



EARNED MEDIA RESURGENCE

An Expert Guide to Help PR
Pros Elevate Their Profession

BY JAY BAER

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INTRODUCTION

Communications has a rich and interesting history. It became established in the 1920s in North America when private companies started employing communications professionals. Arthur W. Page was among them. He worked as a VP of Public Relations for AT&T. In his role, Mr. Page insisted communications proactively drive corporate policy, and his approach influenced professionals for decades.

For the next 30 years, corporate communications were well-regarded.

IT WAS DATA-DRIVEN—communicators were involved in research to understand what consumers thought and believed.

IT WAS PROACTIVE—communicators shaped corporate policy.

IT WAS FUNDED—the role of the communications function was valued, and budgets reflected this.

In the 1950s, advertising had a quick climb and became a major corporate force. In that same decade, it **grew by 462 percent from \$1.3 billion in 1950 to \$6 billion in 1960.**

Since that time, communications have become more gut-driven, not data-driven. It has become reactive, not proactive. Today, communications is the caboose, not the corporate engine.

It is also under-funded. **Ninety-five percent of media budgets go to paid media. Owned media receives 4.5 percent of the budget. Earned media only receives half of one percent of the overall budget.**

Ironically—at the same time—the opportunity for earned media is greater than ever. Consumers are ad-weary: 38 percent of adults have ad-blocking software on their computers. Thirty years ago, the average American was targeted by 560 daily advertising messages. Today, **the number is more than 3,500.** Consumers are tired of receiving a deluge of advertising messages, and they trust them less. Only **47 percent of people trust ads that appear alongside online search results.**

Unlike advertising and owned media, authentic information is at the core of earned media.
It is fact-checked.
It is honest.
It is real and responsive.

All of these factors are coming together in a compelling way, creating a unique opportunity for communicators to help businesses meet the challenging demands of a multi-audience, multi-stakeholder environment.

The communications function is at the beginning of a resurgence, but the key to its comeback is a fundamental evolution from “media relations,” “PR” and even “communications” to Earned Media Management. Earned Media Management requires top-notch communicators, like you, to think and work more like a marketer with the use of technology to optimize your communications efforts.

We created this guide to help you see how your peers are evolving the profession. We spoke with communications veterans—professionals with 20–30+ years of experience—to understand how they’re demonstrating the value of earned media at their organizations. Through these interviews, **we’ve identified six changes communicators must adopt to elevate the PR profession.**

The veteran professionals featured in this book come from different industries and backgrounds. Let us introduce them to you:



MOYRA KNIGHT

*Vice President, Corporate Communications, Astellas
President, Astellas Global Health Foundation*

Moyra Knight is vice president of corporate communications for Astellas in the Americas and president of the Astellas Global Health Foundation. She leads communications strategy and development for the U.S., Canada and Latin America.



JEFF KUHLMAN

Chief Communications Officer, The Americas, Bentley

Jeff Kuhlman is chief communications officer for the Americas at Bentley. The Americas region is Bentley’s largest market, accounting for almost 30 percent of the company’s total sales. He leads Bentley’s product, corporate and lifestyle media communications. Jeff has more than 30 years of experience in the automotive industry.



NIKKI WHEELER

Senior Director, Media Relations, CenturyLink

Nikki Wheeler is an innovative communications professional with more than 20 years of experience. As the Senior Director of Media Relations at CenturyLink, Nikki marries new strategies with proven media practices to advance brand identity, awareness and visibility. Nikki is also the author of “See. Spot. Run. A Media Relations Playbook for Getting More Coverage Faster.”



ELIZABETH RECTOR

Head of Brand & Reputation Intelligence, Cisco

A self-proclaimed “data geek,” Elizabeth has more than 20 years of experience as a marketing communications strategist with an emphasis in digital. She oversees a communications intelligence team that is pushing the envelope when it comes to data. Her team’s insights program finds and develops insights — from consumer to competitive — that drives decisions at Cisco.



MARCY COHEN

VP Digital Communications, Mastercard

Marcy Cohen is vice president, global digital communications at Mastercard where she is responsible for developing and implementing digital communications strategies to drive the company’s corporate reputation. She recently launched Storylab, an in-house content studio staffed by a team of writers, filmmakers, producers and editors who create digital content, partner with publishers, and highlight partnerships to communicate meaningful stories.



