

HOW TO MASTER MODERN MEDIA RELATIONS AND DELIVER THE RIGHT RESULTS



SUMMARY

As one of the core disciplines of PR, media relations has traditionally always been thought of as the key skill communicators need to spread their message to the widest possible audience. However, the rise of social media and new digital publishing platforms – and the influencers these have created – has changed the face of media relations forever.

This white paper will examine how those working in media relations can adapt to the changing media environment and create effective media relations campaigns. It will explore the tools communicators use to implement their strategy, as well as how to integrate influencers into any media relations campaign.

This white paper will also provide tips from both journalists and industry experts on improving the execution of more traditional media relations techniques. It will also explain how Cision's market-leading database and distribution products will arm you with the tools you need to help you to effectively target and disseminate your pitches.

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INTRODUCTION

Media relations has always been a core discipline for PR industry professionals. From the onset of public relations, PRs knew that persuading journalists to cover their story in a positive light is one of the most powerful ways to reach their desired audience.

However, in a time of falling journalist numbers and the closure of traditional media outlets, there are some who believe that media relations is a dying art.

While that is a very simplistic overview of the evolution of the sector, traditional media relations – i.e. contacting journalists at print publications and broadcasters with fixed deadlines – is diminishing in importance for communicators.

Instead, real time news powered by the internet and social media has led to a proliferation of digital outlets which has condensed the news cycle. This has both increased the workload of journalists and changed the fixed deadlines they used to work towards to “as soon as possible”.

While technological changes have somewhat diminished traditional media relations practices, it has also given communicators a cornucopia of new tools, tactics and media which they can deploy in a media relations campaign.

Advances in technology has evolved little black books to media databases, faxed press releases are now distributed instantaneously by digital platforms and press cuttings are now digital snapshots which appear almost as quickly as articles are produced.

This is to say nothing of the rise of internet publishing platforms and social media leading to the development and amplification of niche outlets catering for specialist audiences, all of whom are a resource for a skilled media relations practitioner.

The biggest of these changes is the rise of influencers. Whereas before communicators were limited to approaching journalists or looking to build brand partnerships with celebrities, influencers present a new tool in a media relations practitioner's arsenal.

The use of influencers allows communicators to pinpoint a target audience far better than traditional media outlets. While working with influencers might lower overall "reach", the nature of their audience means that content produced in collaboration with them will be of far more value to an organisation.

David Frossman, head of media at **W**, says that by harnessing influencers you can double your chances of amplifying your message to your audience, through the influencer and through any media coverage of the influencer's activities:



“ If you can crack social media and influencers then it's a win-win. If you're driving interest in the 'real world' with influencers then that can then be picked up by traditional media and you'll get coverage there as well. ”

As such, any modern media relations strategy now requires a clear plan on how to attract and make best use of these people.

In spite of these changes, however, more traditional methods of media relations are still needed to amplify a communicator's message. Traditional media platforms are still the most trusted by the general public, meaning that "earning" coverage from them is still a must for any media relations campaign.

This means still sending relevant press releases, making sharp, snappy phone pitches and building relationships with journalists covering "your patch".

As such, while the world around media relations has been revolutionised over the past two decades, the key skills needed to be a successful media relations practitioner remain the same.

THE MODERN MEDIA RELATIONS TOOLKIT

While the importance of skilled media relations strategies is the same as ever for earned media professionals, the environment they are operating in is constantly evolving.

Some 20 years ago, communicators would have had time to prepare their campaigns and then either fax or ring journalists – who had fixed deadlines – to communicate their idea in great detail. The most important tools communicators would require were a contacts book, a fax machine and a telephone.

The expansion of a media relations expert's remit has produced a range of new tools which they can use to their advantage. Here, professionals from agencies and in-house communicators detail the tools they use to create masterful media relations strategies.



Mike King
Co-founder,
Eleven Hundred Agency

As a small, specialist PR firm, Eleven Hundred Agency works with clients in the technology and professional services industries. Although we are a new agency we have decades of experience and our specialism is a large part of what we sell to clients. We know the industries we work in, the trends, the issues and the key influencers. That said, one of the most important media tools that we use, one that is absolutely fundamental to our business, is a top-notch media database. It is essential that we have up to date information on who are the right people to pitch stories to at various media outlets, not just in trade and business titles but also national media, TV and all other industry sectors that our clients are also targeting (e.g. healthcare, financial services, legal sector etc).

Having been in the business for a long time, we've used a variety of different media databases and seen a huge variation in their quality and accuracy. Although in some ways a database of media contacts seems like a bit of a commodity it is actually the opposite. Building and maintaining an accurate and database of journalists, analysts and bloggers is a hugely labour intensive and

never ending task. We use Cision's MyGorkana platform, in our opinion the best of its type.

Another media tool that has grown to be pretty much indispensable is the journalist enquiry service. Almost every journalist we work with uses this to request information and comment. There are literally thousands of PRs receiving journalist requests, so being able to reply quickly and succinctly with the right information is the key to being included in the resulting stories and as a small, specialist agency that is exactly what we excel at.

