

PR's conversion rate

"PR can be more effective than branded content."



By [Bridget von Holdt](#) 2 Jan 2015

PR is evolving at a rapid rate: these days, 'public relations' encompasses everything from social media to content marketing. According to Fastcompany.com, "PR's data shows that PR generates conversion rates 10 to 50 times that of advertising conversions".

PR can be more effective than branded content. This is the case in the US and the UK, and South Africa isn't that far behind:

Written content is the way to go

Like the rest of the world, the media landscape is shrinking in South Africa, with newspapers and magazines struggling to meet advertising targets and restructuring at every turn. Journalists too, are changing from being reporters to becoming content generators, and in turn many are attracted to content writing and looking at PR as a new career choice.

Creating compelling content that is informative, yet pleasantly consumable and user friendly, is what PR agencies should be focusing on for 2015. After all, we have already seen how social media and digital media (Facebook, Twitter, Mxit as well as bloggers), have changed the face of PR campaigns in 2014.

Visual content no longer a nice to have

Visual content has become an imperative. Consumption of video across the incredible array of available mobile devices and social media platforms keeps on growing and mobile devices will also continue to transform the news environment. The rise of the so-called second screen phenomenon, in which users log onto the internet on their tablet or smartphone while watching TV, is creating a new mind-set where consumers and business will grow more willing to interact with brands through social channels in the coming year.

Social media grows up

The disciplines of public relations and social media will be housed under one functional silo. PR professionals will use a mix of traditional, digital and social media, blended together and tailor-made for companies to reach their target audiences. PR professionals will be able to make deeper connections and to build relationships, loyalty and advocacy through any number of channels - this side of digital is growing up quickly.

'Media' is all media, including print, radio, TV, digital platforms, journalists, bloggers, radio, TV as well as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, WeChat, YouTube and more. These media are all doing well and growing at a rapid rate in South Africa, but there are new innovations that will pop up sooner than you expect that will be used to deliver valuable content to audiences.

Upskill in digital media

South African public relations practitioners are under-utilising digital media and the industry needs to catch up fast. Social media is now fully integrated into most businesses at some level.

Businesses have long realised they need social media representation because more and more consumers are searching for them on Facebook, sending tweets, posting pictures on Instagram as opposed to interacting with their websites. PR needs an aggressive push for better use of digital media which is a powerful and effective tool. The industry will grasp the effectiveness of this tool and upskill their employees in 2015.

Talent pool becomes specialised

Creative and analytics skills will be in greater demand than ever before. The PR talent pool will become more specialised simply because of new developments in monitoring and measurement. PR will be able to gather and analyse data effectively and accurately to assist innovative communication, relationship building, reputation management and crisis management.

PR agencies will employ younger thinking specialists who have an understanding of the effective use of the many digital platforms available to them. Another specialist will also emerge - one who understands strategy - and these specialists will lend their skills to monitoring client needs, unravel data measurement and provide innovative factual data to hone in on the right target media to promote the message to the right audience to fuel the client's campaign.

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Bridget von Holdt is the Business Director at BCW Africa. Bridget's experience in public relations spans over 30 years and is a registered APR. A revered name in South African Public Relations and communication circles and a recipient of the PRISM Lifetime Achievement Award in 2018, Bridget is known for her vision to see beyond the conventional in the communication industry.

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