LAUREN LAWSON-ZILAI

Senior Director of Public Relations and National Spokesperson, Goodwill Industries International

Lauren is a senior communications executive at Goodwill Industries International and a social innovator. As the senior director of public relations for Goodwill, Lauren collaborates with more than 160 community-based organizations (Goodwill stores) and is part of the organization’s growing community involvement and partnerships such as First Lady Michelle Obama’s program, *Goodwill for America’s Heroes and their Families*.



LINDA RUTHERFORD

Senior Vice President, Chief Communications Officer, Southwest

Linda has been with Southwest Airlines for more than 25 years. In her role as SVP and Chief Communications Officer, she oversees and guides several functions within the organization including culture services, media relations, employee communications and engagement, charitable giving, community relations and affairs, public relations, social business, and emergency response and business continuity.

CHANGE #



COMMUNICATORS HAVE TO COLLABORATE TO THRIVE



The modern communicator can't work alone. Today, communicators must work with others to get the job done, and—conversely—communicators have become essential to other functions within an organization. Media isn't siloed. The paid, owned, earned, shared model has overlap and gray area. The value of communications is highest when this overlap is reflected in the way communicators work within their organizations.

“Our company is set up with the understanding that you must collaborate to thrive, and you can't have individual pillars of expertise that don't connect with the broader company or with the group as a whole,” says Moyra Knight of Astellas. “We know what the company is going for—whether it's performance, cost savings, or innovation. That gives us the opportunity to teach our team members to be communication generalists—able to counsel their colleagues and support projects collectively,” she says.

Silo mentality, a behaviour where departments—unintentionally or intentionally—don't share information and work independently of one another—is no longer an option.

“When somebody says [to me], ‘You wear two hats,’ I disagree. I wear one hat. Marketing and communication, I believe, have the same goal,” Jeff Kuhlman of Bentley says. “I don't see a huge difference between marketing and communication. We have a message we want to get to a defined audience, and there are only a certain number of platforms to reach them.”

The convergence of PR, marketing and communications has been a driver in need of more collaboration. As we all know, a good communications strategy is comprehensive and integrated. It looks at the big picture. It considers elements that might be outside of a communicator's functional lane. The PESO (paid, earned, shared, owned) model can and is serving as

a compass to help modern communicators integrate their plans, ideas and roles.

Lauren Lawson-Zilai at Goodwill Industries International says she and her paid and owned colleagues use the PESO model to guide their work. “Even though we have our digital and social team, and our PR team, and our marketing team, we all work together,” Lawson-Zilai says. “We all have different skill sets, and we are very much using the PESO model as our standard planning format.”

When PESO isn’t used to develop an initial plan, it can be a reference or guide to facilitate downstream collaboration.

“If we get a great story, we’re going to want to promote it. We’ll put paid behind that,” says Marcy Koen of Mastercard. “The paid is going towards owned content and toward earned media. We look to our marketing counterparts and the media team for best practices with paid.”

It works in reverse as well. Owned and paid functions are starting to understand they are more successful with their work when the components of PESO are aligned.

According to Nikki Wheeler at CenturyLink, the biggest difference she sees today is that her media team is now being approached by marketing and advertising. “They say, ‘We want to partner with you. We want to collaborate with you. We want to be aligned,’” Wheeler says. “If I understand [marketing and advertising’s] narrative and where they are taking their story, it can influence how I tell my story and where I direct people.”

Another often-overlooked asset of the communications function is its interactions with multiple audiences. This is part of the job. As a result, commu-

nicators have a multi-stakeholder perspective. Today, our experts find themselves in positions where this expertise provides value to their organizations.

“In communications, I don’t think we have the luxury to sit back and wait to communicate anymore. Our role is to help the business understand the impact of change,” Linda Rutherford of Southwest Airlines says. “We’re getting involved on the front end to help the organization be more thoughtful about how [change] comes together.”

Marketing worries about customers. Operations worries about employees. At Southwest Airlines, frontline employees have their eye on the customer, too. But it’s communications, that works in a multi-stakeholder world, which makes them the expert on helping the business understand how different audiences may be affected by a proposed change.

“We’re the ones that come in and say, ‘There are multiple audiences that could be affected, so let’s think about what it means,’” Linda says. How will regulators view it? How will the community perceive it? What kind of questions will the media ask? What behaviour changes do we need from our employees?”

CEOs understand the importance of communicators as integrators, too.