The area where we have always struggled, is in finding analytical tools to measure PR campaign impact. We've tried various tools, some focused on social media monitoring and others more broadly monitoring visibility in the media, but none have been that convincing. That said, the age old method of using an external press cuttings service seems woefully lacking (and, as any PR will tell you, never provides a totally accurate picture). I've no doubt that as marketing automation continues to evolve at pace, we will get to the stage where there are sophisticated tools that can measure clearly and accurately the impact PR campaigns are having. I, for one, look forward to that day and the corresponding budget increases that will no doubt follow.



Fergus Campbell
Head of PR and communications
Gumtree

While the modern day communicator needs to constantly polish their skills across a wide range of new and evolving capabilities, in many ways media relations remains reliably consistent in what attention it requires from the average PRO. This is because a (diminishing) number of journalists remain the gatekeepers of target publications and platforms that brands wish to influence and infiltrate, and building relationships with these media titles is the best way to secure a route in.

However, there are a number of tools and processes which should be put in place to pave the way for successful media relations activity. For example here at Gumtree – the UK’s leading classifieds platform used by one in three UK adults every month – we have been ‘doubling down’ on creating the best possible media relations and press office function. To achieve this we have put in place three key activities.

- **Firstly**, we ensured we had the right resource in place. This included appointing a PR agency to provide the arms and legs to solicit and support incoming media enquiries, and recruiting a PR manager to focus exclusively on managing the press office.
- **Secondly**, we improved the systems and processes that sit behind the enhanced press office. This has ranged from ensuring that we have in place the right escalation and approval processes (including where we are required to liaise with our parent company eBay, or sister platforms such as Gumtree Australia and Gumtree South Africa), through to preparing and then stress-testing a series of statements on key and predictable issues, in the format of a holding bank.
- **Thirdly** and finally, we have been proactive in building personal and professional relationships with key media, through a programme of formal and informal ‘meet and greets’, and by being unapologetic about challenging media coverage which is inaccurate or unbalanced.

While Gumtree is on its own journey, and every brand or agency will have their own tools and preferences for how best to deliver a first class media relations experience, media relations rightly remains one of the foundations upon which to build modern and successful brands.



Charlie Morgan
Managing director
UK Technology
practice at H+K

The post-industrial age is dead - long live the Purposeful Age!

That may sound bold, maybe even grand, but the days of being known only for what you make has gone, consumers today want so much more from a company... they want to truly know you, and know that you have a heart. Take the beloved Hoover for example, millions of consumers swapped it out for a Dyson, because they bought into a company that believes in innovation, not just in vacuums but in everything from hairdryers to cars. This passion really ignited brand love with consumers.

The purpose of a brand, coupled with its product or service performance is what drives sales and brand loyalty today. As storytellers in this new purposeful age we need to inspire creative and curious conversations to help brands reveal their inner purpose.

But in order to do this we need intelligent data, with thoughtful insights, to help us achieve this complex challenge. By truly understanding the data, knowing how to analyse it to improve our communications, campaigns and outcomes, we're able to make incredible impact. Investing in the right tools and the right partnerships will pay dividends for agencies and clients alike.

Strong relationships with the biggest technology providers in the world such as Google, Facebook, Amazon Alexa, Snapchat and Spotify are crucial to inform such a data-driven approach. Their insights allow us to map customer sales and media behaviours, passions, and influencers. They give us access to trend information, social

listening and data visualisation, in-depth research and much more.

Never have we had such intense and true information about our audiences. By taking the insights gleaned from the data we can define compelling, creative strategies and create unique, disruptive content that resonate with the right influencers.

Influencers, in our world, are incredibly varied, ranging from high level thought leaders to the niche content creators, from journalists with social presence to bloggers. Identifying them, out reaching them, needs to vary in approach, style and content.

H+K has developed its own proprietary tool called Sherlock+ to help us identify the right influencers, and measure the impact our content is having so we can engage with them in an impactful way - be that in person, over social channels or as part of a paid partnership. Working with partners, we are able to tweak our messaging to make it more effective; by measuring in real-time how engaging the content is so it can be modified on the fly.

More than ever, measurement means more than counting clippings and column inches. It needs to evaluate efficiencies in communications output, review message impact on key influencers and wider audiences and assess success against business outcomes. In the Purposeful Age, modern communications must go beyond working with a conventional PR toolbox. If we want to be successful as communicators today, we need to be nimble to risk and responsive to opportunity. Today's pace of business will only get faster, and disruption will no longer be the exception, accept that this is the new normal. To thrive, brands and communicators alike must embrace technology, to help them move as quickly as the businesses they represent.

PR 101: HOW TO WRITE A PRESS RELEASE

Despite the changes which have affected media relations over the past two decades, one constant has been the humble press release. While some earned media professionals would be happy to see this medium go the way of the dodo, an effectively written press release has yet to be bettered as a simple, concise and timely way of communicating with the media.

As such, Cision has created the following four-step guide on how to create a press release which will capture the attention of your target journalists and influencers.

1. Identify the “news hook”

If you want to get the attention of the press, you’ve got to think like a journalist. So, the first job when writing a press release is to identify the “news hook”.

