

Internet and Social Media: Role & Scope in Public Relations

13

chapter



After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

Understand why the Internet is a communications revolution

Organize and design an effective website

Be familiar with the mechanics of doing a webcast

Use social media and networking as public relations tactics

Understand the rapid growth and potential of mobile-enabled content

The Internet: Pervasive in Our Lives

The Internet and social media networks are now dominant in almost everyone's lives, and it's hard to imagine daily life without it. It's even difficult to realize that today's popular social networks such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter didn't even exist 10 years ago. Indeed, the Internet is truly a revolutionary concept that radically transformed a media system that had been in place since Gutenberg invented the printing press in the 1400s.

Armed with digital cameras, camera phones, handheld video cameras, podcasts, blogs, and social networks, we've entered the era of citizen journalism and user-generated content.

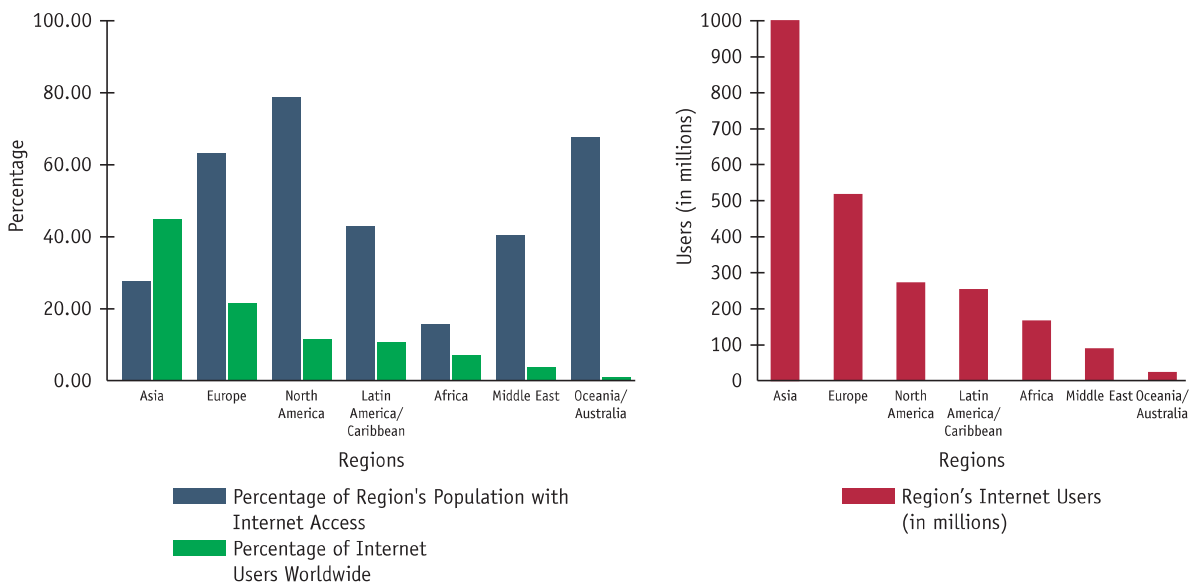
Brian Solis and Deirdre Breakenridge,
authors of *Putting the Public*
Back in Public Relations

For 500 years, mass media dominated the world's landscape. They had the characteristics of being (1) centralized/top-down, (2) costly in terms of being published, (3) staffed by professional gatekeepers known as editors and publishers, and (4) mostly one-way communication with limited feedback channels.

Thanks to the Internet, there are now two spheres of influence, which are constantly interacting with each other. CooperKatz & Company calls them (1) the mediasphere and (2) the blogosphere. The new media system has the characteristics of (1) widespread broadband; (2) cheap/free, easy-to-use online publishing tools; (3) new distribution channels; (4) mobile devices, such as camera phones; and (5) new advertising paradigms. For the first time in history, a medium, the Internet, has literally caused the democratization of information around the world. See Figure 13.1 for a breakdown by region of the world's 2.4 billion users. More recently, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU)

Figure 13.1 Internet Users Around the World

More than a third of the world's population (7 billion) are now using the Internet and the development of mobile broadband is rapidly increasing the numbers of users in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.



Source: Adapted from www.internetworldstats.com (June 2012)

reported that 2.7 billion people were now online—almost 40 percent of the world’s population.

The Internet, first created as a tool for academic researchers in the 1960s, came into widespread public use in the 1990s, and the rest is history. Indeed, the worldwide adoption of the Internet has taken less time than the growth of any other mass medium. Marc Newman, general manager of Medialink Dallas, says, “Whereas it took nearly 40 years before there were 50 million listeners of radio and 13 years until television reached an audience of 50 million, a mere four years passed before 50 million users were logging on to the Internet since it became widely available.”

The growth of the Internet and social media networks continues at an astounding rate. The established ones keep expanding, and newer networks such as Pinterest and Instagram become overnight sensations. Consequently, any figures published today regarding digital media are already out of date. Yet some stats and projections are worth noting as a reference point.

- There will be 3 billion Internet users worldwide by 2016, more than 40 percent of the world’s population.
- Almost 70 percent of the U.S. population will be using smartphones by 2017. Currently, users spend an average of more than two hours daily on their devices.
- U.S. consumers send and receive more than 6 billion text messages every day.
- About 2.8 million e-mails are sent every second, and an average office worker spends about 13 hours a week using e-mail.
- There are more than 700,000 apps in each of the Google Android and Apple stores.
- Facebook, launched in 2004, now has more than 1 billion users worldwide or one out of every seven people on the planet.
- There are 10.5 million photos uploaded to Facebook every hour.
- About 48 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every hour.
- More than 140 million people spend an average of four hours a week watching video online.
- Twitter, launched in 2006, has almost 300 million active users worldwide, and about 400 million tweets are sent every day.
- Two million searches are done on Google every minute.
- Instagram, launched in 2010, surpassed 1 billion photos uploaded, by the end of 2012.
- Wikipedia, if made into a book, would be 2.25 million pages.