According to the Arthur W. Page Society’s *The CEO View: Communications at the Center of the Enterprise*, CEOs see communicators as a key driver of corporate character. In their view, communicators, particularly the chief communications officer, should function as an integrator across the enterprise to define corporate character and to ensure it permeates the company.

CHANGE #

2

USE DATA AND METRICS TO TELL A MEANINGFUL, VALUABLE STORY



A key to improved collaboration and integration is using shared data and results. This is why metrics are essential to the modern communicator.

If communicators want to regain and/or maintain a strategic position at the helm of their organizations, it's time to rethink how measurement is approached and move beyond metrics such as earned media clips, social shares, likes and followers. At best, those metrics tell a brand awareness story that is light on details and low on business performance. It doesn't paint a picture that demonstrates value. It's not surprising that, as a result, earned media budgets have declined.

The downfall of earned media budgets is repairable if communicators take the right steps. Among B2B marketers, 70 percent would shift more of their budgets to earned media if it was directly attributable to financial impact and ROI.

"I've got people around me who say things like, 'I went into media relations because I don't want to do math.'" Nikki Wheeler of CenturyLink says. "The ability to do math and understand your metrics and determine how you drive value is a position of strength. You need to stop saying I don't do math and start saying I'm excited to share my results and prove the value of media relations."

This shift in thinking is critical. Doing math, understanding data, and compiling that data in a meaningful way are requirements of the job today. It's a change paid and owned have embraced, which resulted in a budget reallocation for them. In paid media, cost-per-acquisition (CPA) metrics helped businesses understand how many transactions were prompted from a digital ad, showing ROI. In owned media, conversion metrics demonstrate how a digital experience drives new leads or purchases.

At Cision, we call this True Measurement. True Measurement provides a new framework for PR and comms teams to showcase the effectiveness of their campaigns. It is predicated on the idea that measurement should be based on both the quality of coverage, as well as how that coverage drove specific business outcomes.

To Learn More About True Measurement, Download the Whitepaper: Implementing True Measurement: An Earned Media Management Strategy, Metrics That Matter

Moyra Knight insists that her team members have a measurable objective for any campaign, plan or program. “The objective statement needs to be a measurable statement with KPIs directly connected to it,” she says.

Her insistence doesn’t guarantee she always gets what she wants. “I still see a lot of plans where there’s an objective statement, strategies, tactics and all the materials, but there’s not one measure in it. I go back and say, ‘Okay, this is great, but how do you know if it’s going to be successful? How are you going to share it with other business leaders?’”

Elizabeth Rector, head of brand reputation and insights at Cisco, pushes measurement norms in her

role. She and her team are looking for new, strategic ways to provide value to Cisco through the communications function.

“It starts at the business level. What is the outcome we’re trying to drive? That’s the key,” Elizabeth says. “You can’t customize [measurement] to every individual. You have to say, ‘Here’s how we approach it.’”

Elizabeth’s team is responsible for finding, reviewing and synthesizing the insights, metrics and intelligence that will help them make more strategic decisions that align not just to the communications department at Cisco but to the business overall. As they’ve gotten more insights, it has given communications a stronger strategic position within the organization.

“For the last several years, it has been really clear we need budget for earned media because it is a lens to the market,” Elizabeth says.

For those trying to understand where to start, it’s important to first recognize the way stakeholders interact with brand messages and how business has significantly changed. Today, it takes **six to eight touches to generate a viable lead**. The path to purchase — the path to convert — are not straight lines.

“We know a positive story engenders positive brand feelings. Feelings are great, but how do those feelings translate into buying decisions?” Nikki Wheeler of



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—MOYRA KNIGHT

CenturyLink says. “What I’m looking at is how can I track the effect a story is having from the time it’s placed to the buying decision. This allows me to connect the fact that a sales rep was able to share an article with a prospective customer. That article made a positive impression, which influenced a buying decision.”

This idea is called multi-touch attribution. Multi-touch attribution distributes credit for conversions among the different communications a customer or stakeholder comes into contact with across their journey.

“We’re able to source code our digital content with links back to landing pages on our website, the booking page, the booking widget on our web page. We can actually track a piece of content and a customer’s behaviour all the way through to a booking,” Linda Rutherford of Southwest Airlines says. “We can trace what a customer does and when he or she is interacting with a piece of content we put out there.”