This will be the most newsworthy element of the story, and will form the headline and lead of the piece. (As a general rule of thumb, you should be able to sum it up in 27 words or less.)

Remember, different titles cater for different audiences. So the best hook may differ depending on who you are pitching to. For example, titles with differing political slants will routinely put contrasting spins on the same piece of political news.

In many ways, this is the hardest part of the process. It requires familiarity with your target audience and a strong grasp of what makes a story newsworthy. Try looking for stories with a human angle, that can be linked to a prominent public figure or which provide insights through new research (where appropriate).

Once you’ve identified the hook, you’re ready to put together the rest of your press release.

2. Decide which information to include

The aim of newswriting is to inform your reader as efficiently as possible. Try to lay down just the facts simply, without adding your own commentary to the mix.

When thinking about what information to include in your press release, remember these six questions. They will help you deliver the key information to a reader or writer:

- **Who** are the important people in your story?
- **What** are the key facts the reader should know?
- **Why** is this something the reader should care about?
- **Where** did this news happen, or will it take place?
- **When** did this news happen, or will it take place?
- **How** did this story come about?

Strong opinions make for great quotes – and if there's public interest in the person speaking, a great, justifiable, quote can form the basis for a story all by itself.

Journalists like having a selection of sources, especially for longer pieces. So if you think you have an interesting story to tell, try to include two or three different quotes for them to choose from.

3. Put the most newsworthy facts first

When writing your press release, start with the headline. From there, list the information in order of newsworthiness, with the most important facts first. Be sure to weave your brand's messaging in with the story – ideally in such a way that it's not easily deleted.

It's generally best to put all your quotes at the end of the release, as different titles will have different conventions about how they use quotes in their pieces.

Finally, make it as easy as possible for the journalist to answer any questions they might have about your story. Include a "boilerplate" at the end, providing background information about your brand, along with your contact details so the journalist can get in touch.

To achieve maximum coverage, you should also have a high resolution picture ready to go with your story. This can be attached to your press release when you send it, hosted online or simply kept on hand until someone requests it. As all outlets will use images to illustrate their story, failing to send one with your press release will diminish the chances of your story being covered.

4. Send your release using industry leading PR software

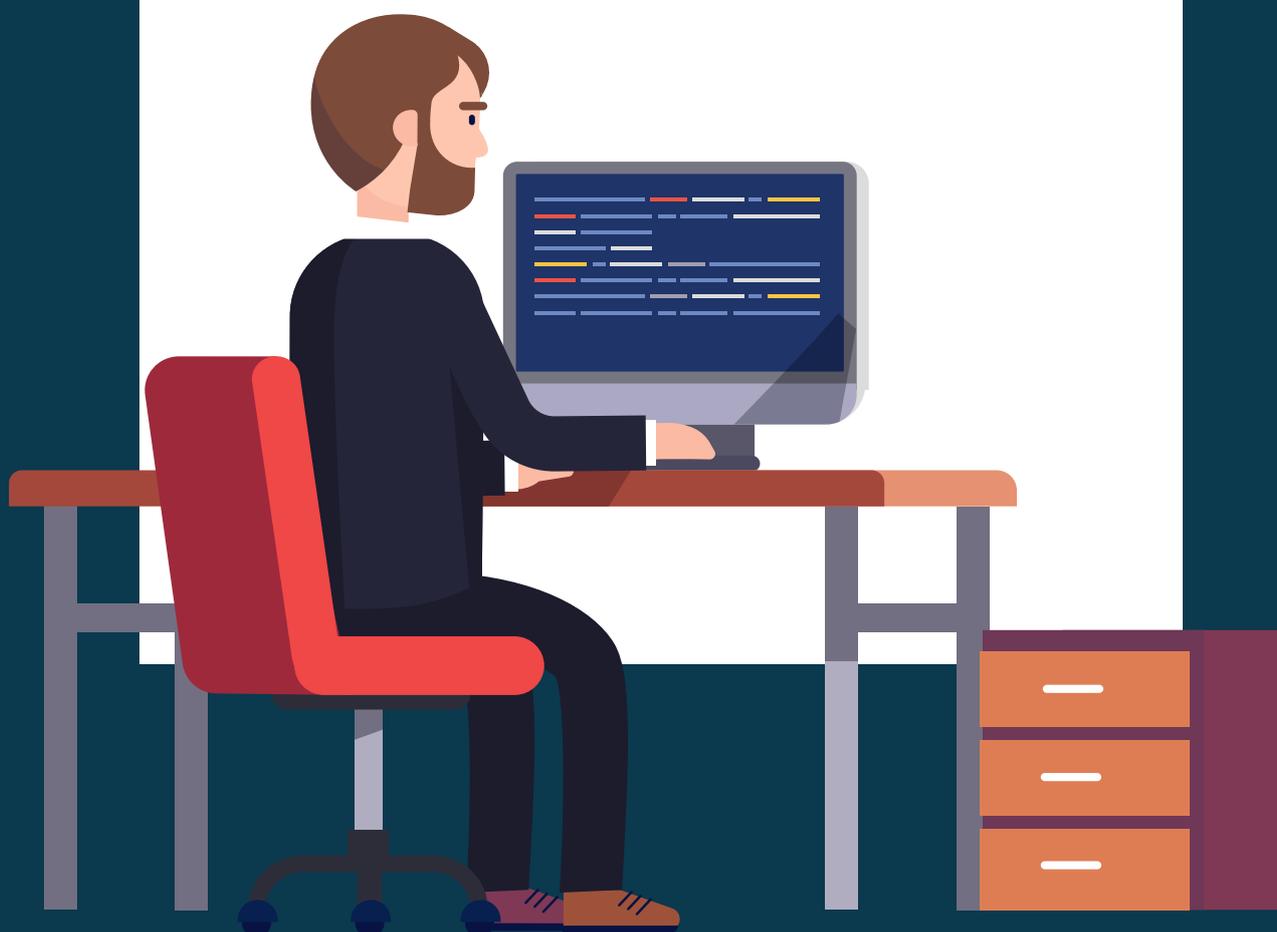
Once your press release is complete, it's time to distribute it to relevant journalists using the Cision Communications Cloud.

