

RAGAN VIRTUAL CONFERENCE:

# Media Relations & Measurement

Wednesday, April 7, 2021

11 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. ET

## Executive Summary

*Notes from select sessions at the virtual conference.*

11:25-11:45 a.m. ET

Panel

### **Regaining Trust and Transparency: Communicators' Role in Media Literacy and the Fight Against Misinformation**

Panelists identified the top challenges communicators face in promoting transparency amid a fractured media ecosystem:

**Karthik Krishnan, Global CEO of Britannica Group** said that fake news has been around for centuries, but noted that today the volume, velocity and type has amplified its strength. Deep fakes are a particular concern, which opensource video can exacerbate the spread of. Audiences are also more likely to re-tweet fake stories than real stories, and it takes 6 times longer to reach people on good stories than negative stories

While we expect technology today (search engines) to provide the best information, audiences also usually end up clicking on the top 1-3 results. As we are inundated with info, we are also a culture driven by soundbites.

All of this means that we can't fight fake news with vague information. Communicators should enact best practices that encourage self-regulation and meet ethical standards of journalists.

Journalists can't fight fake news on their own – it requires a strong network that communicators should help build. Everyone must come together and agree on a process or initiative to tackle myths and uniformed opinions. Communicators should also advocate for regulations that prevent the sharing of fake news.

**Howard Mortman, Communications Director at C-SPAN** noted that the network is in a unique place when it comes to the trust and transparency conversation, as it shows real news with no correspondents telling you what you are watching. All of their video lives online and is searchable and shareable. People can excavate and discover things that have been said by politicians and then share that info.

Trust is sacrosanct and building trust with reporters starts with having trust in reporters. He agreed with Karthik that communicators are begging for smart people to solve the fake news problems, but stressed that comms should partner with tech teams to make sure the content they put out is protected from manipulation by bad actors, and traceable back to primary source.

1:40-2:00 p.m. ET

Panel

### **The Art of the Pitch and More: What Journalists Really Want**

*Brianne Garrett, reporter, editorial lead, For(bes) the culture*

*Ilana Kaplan, lifestyle editor, Dotdash*

*Marcus Riley, senior director of content strategy, E.W. Scripps Co.*

*Aaron Kwittken, founder and CEO, PRophet*

**Aaron Kwittken:** What do you recommend for PR people in creating and forming relationships?

**Brianne Garrett:** Limit how rigid you are with your agenda. Be open to cultivating a relationship that may not immediately yield a story. That's the best advice I could offer. Some of the best stories I have pursued have been from developing relationships with PR people that weren't on a story I was working on or that I wanted. If you're open to developing a relationship with that journalist, it's the best course of action.

**Marcus Riley:** It's not always about the PR person being about that story at that specific time. It's often about whether you form a relationship. When you have a relationship with someone it doesn't have to be a fully laid out pitch. It can be, "I have this expert on whatever, I don't know what you're working on."

**Ilana Kaplan:** The most meaningful relationships I have with publicists are with people who've researched what I've done. Doing research and seeing my beat, which is pretty evident, is really helpful and really cultivates the relationship. And have a general rapport about what topics the journalist is interested in so. Then you can come back in the future.

**Kwittken:** There's linear pitching—as in, I'm pitching you because it looks like you might be interested on what you've written in the past. But sometimes there are things you shouldn't be pitching. An attack on the capital. The insurrection. Civil unrest. What do you recommend for PR people when there's something sensitive going on. How do you approach reporters?

**Riley:** We still need to speak to people, and we still need to reach people and interview people. We need to talk about this stuff. Personally, I'm okay with that pitch. Does that person know where you're coming from as the reporter? Are they not an opportunist? That goes a long way.

**Garrett:** PR pros need to really double down on knowing the reporter, that's really important. Send me a pitch that reflects that you did your own research before you hit send. And you're not being opportunistic. Avoid that condescending nature of sending—I don't need the context. I need to know how you want to help me do my job. There's no need for them to shelve pitching, but be more intentional about the pitch.