Adopting the right measurement model is only half the battle. The other half is figuring out how to communicate the results in a way that is valuable to the business. Many communications pros find themselves in a state of data overwhelm — both by the amount of data available and the way data is interpreted and perceived. Communicators who succeed at measurement take control of this situation.

“If you have two different tools to help you measure impact, you’re going to get two different impacts,” Marcy Koen of Mastercard says. “We’ve standardized our measurement templates across the company. No matter who’s looking at the report, they’re familiar with the types of metrics we’re reporting out. We’re very consistent.”

Consistent storytelling is key. In fact, we encourage modern communicators to go beyond a financial impact story. In this field, there’s more to the story than dollars and cents. Communications creates intangible benefits — stronger relationships, brand awareness, emotions. ROI should include metrics such as share of voice and sentiment because they are metrics that can show progress over time.

Southwest Airlines has a measurement guru, and she likes to say that everybody is focused on big data. “I’m chewing on small data,” Linda Rutherford says. “It’s how to bring all of these little data points together to provide an insight on whether a piece of content is working or whether an employee understood an announcement. The correlation of different types of data is just as important as some of the vanity metrics,” she says.

Communicators know they bring value to the organizations they represent. But, 70 percent of marketers don’t have enough data and analytics (or don’t know where to find it) to determine the impact of earned media programs. At the same time, **81 percent of senior marketers believe earned media has a more positive impact than paid media**, and that’s a number likely to increase. Bridging this gap is vitally important and to do it you need the right tools providing the right insights and information.

Cision Impact, powered by Cision ID, puts a vast amount of earned media data into an easy-to-read report. Cision Impact reports bring together data points on validated reach, engagement, demographic (or for B2B, firmographic) data, and conversion data for all earned media campaigns. With Cision Impact, modern communicators can measure and report on tangible outcomes that truly matter to the organization.



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CHANGE #



3 LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN. THEN, TEST AND LEARN



One of the ways communicators can improve their metrics and the success stories they tell business leaders is by listening to the needs of their audiences. Engage in tests that explore how to enhance message structure, delivery and distribution.

Until today, communications have often been an afterthought or separated apart from the marketing function. As such, communicators get requests to create press releases or add tactics to marketing plans. To combat this, communicators are learning everything they can about the channels they own so they can be an authority instead of an addendum. Communicators know to reach the right people, at the right time, with the right message, means they first have to listen to what they want and understand what they need.

“We spent a number of years honing our skills in social listening and engagement before we started

going full force into content creation,” Marcy Koen of Mastercard says. “I think it was a really good approach because we had a better sense of who the stakeholders were and who was leading the conversation.”

Once they had that knowledge, they had more precise ideas about the content that would perform well on their channels. One of the luxuries modern communicators have today is there are many ways to communicate. There are many vehicles, voices, technologies and channels. The challenge with this is that all of those options can be variables and function differently.

“You have to test out channels to see how audiences react to certain messages,” Linda Rutherford of Southwest Airlines says. “I think the audience will tell you what channel they want to get information on. The most important thing we have to be doing is listening to see where the right place is to go.”

For instance, Southwest Airlines first thought Twitter would be a place to make news announcements. Through trial and error, Linda and her team learned Twitter users weren't interested in their content. Instead, the Twittersphere wanted to use the platform as a real-time customer care channel. They wanted Southwest Airlines to take care of the challenges they were experiencing as customers.

Linda and her team shifted gears.

Now Southwest listens 24/7 on Twitter, and they have an eight-minute response rate. Based on what the audience told Southwest they wanted, Twitter has

become a channel for customer care. When Southwest's customers visit their Facebook page, however, they get a broader brand story. "They might learn about where we're flying next. That's where they get a lot of texture about our brand," Linda says.

Southwest Airlines encourages a corporate culture that allows for a test-and-learn approach, and Linda thinks this is brilliant and needed for the world we live in today. When you think about the communications profession and all the different ways in which communicators can put together a story and share it with the world, don't you want to have a sense of what your audiences want and will respond to first?



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—MARCY KOEN

CHANGE #



BECOME A MODERN COMMUNICATOR WHO CAN DO IT ALL



Understanding advanced metrics in [Earned Media Management](#) and testing and optimizing communications channels requires new personnel on the communications team. Or it requires the current personnel to learn new skills.

The rise of digital in the mid-2000s exposed something about communicators: they couldn't do everything. As a result, agencies and companies rushed to hire digital specialists to plug missing skill sets. Since then the industry has had a see-saw debate on whether it's better to be a communications generalist, specialist or combination of both.