With more than 1.6 million contacts and 300,000 digital influencers, it's more than the industry's largest media database. It also uses smart insights to highlight trending influencers and recommend the best contacts for every press release you send.

Each media list you create is automatically updated behind the scenes, so you can be confident you always have the best details to reach your contacts on.

What's more, the Cloud's intuitive email distribution system makes it quick and easy to design, setup and send powerful press releases. You'll even get clear data on email open rates, clickthrough rates and more – so you can see exactly who is engaging with your content.

This information is essential for maximising the impact of your press releases. If you have a great story to share, you shouldn't settle for anything less.



PR 101: HOW TO PHONE PITCH A JOURNALIST

While most journalists prefer PRs to contact them by email, there are times where you will need to call them to help get your message across.

We asked some of the journalists listed on our database as willing to receive phone pitches exactly how they want to be pitched to:



Jillian Ambrose
Energy editor
The Daily Telegraph

“A good pitch will go something like: ‘Hello, I have a story about X. Basically [company] is planning to [invest/buy/sell] for £x [a wind farm, project stake, rival].’ And then answer any number of questions I might have.

A bad pitch sounds like: ‘Hello, I’m [name] from [agency I’ve never heard of] on behalf of [company I’ve never heard of] which is a global leader in [a very niche area which may or may not have anything to do with what I write about] and they are about to announce plans to make major changes to accelerate their share of the market.’

This may take a few minutes in which I’ve listened to quite a lot of information, none of which is interesting or ‘news’. Then when I ask them to cut to the chase there’s no quick rundown only more waffle. And when I ask questions: ‘My client can answer that, shall I set up a phone call?’ - I don’t have time to set up calls for the hell of it if I don’t know whether there’s a story yet.

And a very bad pitch is: ‘Hi, I just wanted to check that you’ve received my email’. It’s like saying: ‘Hi, I want to interrupt whatever you’re doing and make you look at an email that you have almost definitely received and probably overlooked for a reason!’”



Aubrey Allegretti
Digital political reporter
Sky News

“What I find most helpful is when a PR introduces themselves quickly and asks if you’ve got two minutes to talk. Some people launch straight into a pitch and it can frustrate those of us who are too polite to say we’re in the middle of a breaking story/ something else of high importance. Then, explaining briefly what your agency does, what kind of clients you have and relating that to the journalist is really helpful.

So, saying ‘we’ve noticed you’ve covered stories on this issue before, we’ve got something we think could be really interesting on homelessness/ tech/ equality issues’. Then bearing the strong news angle in mind, which is what the journalist is probably after. So try to be specific – think headlines and top lines, rather than waffle. That might sound harsh but it’s much more likely to pique a journalist’s interest.”

Frances Hedges

Workflow director / associate editor
Harper's Bazaar and Town & County

Please only call if your idea is genuinely something you want to pitch exclusively to my publication ahead of any other, if it's a particularly complex pitch that needs explaining over the phone rather than in writing, or if we have an existing personal relationship and you want to say hello.

Lisa Minot

Travel editor
The Sun

I am happy to talk to PRs over the phone if they are pitching something new or exclusive or urgent. What drives me nuts is PRs ringing me up to ask if I have received their press release or if they can send me a press release. That is just wasting time. I read every press release I am sent and always respond if I am interested.

Malcolm Moore

UK news editor
Financial Times

Please have a think before you pitch about whether your story is right for the FT and which specific section of the FT it would fit in to. Can you see it appearing in the UK news section (which I run)? Have you ever seen any similar stories appear in that section? I tend to get a lot of unfocused and general pitches and we are, of course, a pretty specialised media outlet which tends to be interested in different stories from the other nationals. And if you have pitched it all around, we are very unlikely to be interested, unless it is very big news.

Steven Wright

Senior arts producer
BBC News

I work on news programmes, bulletins and summaries - the most effective pitch to me will encapsulate a story, which could realistically be of interest to our specific outlets, in one sentence. If I then have questions for the PR, I would expect them to have clear and concise answers.