**Kaplan:** To both Marcus's and Brienne's point, what I find is it helps if a publicist gives people gives writers grace when there is a lot going on. Your emergency is not someone else's emergency. When there's a lack of humanity when it comes to pitching, that's when it doesn't work.

**Kwittken:** Technology is changing the way we get tips and engage with sources and PR. There's AI, there are new platforms like Clubhouse. How does that impact the relationship between publicists and reporters?

**Riley:** I've dabbled in Clubhouse on a lot of topics. I don't have a lot of experience in using AI in journalism. Relationship building is relationship building. If you're on Clubhouse make sure you're building a lot relationships.

**Garrett:** We have had a lot of success on Instagram. When the pandemic hit we pivoted to a lot of our programming for For(bes) the culture on Clubhouse. You could get a good sense of the topic we want and the coverage areas. That has been beneficial on both sides is what I'm finding.

**Kwittken:** How can newsrooms change their workflow and processes to be more diverse and and inclusive and also create a sense of belonging?

**Garrett:** By making sure DEI is enabled in all aspects of coverage. It should be a priority and used in all of our verticals.

**Riley:** Everything Brienne just said. Putting an accountability tracker in your newsroom. We're building diversity Rolodexes in our newsrooms. Intentionality—you just have to be intentional about it.

**Kwittken:** What format are you most likely to respond to?

**Garrett:** I don't do well with all caps. I don't like the urgency.

2:40-3:00 p.m. ET

Panel

### **Focusing on Purpose: Adapting to Values-Based Spending and Resonating with Multicultural Audiences**

*Trovon Williams, SVP, Marketing and Communications, NAACP*

*Cat Colella-Graham, Founder and Chief Employee Experience Officer, Cheer Partners*

- **In 2021 and beyond, authenticity must be more than a PR buzzword.**
- **Authenticity must be a foundational, long-term part of your business strategy.** Take your employees and customers on a journey as you learn, grow and develop a DE&I plan.
- **Don't pretend like problems don't exist.** Be transparent. Acknowledge harsh truths and that you don't have all the answers. Don't be afraid to be real and raw and to be honest about your own ignorance.
- **DE&I and social justice objectives are a marathon, not a sprint.** Show your work as you learn and achieve specific goals. As you mature, show your progress.
- **You must listen first before you act.** Talk to employees, clients, partners and vendors to gain honest feedback. Ask: "What do you think, and how can we improve?" Then, ask internally: "What can WE do to help?" Be real about what you don't know and realistic about your limitations.
- **Listen to the diverse voices in your midst.** How has your company failed? Where are you falling short or missing opportunities to grow?
- **How can comms set meaningful DE&I benchmarks?** First, figure out what you want to measure. Is it tactics or actual change? Establish clear objectives that are trackable and tangible. Social justice is a long-term process that requires commitment. If a company is committed to becoming an agent of change, you should be transparent about the measurements you're setting. Make DE&I part of your companywide measurement and reporting efforts.
- **Your audience should be able to follow on your journey, and celebrate with you when you hit goals.**
- **When setting a DE&I strategy, determine what's attainable for your specific organization and workforce.** Don't try to be everything to everyone. Social justice is a buffet, but orgs should be a steakhouse. Lean into what you can afford and where you can make a difference.

- **DE&I is still a growing area, and comms should claim part of this space.** You can set and shape the internal and external narrative. Be cautious with shared accountability, however. If everyone owns it, no one does.
- **Don't just be reactive, weigh in, and assume social media solidarity will save you.** Audiences care about action, not about box-ticking words.
- **Tie DE&I initiatives to your bottom line.** See [Nike](#)'s five-year DE&I plan that ties executive compensation to hitting DE&I goals. (Chipotle and McDonald's have done something similar). Report on DE&I quarterly with your earnings call, and show how DE&I can improve retention and bring in more business.
- **If you have long-term DE&I commitments and goals (like Nike's five-year plan), it keeps you on target.** You can't and shouldn't respond to every flare up or every issue. Find your niche. You can always shift priorities down the road, but maybe start with local neighbors and community stakeholders? Show people you're doing good works for the right reasons and not just for clout.
- **Customer and client engagement can soar when your actions match your words.**

