bonus of allowing you to test all content on your owned channels before you decide to put money behind it.
- Sponsored content, another form of native advertising, is when you pay to provide content directly to a publication and they host it. This was long seen as “advertorial” and frowned upon by traditional journalism, but these days even *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Atlantic* are using this as a revenue stream.
- Social distribution tools help amplify your story by leveraging your existing resources, allowing employees, partners, customers and stakeholders to easily share your content. Your brand gains unprecedented access to your fans’ networks.

There are several places to go when looking to create content that resonates with an audience. A great place to start is the customer service department. Find out the types of questions they’re receiving. If many of the questions are the same, answering them in a company blog or newsletter will deliver real value to the brand’s audience.

Creating great content is an essential step in the new PR cycle, but it can’t stop there. Content is only effective if it reaches its intended audience. As mentioned before, content is being churned out faster than ever. If brands want their content to be found, they must invest in content marketing.

Why Journalists and PR Pros Turn To Paid Media

Producing a compelling story just isn’t enough anymore. “You have to market your marketing,” says Jay Baer, marketing consultant and author of *Youtility* (Portfolio). Propagated by the 24-hour news and social media cycle as well as the standardization of free content, members of the media and the PR and marketing industries compete with a continuous stream of information, struggling to capture the attention of their target audiences in new ways with effective promotions. Social channel publishing, influencer

engagement programs, and even simple email alerts can help spread content. But organizations are realizing that they need more.

Today’s landscape of converged media is a direct response to how the story process has changed. While earned media is still among the most valuable coverage PR can secure for a brand and despite the ease of control of owned media, paid media has been steadily gaining traction online among communications professionals for its improved ability to reach people in context.

Paid media and amplification—the idea that one can boost or increase the strength of content to better reach a targeted audience—is being applied by publications as well as PR and marketing pros most vigorously in the form of promoted or sponsored content. The paid model is increasingly viable in journalism and public relations because it is driven by numbers—tracking clicks, unique visitors and virality of content pieces and campaigns is easy.

When compared with traditional advertising, paid media is also better at creating brand engagement. Thanks to native advertising—a tactic used to reach readers with relevant, valuable messages where they’re already online reading similar stories—brands that invest in paid media are seeing returns. According to FTC Chair-

woman Edith Ramirez, an astounding 73 percent of online publishers now offer some type of native advertising opportunity on their sites.

With 60 percent of B2C marketers and 58 percent of B2B marketers expecting an increase in their company's content marketing budget, this tactic is becoming a top method for brands to connect with their audiences. **PRN**

Lisa Denten is the social media manager at Cision, where she leads social strategy, coordinates the blog editorial calendar and manages public relations campaigns.

Teresa Dankowski is the content marketing manager at Cision and a blogger at Cision Blog.

Gina Joseph is a social media community manager at Cision and is the face behind the Navigator's Twitter handle.

Brandon Andersen is the director of marketing at Cision.