Lynda Redington
Co-founder
Another Word

Lynda Redington, co-founder of **Another Word**, is convinced that communicators do not make best use of their opportunity when pitching to journalists on the phone. Here, she presents her tips on how to prepare and enact a phone pitch.

Preparation, preparation, preparation

Plan what you are going to say before you pick up the phone to avoid getting flustered. Make sure you have all the information you need to hand and be prepared to think on your feet and answer lots of questions.

Know your target

Make sure you personalise your pitch to the journalist and publication. Research what they've written about recently and use it to tailor your angle.

Be quick

Try to encapsulate your story in one brief sentence: if you're lucky, you'll get around 20 seconds to pitch. Get to the point quickly by telling the journalist why the story is of interest to their readership.

Be timely

Think about the time of the day you are pitching and consider the journalist's schedule. Try and get a call in before 10am, or after 12pm to avoid morning planning meetings. Don't call on deadline unless you genuinely have a 'breaking news' story that no publication would live without. If possible give plenty of lead time for a story, ideally pitching a couple of days beforehand.

Offer something new

If you're calling to follow up an email, make sure you're offering something new whether it's an interview, additional stats or extra photography.

Be pleasant, polite and positive

Be friendly, upbeat and personal - and avoid sounding like a robot! You might get some knock backs but try to keep your enthusiasm for the story throughout.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH JOURNALISTS

As much as crafting a perfect press release or phone pitch can help to secure coverage, there are times where journalists are so busy that unless you have the story of the century, they won't even countenance dealing with someone who they do not know or trust.



Lis Field
CEO
Eulogy

“Building relationships is key, if they don't know you, why would they speak to you?”

Field adds: “It's a massive market and they get hounded, sometimes they receive over 1,000 emails a day from us lot. If you're going to stand out you need to make something memorable, that's where the real media relations experts come to the fore.”

Suffice to say, if a journalist does not want to open your email because they don't recognise your name, there is no chance of them publishing your story. However, there are ways to identify and attract journalists who you believe will be critical to the success of your campaigns.

“Finding a journalist at your sort of level is ideal,” Field said. “If you're a junior account executive, building a rapport with a junior reporter today could be a productive relationship with a senior business reporter tomorrow. If you match up with peers at your level then those are the long-term relationships from which you'll reap the benefits.”

“You'll need tenacity and to be interesting to the journalist. If you tell them you represent six clients or have a sector specialism then that makes you instantly more attractive to a journalist. If you can make producing a story easier for a

journalist than they're expecting then they'll snap your hand off.”

David Frossman, head of media at **W**, agrees with Field that pitching your other clients, as well as the story in hand, will help to reinforce how useful you would be as a contact to a journalist:

“What you need to do is sell the best thing you've got to them. If you're the gatekeeper to a cool or well-known brand then use it, even if what you're pitching this time is nothing to do with that brand. Tell them you might have something relating to that brand which will be very interesting to them further down the line.”

“Make sure it's the first thing you tell them and say that you want to take them out for a coffee. Once you get them out, then you're cared about, so it's all about getting to that moment.”

Being able to personalise any approaches to journalists and show an understanding of their outlet will help to get you into a journalist's good books, as **Phil Hilton**, editorial director at **ShortList**, explains: “The trick is to say anything that seems informal and send something that looks like it's crafted just for me.”

“Good PRs come to you for your title, they’re not going to other titles with the same thing, and they don’t approach when their idea is not appropriate.”

Showing this sort of understanding convinces a journalist that you understand their role, gaining their trust in your judgement. This will give you greater latitude in future pitches.

“We’re really looking to establish good relationships and see that there’s always been an appreciation from PRs for what we do and how we approach stories,” says **LBC** deputy managing editor **Tom Cheal**,

“that always opens a door to getting people on air.”

Trust only helps so much however. Having a relationship with a journalist certainly assists in getting their attention, but you still have to have some substance they can use.

David Fraser, founder and MD of **Ready10** adds: “Relevance is key – if you have something that hits the spot with the journalist’s audience then you don’t need to know them and there is a great chance they will want to write about it.