3:35-3:55 p.m. ET

Panel

### **How to Growth Hack Your PR Efforts: Ways to Boost Media Coverage, Gain Buzz and Prove ROI**

*Jake Mazanke, Senior Manager of Corporate Communications, Teladoc Health*

*Enid Maran, Managing Director, Global Customer Success and Operations, Onclusive*

*Kristin Daher, Founder and President, Powerhouse Communications*

**Kristin.** As a PR agency, we are always exploring how to rise above the noise. We start everything we do with the why? What value are we bringing to the readers?

Some ways:

- Invest in quality visuals and data. Assets that can help tell your story outside of the words is really important. Subscribing to data intelligence and up to the moment data services.
- Explore media angles outside of the obvious. Unique angles lead to unique coverage.

- Ownership opportunities. Clients that have created their own holidays, their own charity giveaways. Create your own event.
- Dell Taco... the company was launching a taco with more cheese. But at the same time there was a massive cheese surplus in America, and so we were able to tie it in and we found a sculptor to carve media logos out of 40 lb. blocks of cheese.
- Stats... We found data that showed that the more teens have family dinners, the more likely they won't get involved in juvenile drug use and crime. But we can tie into the story for our client, a pizza company, that can tell a larger story about creating family dinners that have a big impact.

**Jake.** At the beginning of the pandemic we were searching for answers. CDC guidelines, how to manage everything. We went to our team and asked, "What are we seeing right now?"

- Crafted a new messaging framework out of talk that came out of Washington, D.C. We really wanted to inform the public about opportunities to use remote health solutions.
- Reporters didn't want to talk about earnings reports or product launches. They needed to talk about the pandemic.
- We leaned into our expertise in chronic condition management.
- Capitalize on trends. We saw that it wasn't just about COVID, there was an overall consumer behavior change. We realized this was an amazing story and was able to book a segment on "Mad Money" with Jim Cramer to use trends to talk about the business going forward.
- Data that tells the story that journalists want.

**Enid.** How do you become part of the conversation? One of the things I hear from Jake and Kristin:

- Not so much capitalizing on a trend as contributing to the conversation.
- Jake's team had something to add to the conversation, to just a take to offer on a news item.
- It's not just about getting your CEO's name in a news program. It's about advancing the conversation.

**Kristin.** Communication is key to build relationships with a client and agency. What we really love is when clients get us involved really early on. It gives the agency ample time to plan and strategize. It also allows us to weigh in on the PR value. Sometimes there are suggestions we can make that will lead to better media opportunities.

Clients sharing their data with us can be a great opportunity. From a marketing perspective they are developing this new product or service for a reason. Having access to the data that underpins those decisions is very valuable.

Clients that make PR a priority get the most out of their PR agency.

**Enid.** It really starts from the top, the CEO and CFO. The most important thing to do as you are setting out for a campaign is to choose metrics that actually reflect the performance of what you are trying to achieve.

You will know if your metrics match your goals if they are actionable in real time. Make sure that you CEO and CFO, all C-level and top leaders, understand that metric and understand why its useful. Get those top leaders to look for it.

If your CEO doesn't care about the metrics, then you have a much bigger problem. Ideally you are in a position at the start of the campaign to show how you goals are going to be measured and how they will contribute to top leaders overall organizational goals.

It can be dollars; it can be generating leads. Brand metrics can feel squishy but there are other metrics that will more directly translate to top leaders, numbers or dollars.

**Jake.** The opportunity to use data is create relatable and timely stories. Your marketing teams are going to be pushing you to tell the story in a particular way. Lead with the news hook—don't lead with your company.

Communications is really about building momentum in the market. Earned media, speaking, social media and awards to build.