While that debate continues, what is evident is communicators must do more — learn and perform new skills from data analyst to videographer to podcast producer — to be successful. Communicators need to be nimble and willing to try what is needed to get the job done. To add value to their organizations,

communications leaders are assembling teams who can do it all.

“We’ve created a really good team of generalists who understand the importance of getting the message right. Together, we determine the best place to convey a message or where we want to start a conversation,” says Marcy Koen of Mastercard. “There has been some scaling up and scaling across our team to help everyone get comfortable in the omnichannel world we operate in. We’re asking everyone to be strategic, to make decisions, and to help the business understand where messages and conversations need to be.”

Expecting more from communicators does not mean there are more people to do the work. “There aren’t more people; there’s just more being asked of us.” Nikki Wheeler of CenturyLink says.

How do effective communicators respond?



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—MARCY KOEN

They're always training and learning new essential skills, as the job requires.

"We basically like learning," Marcy Koen of Mastercard says. "Each time we're learning from our mistakes and then figuring out how to do better next time. I think it's a very interesting approach and something I would recommend. The whole industry is changing so quickly that we have to be very nimble about how we approach our work."

For example, at CenturyLink, Nikki Wheeler and her team needed to change the way they created news packages. They needed to adopt an approach that let them make and deliver news quicker.

"We did a training with our team where we practiced creating news packages with our iPhones. We learned how to edit and how to convert with them."

Mastercard has taken a similar approach. They've invested in training to help communicators

become social and digital experts and better understand the evolution of the publishing world. "It starts by rethinking the skills of what a modern-day communications team looks like," says Marcy Koen.

Part of assembling a modern communications team means extending the boundaries of who is on the team. "We put out a call for creative [talent] and realized we have more people than we thought," Marcy says. When the needs of the job demand skills the communications team doesn't have, they go to their colleagues. "We look to our marketing counterparts and media team for best practices with paid," says Marcy.

Managing a modern-day communications team requires a different and new approach. From finding the right skill sets to building out talented and diverse teams from within, every company addresses the need differently, but making the shift is essential.

CHANGE #



EMBRACE A MULTIMODALITY APPROACH



One of the new skills communicators are learning today is how to take a multimodality approach to compose their messages and reach their audiences. Multimodality is the use of different media elements to compose a central message or story, which can improve your audience's interest and receptiveness.

"The job hasn't changed, but how we do it—the tools we have to do it—have changed," Jeff Kuhlman of Bentley says.

Our increasingly visual world is due in large part to the influence of social media. **Communications are now 84 percent visual.** The success of Stories on SnapChat, Instagram, and Facebook is another indicator: visual

messages and multimedia have become table stakes—they are the new normal—for communicators.

"I restructured my team a year ago, and I revamped my manager position to be PR and multimedia," Lauren Lawson-Zilai of Goodwill Industries International says. "I'm always looking for someone that either has a news background or a video background because I see how the industry is changing."

Multimedia and visual communications have the ability to grab interest quickly and maintain attention. For media outreach and pitching, it's more effective at making a quick impression than text. According to our **2018 Global State of the Media**



84%

Communications are now 84 percent visual. Visual messages and multimedia have become table stakes—they are the new normal—for communicators.

report, journalists use multimedia elements 70.5 percent of the time. Often journalists are tasked with creating multimedia without the support of a photographer or video editor. Providing them with those assets can make their jobs easier.

“In our organization, we take an integrated approach to storytelling,” says Nikki Wheeler of CenturyLink. “Not every time, but typically, we try to create a written piece, a video, and a graphic or visual,” she says.

Communicators need to be aware of the quality of the multimedia content they produce and pitch. The quality needs to be digital-ready, but that doesn't mean it needs to be perfect.

“We produce news using our iPhones. It isn't always the most highly polished piece,” Nikki says. “It's a straight news shot just like you'd see on the CBS Monday morning show. It's not an overly done, hyped-up marketing piece,” she says. This approach — this style — gives her team credibility with news providers. If the piece isn't overly polished, it's perceived as more newsworthy, authentic and genuine.

Marcy Koen at Mastercard has experienced something similar. “We are scrappy. We don't have a big media budget. We don't have a reproduction budget,” she says. “We produce content quickly and accurately. And we're very flexible. We get it out there fast.” This approach has worked in Marcy's favor and opened an opportunity for additional budget. But more budget doesn't necessarily mean sleekness follows. “Sometimes we want [our content] to be more organic.”