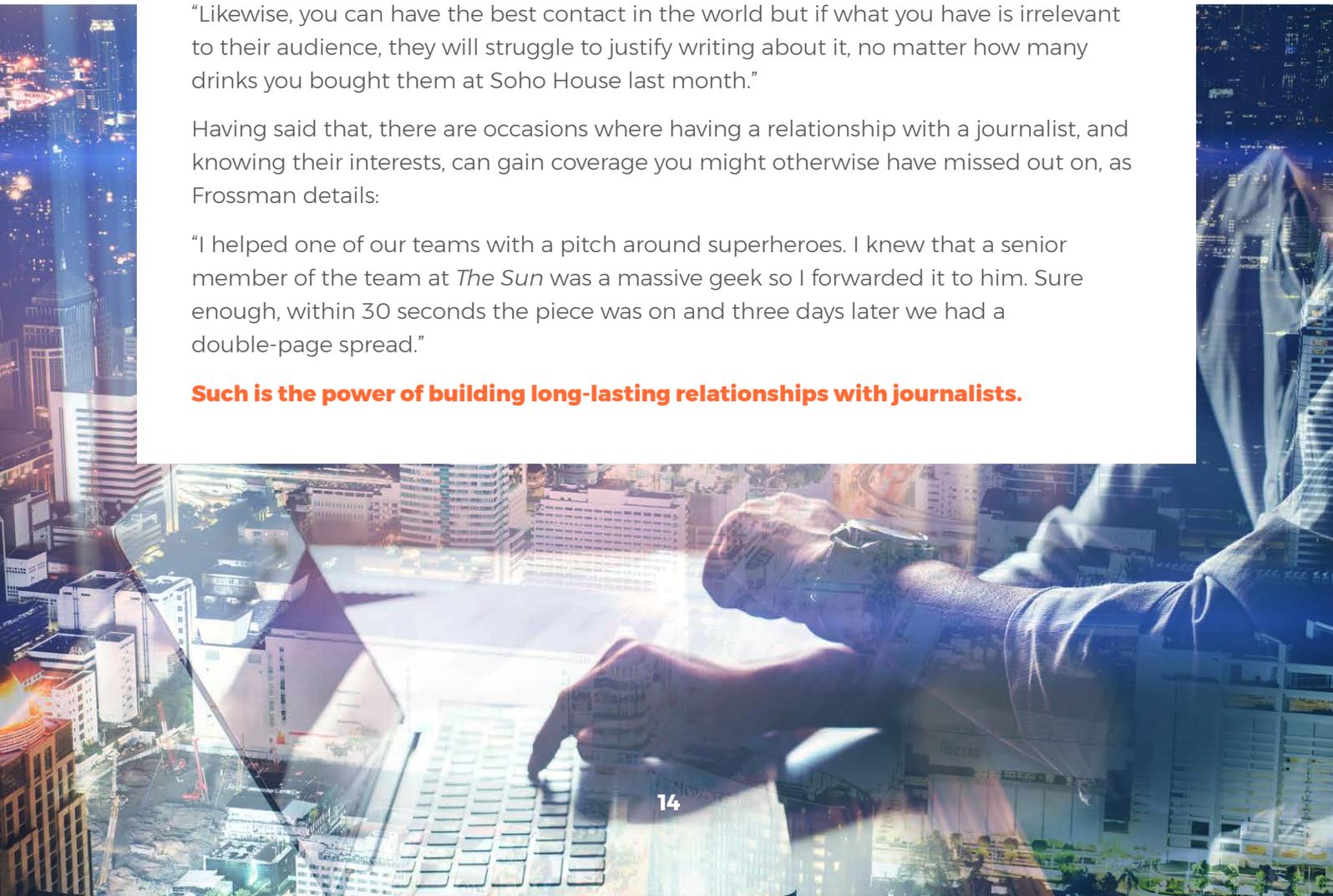
“The most important thing is to have a good story, a good understanding of the journalist you are talking to and what they are after – and to be able to talk about your client with passion and insight.”

“Likewise, you can have the best contact in the world but if what you have is irrelevant to their audience, they will struggle to justify writing about it, no matter how many drinks you bought them at Soho House last month.”

Having said that, there are occasions where having a relationship with a journalist, and knowing their interests, can gain coverage you might otherwise have missed out on, as Frossman details:

“I helped one of our teams with a pitch around superheroes. I knew that a senior member of the team at *The Sun* was a massive geek so I forwarded it to him. Sure enough, within 30 seconds the piece was on and three days later we had a double-page spread.”

Such is the power of building long-lasting relationships with journalists.



IDENTIFYING, PITCHING TO AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH INFLUENCERS

The expansion of influencer marketing encompasses most of the marketing mix, including earned media. Earned media professionals are perfectly placed to ride the influencer wave by using their media relations experience to help attract and engage influencers.

However, there are some key differences which communicators must bear in mind. One key aspect is that any work influencers do will need to help their personal brand and be of interest to their audiences.

“We need to be more sensitive to commercial aspects and media relations must be central to any commercial relationship with influencers,” **David Frossman** explains.

Lis Field adds: “Influencers today are the celebrities of yesterday. The difference is that they are trying to service their own business needs, whereas celebrities were generally famous for something else.”

The need for influencers to benefit financially from their activities can blur the line between earned and paid media when trying to secure their support. However, treating outreach in a similar way to pitching to a journalist by tailoring a pitch to their audience will increase your chances of bringing influencers on board.

“There are similar principles as far as pitching to influencers are concerned: relevance to their audience and authenticity is vital. If you can add value to them and what they are putting out to their audience, then that will be of huge advantage to you when pitching,” says **David Fraser**.

Amelia Neate, senior manager at influencer agency **Influencer Champions**, is responsible for arranging influencer partnerships for PRs and influencers. She goes through a specific process to ensure brands and influencers are a good match for each other to ensure that the partnership works for both:



“When a PR is first contacting us for a campaign, it is important that in the initial email they are specific with what and who they would like for the influencer marketing campaigns, as well as what sort of budget they have. We can then suggest the appropriate influencers for them and their budget.

