

Transform your tech PR approaches or risk becoming irrelevant

 By [Ronelle Bester](#)

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In a fast-evolving and digital news environment, once tried and trusted models for media relations and media releases are becoming obsolete.



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At Red Ribbon Communications, we have seen significant changes in the world of media relations in recent years, but the Covid-19 pandemic brought with it even more dramatic change, and within the space of just a few months.

Emerging news sources

According to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2021, there has been a steady decline in printed media over the past five years, with only 32% of research respondents using print as a news source in South Africa.

Now, there is growing use of social media channels such as Twitter and LinkedIn as a source of news, and forward-looking brands are harnessing newer platforms like TikTok to reach younger markets. The research also found that 73% of respondents around the world now access their news via smartphones.

In addition, we see podcasts and vlogs becoming more important as a source of news and opinion.

These trends all impact the placement, format and style of the content that brands and their PR agencies produce, and we have to adapt to this. Listicles, clickbait and short-form content suited to mobile consumption are becoming acceptable and effective ways to convey corporate messaging in this new environment, and brands' own digital channels are a good way to support overall communication efforts.

Media relations is still important

At the same time, leading news, business and technology publications remain important for brand exposure, because of their reach and credibility. Unlike digital content distributed on your brand's own channels, media exposure gives you credibility and authority from a trusted source.



#PRAisethePR: Nthabiseng Mokoena, "Storytelling is critical"

Emily Stander 20 Sep 2021



But securing earned exposure has become tougher. It requires solid media relations and a good understanding of how the media itself has changed. Where just a year or two ago, thought leadership was well-received, journalists are now more concerned about topical issues, and how a company will make a difference to challenges like the economy and the future of work.

Particularly in the technology market, which is crowded with new products, services and innovations, a brand's news needs to relate to a major breakthrough, an incredible first, or have a significant and demonstrable impact on society, or it probably won't make it to publication.

Now, rapid responses to a newsworthy event are proving highly effective; which requires a different mindset and a sense of urgency from both brands and marketing agencies.

The 'so what' question

If a brand's news cannot pass the media 'so what' test, my advice is to issue it via the wire and share it on the brand's own channels instead. This type of brand awareness content has its place – notably as reference material which may be found online. But it probably won't find a place in business and mainstream media.

Storytelling

Ideally, you want to establish your spokesperson as an expert and trusted advisor. It means original, well researched and well-constructed content. It's about telling a story and illustrating values, while also adapting to new content and consumption models.



Jennifer Stein 9 Jul 2021



In a nutshell, media relations today are about answering to two fundamental questions: why would our story be of interest to the readers and more largely what impact will it have on our community, our country, and the world. It is a new mindset to media relations, but also a business challenge leaders are faced with – marking a positive impact.

ABOUT RONELLE BESTER

Ronelle Bester, MD of Red Ribbon Communications, started her career in technology at Dimension Data as marketing manager of the Western Cape. She has a BTech degree in public relations from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and has lectured in public relations at both the University of South Africa and Varsity College. Email Ronelle at ronelle@redribboncommunications.co.za, read her blog and follow her on Twitter at [@ronelle](https://twitter.com/ronelle).

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