The way communicators execute their work must evolve. One way to achieve this is through a concept called Smart Engagement: Smart Engagement is an approach to content and communications distribution that values a proper mix of both reach and relevance for each audience member.

It starts with creating content that is individualized to precise audiences but also depends on creating more immersive and entertaining experiences with the use of multimedia. An essential element of Smart Engagement is including rich, dynamic assets like images, audio, infographics, interactive and video content as part of a pitch or a press release. Modern communicators will also need to switch from a generic, episodic press release strategy to one where they are focused on a continuous, always-on campaign approach much like those their digital counterparts employ.

Journalists rely more than ever on brands to provide fact-based, compelling information. Sixty-three percent of [journalists still find immense value in the press release](#). Providing supplementary elements alongside a press release that tells a full, clear, concise digital story are appreciated. When done right, Smart Engagement builds relationships and trust. The end result is more earned media.

To Learn More About Smart Engagement, Download The Whitepaper: Smart Engagement: An Earned Media Management Strategy



*The job hasn't changed, but how we do it—
the tools we have to do it—have changed,*

—JEFF KUHLMAN

CHANGE #



EVERYONE, EVEN TRADITIONAL MEDIA, IS MEDIA



Today's new communication formats are targeted to broader and more varied audiences. Those audiences include influencers of every shape and size, the traditional media, stakeholders and brand advocates. Today's communicators must embrace the opportunities available in the reality that everyone has the potential to be media.

"When everyone is media, what do you do?" Jeff Kuhlman of Bentley asks. "Number one, you encourage it."

The Digital Age has redefined what it means to be media, multiplying the number of outlets and distribution channels available to communicators. The traditional media list has gotten smaller, but new, non-traditional media lists have emerged and grown.

"Historically, we had to rely on the [traditional] media to tell our story, so it opens up a big opportunity for communicators to change the medium and change the way our message is received because we have more control." Marcy Koen of Mastercard says.



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Cisco's Elizabeth Rector believes lists still matter, but they must evolve. "Sometimes it's blogs or social influencers who are moving the needle in the mind of our customers," she says. Communicators need to assess and understand their best media options and build relationships and lists where it's going to have the greatest impact on their organizations.

A shift must occur, where influencers and journalists are identified based on the amount of actual overlap that a person has with the brand's target consumer. PR pros can easily do this by establishing an Influencer Graph: an Influencer Graph is a complete mapping between an influencer, their content and the actual audience that consumes it. Essentially, by mapping out potential influencers, the content those influencers create and the consumers that read/watch/listen to that content, you can graph the overlap and identify the ideal influencers to pitch.

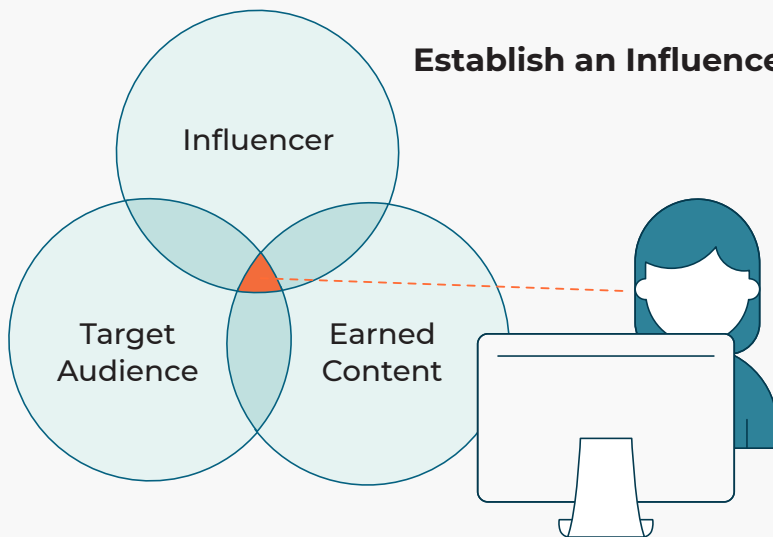
This change is influencing the way communicators approach media outreach, too.