Maintaining good relationships with PRs is essential as we do a lot of repeat deals, and enjoy working together on long term relationships. For us, it is also so important to build and maintain a good relationship with influencers so that they want to work with us and promote us to other influencers they know.



KNOW YOUR INFLUENCERS

Where the skill of a media relations expert can really make a difference is in the identification and targeting of the right influencer.

“The value of a PR professional is to understand where an influencer sits in the ‘great to not-so-great’ scale when related to their client,” says Field. “What works best is finding an influencer who understands what you’re trying to achieve, who is respected and respectful of the nature of the work.”

“We question the value of influencers demanding big bucks; we think brands could spend that money better elsewhere. For us, it’s about having a flexible approach.”

While the social follower numbers of the top influencers are tempting to

maximise your reach, these figures may be both misleading and also not useful for reaching your target market, as Frossman explains:

“If you’re just picking a top-tier influencer so you can wave it at the likes of the *MailOnline* then you’re going about it the wrong way. Some of the numbers these influencers have are staggering, but if you put them through as system examining for fake followers then the numbers drop off, plus they have a broad range of people following them.”

As such, when deciding on which influencers you should approach, you are far better served targeting influencers with lower follower numbers who have much more resonance with your target audience and sector.

INFLUENCER CREDIBILITY

Earned media’s inherent advantage over paid and owned output is that consumers are more likely to trust recommendations from journalists, influencers and experts.

Unfortunately, however, not all influencers bring equal expertise to the areas they cover. While some influencers are open and honest about their knowledge of a subject, others will be less forthcoming in order to avoid jeopardising their revenue. Brands working with these influencers could find their reputations tarnished by association if an influencer’s credibility comes into question.

Sarah Greenidge is the founder of **WellSpoken**, a content accreditation group for spokespeople in the wellness sector. She explains why communicators need to be careful when selecting influencers to work with:





Sarah Greenidge
Founder
WellSpoken

Ambassadors and partners play a vital role in raising awareness of any brand. They can contribute to growing a brand's presence among consumers, providing reassurance and credibility.

Because online influencers/experts are already trusted within their area of specialism, their word is often taken as gospel and their endorsement can be a hugely valuable marketing tool for brands.

Consumers look at experts and influencers within the relevant field to provide advice, recommendations and guidance from a qualified, experienced and ethical standpoint. Due to this level of public trust, we believe that businesses, and the influencers and experts they engage with, should seek to ensure that their partnerships and resulting content meet the highest standards of excellence.

No matter how polished content can appear, if it is not delivered responsibly and accurately to consumers, it can be received negatively and may have an undesirable impact on the reputation of the brand.

If an ambassador or partner is seen to be providing advice that they are not qualified to give, or that is based on dubious evidence, this can lead to controversy and public scepticism, thereby tarnishing a brand's image. Engaging with credible, well-informed and highly-qualified influencers/experts is therefore paramount to ensuring the credibility of a brand.

When deciding whether to work with an expert or ambassador to partner with, it is essential to consider the following four pillars:

- **Qualifications:** What is the legitimacy and validity of their qualifications and skills?
- **Experience:** A notch up from qualification, they may be qualified but do they have experience in practice?
- **Accountability:** Who are they accountable to in their area of expertise? Are they registered to a professional body or so they even have proper representation?
- **Reputation:** What is their general reputation (positive or negative) in the public arena? This can really come back to bite a brand if due diligence is not conducted.

The internet has created a truly global landscape, where information is freely shared without borders. While this has an enormous amount of positives – an unfortunate side effect is that corporate mistakes spread like wildfire.

In 2017, we saw many of the world's leading brands face the harsh consequences of sour partnerships. From backlash to boycotts, getting content wrong can have a very real impact on sales and reaching targets. Once a groundswell of public outrage starts, it is incredibly hard to stop and to re-build trust.

There needs to be a paradigm shift in how brands think about communicating externally. Partnering high profile influencers is not just a means to end or simply a mechanism to generate sales or reach new audiences. Company partnerships provide consumers with a glimmer of a business's value system. Building credibility builds rapport, brand loyalty and ultimately better business.



HOW CISION CAN POWER YOUR MEDIA RELATIONS STRATEGY

While the top tips detailed in this white paper will improve your media relations strategy, the nature of the discipline means that there is not one single method which will work every time with every journalist and influencer.

Phone calls and follow ups annoy some journalists yet are welcomed by others, while catching a journalist or influencer at a good moment will increase your chances of successfully pitching a story.

