

Stay on top of the communications game in 2017

 By [Jennifer Stein](#)

1 Dec 2016

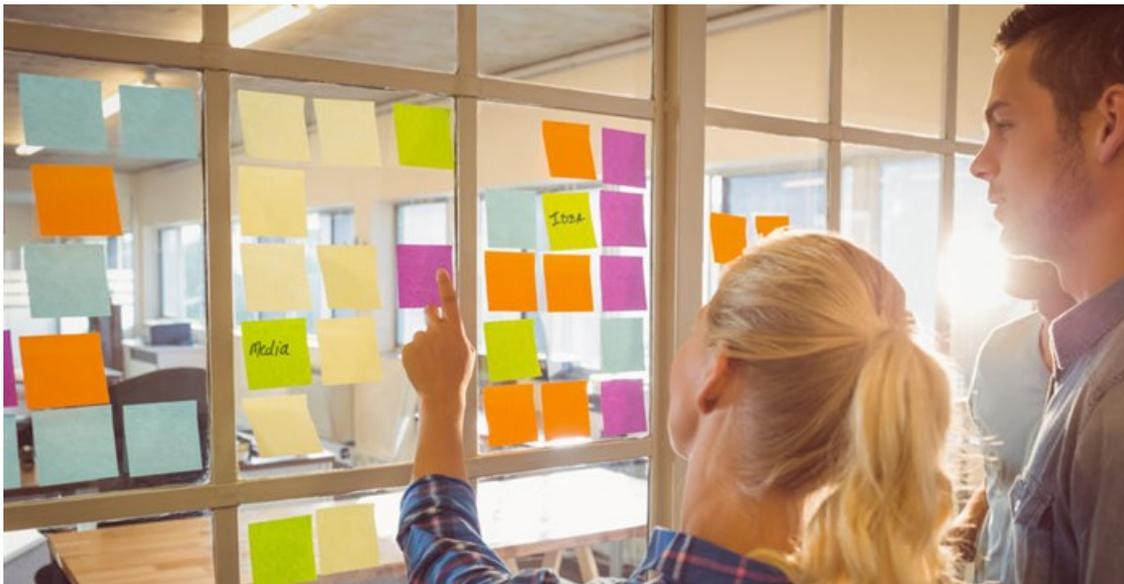
To say that this year has been an interesting one is an understatement. No-one could have predicted the effect on the news cycle of the combination of local news with content that couldn't be made up, global political tsunamis whose waves will continue to batter us for some time and a tough economic climate.

So taking that into consideration, what do PR agencies and clients need to be aware of going into 2017?

Up your game

The economic environment has affected both clients and agencies alike, but on-going downward pressure on budgets shouldn't mean a reduction in delivery or output.

During tough economic times budgets are frequently cut. With the bottom line in mind, the knee-jerk agency reaction is to reduce the scope of work or deliverables accordingly, but this is the worst time to lessen output. Clients are increasingly being asked to justify agency spend and any evidence of reduced performance or results creates a vicious circle of declining delivery leading to further reduced budgets.



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Agencies should always go beyond the brief but when times are challenging, it shows a client/agency partnership in the truest sense of the word by giving added value to clients.

PR will continue to earn its place

Years ago Al Ries predicted the rise of PR and the fall of advertising. While his comments were controversial then, there is incontrovertible evidence of the ever-growing importance of PR and social media at c-suite level and cascading down to marketing and communications departments.

Today we are seeing an increasing acceptance of strategic PR taking its place at the integrated table. More often clients are seeing a multi-channelled integrated approach resting on PR for amplification and conversation creation. No matter which discipline creates or owns content, a big idea or concept, there is little doubt that PR magnifies the message.

Earned media is king

Earned media comes first, and paid amplification comes second.

Earned media's strength should not be underestimated and used properly, it can be the most powerful weapon in the communicator's arsenal. It is a cornerstone of driving reputation, brings the authenticity, trust and credibility sought by savvy consumers and it has power to communicate a brand's key messages.

Bottom-line benefit

Public relations is exactly that – it builds relationships. While media relations was the cornerstone of PR for so many years, the digital environment in which we live has blurred the lines of PR's role in building direct relationships with consumers. Brands are transitioning to play a far greater role in delivering bottom-line impact and now directly build and foster relationships with consumers thanks to integrated communications channels and platforms. It's crucial to measure more than impressions or reach - you have to be able to track leads resulting from your call to action and follow them through to conversion.

Video is like Topsy ... it just keeps growing

Any brand looking to maintain its market share and entice millennial and Generation Z audiences need to jump onto this bandwagon. Fast. Clients who have not factored video production into their 2017 budgets are missing a critical trick. Video consumption is rising exponentially, with Cisco predicting that it will comprise close to 70% of all internet traffic in 2017.

With the concomitant rise in broadband speeds and accessibility, more and more users are streaming videos whenever they want to, wherever they are. The trick here is to create once and use on multiple platforms, being mindful of the strengths and limitations of each and refining and editing content accordingly to ensure access by multiple devices. More bang for the same buck and who can argue with that?

ABOUT JENNIFER STEIN

Jennifer Stein lives and breathes PR. With over 25 years in the industry she has extensive corporate and consumer PR experience across a number of sectors including automotive, IT, fast moving consumer goods, pharmaceutical, property, luxury brands and various services industries. Her areas of expertise include strategy, crisis communications, high level client service and counsel, project and budget management...

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