

# Staying ahead of today's public relations challenges

While my focus has been more on the digital/social media side for the last eight years or so, I have been in the world of public relations and marketing for more than 25 years. Over the last several years, I have seen the role of the public relations professional and agency definitely change, but public relations agencies are far from being obsolete. In fact, our job has become even more important, with even more "to do" for those who have expanded into new media channels (as they should), like Jaffe PR.



Jaffe Guest Blogger

The modern PR agency must now stay ahead of today's expanding communications challenges. Our job is to help our clients communicate their ideas and connect with the right audiences to deliver return-on-investment (ROI) results based on their overall business development goals. Media is media. The reality is that our tasks at hand haven't really changed that much, other than how we execute, thanks to digital and social media channels. The rest of PR's duties will still remain constant, from event production and pitching media to internal and investor relations activities, but modern public relations professionals who have embraced new media (as they should) must now do much more in conjunction with the [traditional role that we have held for close to 60 years](#). Here's a partial list of these new added tasks.

**Build Online Communities or Audiences:** Search involves more than the technical details of keyword research and on- and off-page optimization. Google, Bing and others rank content based on its relevancy and popularity. These search engines also judge that by how much is going on in social media channels: sharing, liking and commenting on content that is placed on social media channels (via media and blogger outreach). PR professionals must now support clients to build online communities for their content to be shared. Media outreach now includes blogger and influencer relations within social media communities such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Pinterest, Google+ and many others.

**Handle Influencer Relations and Manage Online Public Reputations:** PR professionals must now do more than media relations; we also need to handle influencer relations and manage our clients' online public reputations. It used to be that clients relied on a PR agency to find an intermediary (i.e., journalist) to get their stories out, but now that "middleman" is not as necessary. It also used to be that our only job was to manage what our clients said to the media. As our clients have become their own publishing houses (brand journalists or Legal Brand Journalism pros). As clients have more ability to write and say what they want online, PR professionals now need to help clients develop, produce and publicize good multimedia content, such as videos, podcasts and blogs to get as many impressions and as much engagement activity as possible. We also need to ensure that what our clients write and say is appropriate and on point with their personal or business brand's reputations within the digital media space.

**Enhance Digital Visibility and Target Audience Reach:** Landing a story in the *New York Times* might be great for traffic and getting great visibility, but that kind of visibility will only last so long (even as it continues to live on the publication's website. Even then, stories are not usually archived or that "findable" as the years go by. Targeting a story in a smaller niche blog (i.e., <http://www.natlawreview.com/>) is likely to convert better and provide a much greater reach, especially if it is optimized with the right keywords and back links. Obviously, the best media coverage must land in both mainstream and new media (remember, media are media). Many stories that may never have had a chance of being picked up or placed in the big mainstream channels now have a chance "to be seen and read" because of new media.

**Search Engine Optimization and Social Media Network News Placement:** Most of our news and information world now also takes place on the Internet – from discovery and research to relationship- and business-building, Publicists are now charged with getting our clients' information and news on the Internet alongside or not alongside traditional print and media channels like TV, radio or print. This means we also must know how to work/understand search engine optimization. The days of hiring a PR firm to write a news release and get you in your favorite magazine are over. Spreading word of mouth via content, social and targeted influencers is far more effective – and all of that is what PR professionals *must* handle. News releases now also have to "be found" online and be written a certain way. Press releases must be relevant and interesting, and include natural links and keywords so the content can earn a search engine's vote of confidence. The more such votes of confidence, the higher up the search engine food chain the content will go. Page-one (page rank) placement on Google with keywords that draw in the right audience is becoming just as important as that traditional old *New York Times* story placement or mention.

**Forget the social media management or marketing agencies.** Most of these "upstarts" have usually not grown from traditional public relations or marketing backgrounds. Most people these days can operate a social media account and put out posts, tweet, share content, etc., but, in my opinion, it's the public relations professional who should be the go-to for all social media activities. Modern publicists who have evolved to meet the changing public relations needs of personal and business brands know how to support clients with the writing and expression, as well as the delivery, of the right messages that will reach the right people and successfully communicate and drive publicity in new media channels. Doing so is crucial for short- and long-term success or ROI.



*Laurie Pehar Borsh is a 25+ year B2B and B2C public relations and promotions veteran who merged her traditional skill set into producing and managing digital publicity and public relations campaigns and projects for clients in the early part of the new century—the dawn of social media. As a social media publicity producer, Laurie's mission is to help clients cut through the clutter of the overwhelming "new media beast"*

*with better strategies and best-practice tactical plans to ensure a continual return on investment.*