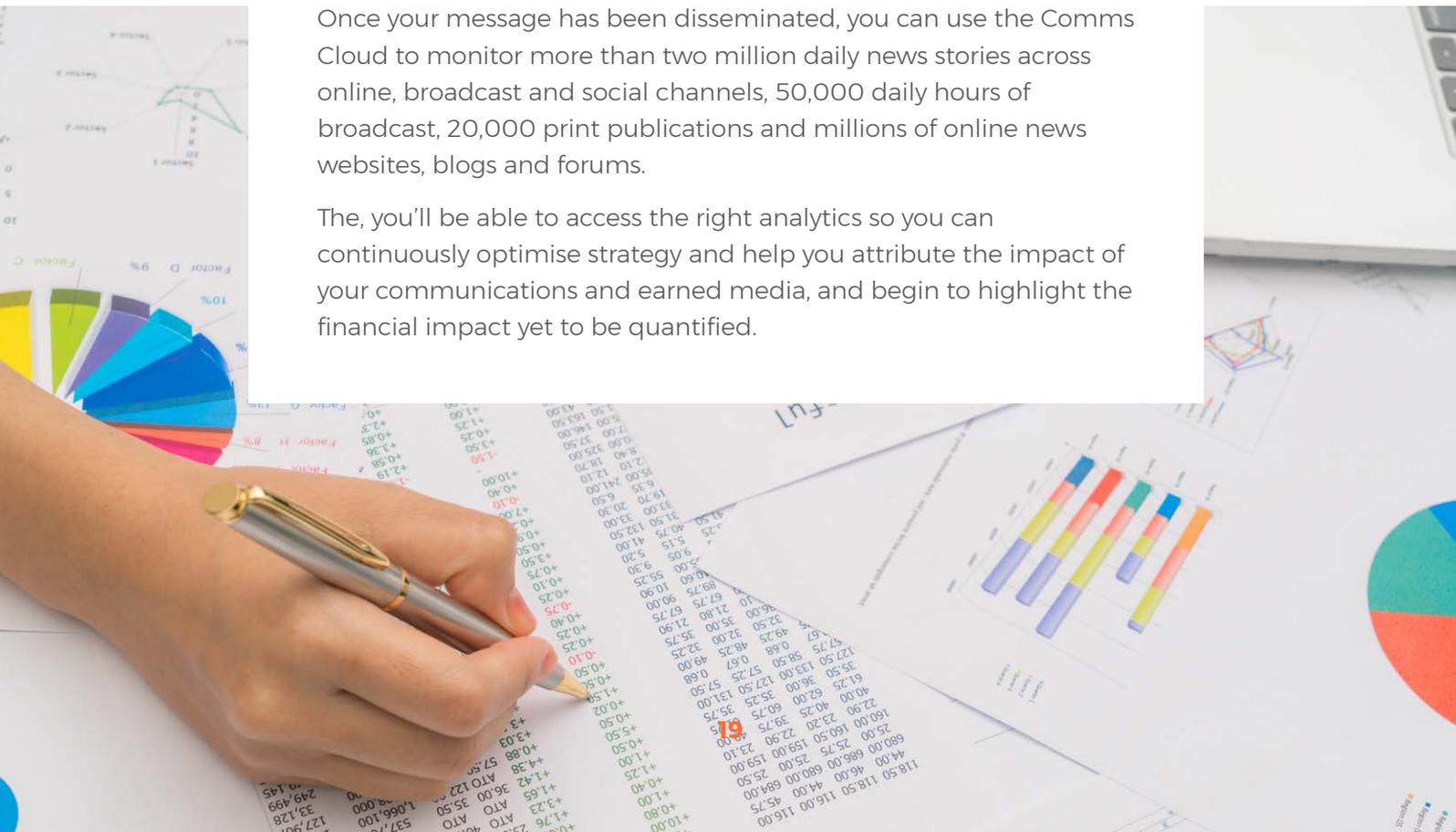
Fortunately, Cision's software will help you to increase your chances of landing a successful pitch to journalist. The Cision Communications Cloud offers you an influencer database containing over 1.6M media contacts, outlets and editorial opportunities, as well as 300,000 digital influencers.

When we ask journalists how PRs can best pitch to them, a common response is that PRs should familiarise themselves with their media outlet. We appreciate that you don't have time to learn each section of every outlet inside out, so our database lists an outlet's key features, while we've also researched the best PR opportunities for large publications.

Once you've found the perfect journalists and influencers to target, Cision Distribution by PR Newswire allows you to spread your message through the industry's largest, most trusted press release distribution network in over 170 countries and 40 languages.

Once your message has been disseminated, you can use the Comms Cloud to monitor more than two million daily news stories across online, broadcast and social channels, 50,000 daily hours of broadcast, 20,000 print publications and millions of online news websites, blogs and forums.

The, you'll be able to access the right analytics so you can continuously optimise strategy and help you attribute the impact of your communications and earned media, and begin to highlight the financial impact yet to be quantified.





CONCLUSION

Modern media relations practitioners must now blend a combination of tried and tested skills with the opportunities and challenges new technology has brought to the media.

While some key staples of traditional media relations remain, such as conveying information in press releases and building relationships with the media, increasingly communicators will need to ensure they are using influencers, social media and technology to ensure that their messages reach their desired audience.

Communicators with media relations experience will recognise that, while the evolving media landscape has changed the role, it offers them the opportunity to stand out using skills they already use.

They know how to write a press release, but now they can use technology to distribute them to journalists and influencers best suited for their target audiences. Having spent time building relationships with journalists, they can use similar skills to gain the trust of influencers. Their experience of knowing what works for traditional media outlets will guide them into deciding what works on social and new media.

In many ways, the more media relations changes, the more it stays the same.

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