According to Nikki Wheeler of CenturyLink, the approach today is the reverse of what it used to be. Instead of starting by pitching a story to a list of jour-

nalists, Nikki and her team begin with a one-to-one approach. They look at the right story, for the right reporter, to reach the audience they want to engage. Today, Nikki and her team think about how to give an outlet or influencer what they need to publish a news piece. Once they've gone through that process, they consider whether they want to pitch their story to a broader list.

Another trend that continues to change the media landscape is the growth of influencers. A 2017 survey of nearly 300 marketing managers found that **influencer marketing was the fastest growing online customer-acquisition method**. Fifty-five percent of marketers believe influencer marketing produces better leads and customers, and businesses make \$6.50 for every dollar invested in influencer marketing.

In some ways, Marcy Koen of Mastercard doesn't think all the new options available to communicators are necessarily new. What has changed is the scope and breadth of influence new media has. Because of that change, Marcy works collaboratively with marketing to think through the spectrum of influence. They look at who their influencers are and determine how Mastercard can work with them, and it shifts.



Establish an Influencer Graph

Optimize influencer identification with these questions:

Who is your target audience?

What influencers reach your target audience?

What content performs best?



*We put several tiers of training around social media so our frontline employees understand they could be on all the time, ...
Every customer is a potential reporter and recorder.*

—LINDA RUTHERFORD

From YouTubers to Instagram influencers to podcasters, communicators have a lot of choices, including their very own employees, which brings both a unique opportunity and risk.

“One of the groups we look at closely is employees as advocates for our brand,” Marcy says. “How do we get them to be more comfortable being an employee advocate and an authentic advocate? I think this is a big opportunity, but everybody sees the mistakes the media covers, and they don’t want to be that person.”

With so many employees on the frontline, Southwest realized it had to be intentional. “We put several tiers of training around social media so our frontline employees understand they could be on all the time,” Linda Rutherford says. “Every customer is a potential reporter and recorder.”

In the airline industry, there are plenty of examples of employees who have been caught on camera doing something they’d rather not have recorded. Those instances can become the company news of the day. “We want to avoid that if at all possible,” Linda says.

Jeff Kuhlman of Bentley acknowledges the employee-as-advocate challenge is real. He also acknowledges it’s not 100 percent containable. “Of course, you want some control, but you never have control,” Jeff says. “What you do is you teach. You demonstrate and share best practices. We need to mentor and direct people,” he says.

The proliferation of media and distribution channels has fundamentally changed the game with media options available today that communicators wouldn’t — couldn’t — consider before. This is another opportunity for modern communicators to provide the strategic thinking and directions business’s need to flourish in this new landscape.

**Want to Learn How to Become A Modern Communicator? Download The Whitepaper —
The Modern Communicator Playbook:
A Guide On Transforming Public Relations
And Earned Media For The Better**

Be Part of the Earned Media Resurgence

One of the more striking points we learned from interviewing communicators for this guide is that meaningful change doesn't come quickly. It takes time. It takes trial and error. It requires effort and learning. But for PR and communications to regain a strategic business position, authority, and influence the status quo—the way things have always been done—is no longer practical.

We recognize the communications industry grapples with the changes it needs to make. We recognize it can be hard to start.

We believe the six ideas we've outlined here are a strategic guide to help you make the changes the field needs. Begin by collaborating more with your paid and owned counterparts and acting as a chief integrator for your business. Develop metrics and rely on data to share your story of success and communicate the value of earned media. Listen to your customers and audiences. With that knowledge,

test messages and communications channels and keep testing them until you find the approach or channel that moves your objectives forward. Adopt a Smart Engagement approach and provide value to the journalists and influencers you pitch by giving them multimedia, visual, and reliable, fact-based content. Take this approach because it means you will learn something new and become a communicator who can do it all. And realize that everyone and anyone can be media. When you think of people in that context, you will learn new ways to work with them to support your message and brand story.

As we said, trends and data point to a resurgence of earned media and communications if communicators can seize the opportunity. Are you ready to be a part of the new way—the modern way—communications is practiced? With an abundance of tools, media and techniques to practice as a modern communicator, the only thing that's missing is you.



ABOUT JAY BAER

Jay Baer helps businesses clone their customers. He has created five multi-million dollar companies, and is a 7th-generation entrepreneur. He is the President of Convince & Convert, a consulting firm that helps the world's most iconic brands like The United Nations, Nike, 3M, and Oracle use technology to win new customers, and keep the customers they've already earned. A New York Times best-selling author of five books and key-note speaker, Jay is also the host of the award-winning Social Pros podcast.

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