The World Wide Web

The exponential growth of the World Wide Web is due, in large part, to browsers such as Internet Explorer and search engines such as Google, which have made the World Wide Web accessible to literally billions of people. Here are some characteristics of the Web that enable public relations people to do a better job of distributing a variety of messages:

- Information can be updated quickly without having to reprint brochures and other materials. This is an important element when it comes to major news events and dealing with a crisis.

- Web allows interactivity; viewers can ask questions about products or services, download information of value to them, and let the organization know what they think.
- Online readers can dig deeper into subjects that interest them by linking to information provided on other sites, in other articles, and in other sources.
- A great amount of material can be posted. There is no space or time limitation.
- It is a cost-effective way to disseminate information on a global basis to the public and journalists.
- You can reach niche markets and audiences directly without messages being filtered through traditional mass media gatekeepers (editors).
- The media and other users can access details about your organization 24 hours a day from anywhere in the world.

Nobody cares about your products and services. They care about themselves and solving problems. Your online content needs to be less egotistical and more helpful.

David Meerman Scott, author of The New Rules of Marketing and PR.

From a public relations standpoint, a website is literally a distribution system in cyberspace. Organizations, for example, use their websites to market products and services and post news releases, corporate backgrounders, product information, position papers, and even photos of key executives or plant locations. The public, as well as media personnel, can access the information, download selected materials into their computers, and even print out hard copies. Websites have also become more interactive, giving public relations professionals' valuable feedback from consumers and the general public. In many cases, an organization's website is hyperlinked to other web pages and information sources. A user can thus jump immediately to a related website by clicking the mouse on various icons. Business Wire's website, for example, links to the home pages of various organizations that use its distribution services.

Various surveys indicate that journalists also extensively use websites to retrieve current news releases and other materials.

A survey by Cision and Don Bates of George Washington University, for example, found that corporate websites are ranked number one by journalists as a research tool.

In sum, the Web has become a major source of information for journalists. According to *NetMarketing*, companies are sending out fewer media kits and getting fewer phone inquiries as a result of putting material on websites. As Rick Rudman, president of Capital Hill Software, told *PR Tactics*, "The days of just posting press releases on your website are gone. Today, journalists, investors, all audiences expect to find media kits, photos, annual reports, and multimedia presentations about your organization at your press center."

Marketing communications is also a common objective of organizational websites. All companies, from mom-and-pop businesses to multinational corporations, have websites to sell products and services directly to the public. Public relations firms, for example, often have extensive websites to promote their services by profiling their expertise and providing case studies of campaigns for clients. See the Insights on page 361 for examples of how organizations are using their websites.

Other marketing approaches might be page links where potential customers can learn about the organization and its approach to producing environmental friendly, "green" products. Web pages with a strong marketing emphasis may have several main sections, such as (1) information about the organization and its reputation for

on the job

INSIGHTS

Ways That Organizations Use Their Websites

Organizations use their websites in different ways. Here's a sampling:

- Red Bull's website emphasizes its sponsorship of sporting events and provides extensive stories, photos, and videos that enhance its brand image among active, athletic consumers. The site is shown below.
- Rutherford Hill Winery in California uses its website to give a video tour of the winery.
- L. L. Bean has a website that gives a history of the company, shows how it hand-sews its shoes, and lists attractions at 900 state and national parks.
- Westchester Medical Center posts a virtual encyclopedia of disease and health care information that is freely available to the public. The site also establishes the medical center as a premier medical facility by describing its multiple clinics and medical services.
- IBM devotes segments of its website to its activities on various continents. One segment on Africa, for example, provides pdfs of case studies and short video clips.



service and reliability, (2) a list of product lines, (3) technical support available to customers, (4) information on how to order products or services, and (5) a list of the various services available.

A preliminary step before creating any web page is to understand the potential audience and their particular needs. Are they accessing the website to find a particular product? Are they primarily investors who are looking for financial information? Or are they looking for employment information? Are they likely to download the material and save documents in print form? Focus groups, personal interviews, and surveys

As more people use the Internet to search for information, a user's first impression of a website can determine whether that user forms a favorable or unfavorable view of that organization.

Dr. Hong Sheng, Missouri University of Science and Technology

often answer these questions and help the company design a user-friendly site.

The San Diego Convention Center, for example, redesigned its website by forming a customer advisory board of 28 clients that used the facility. Focus groups were held to determine what clients wanted to see in an updated website. According to *PRWeek*, "The Customer Advisory Board feedback enabled SDCC to jettison a great deal of the clutter that plagues many sites and focus on exactly what the target audience wanted. Gone was dense copy and hard-to-navigate pages, replaced by hot links to key portions of the site."

Indeed, paying attention to the needs of the audience helps a company decide exactly what links to list on the home page. Starbucks (www.starbucks.com) has a somewhat affluent audience that is digital natives so its site provides instant links to its profiles on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. There's also a section "Newest Blog Posts." The page changes almost daily with a new lead story such as "April Is the Global Month of Service." There are also thumbnail photos highlighting four or five other major stories about new products. At the bottom of the page are subject links such as About Us (including a newsroom), Career Center (working for Starbucks), Online Community (a list of social network profiles), and Quick Links (store locator, customer service).

Forrester Research says there are four main reasons why visitors return to a particular website. First and foremost is high-quality content. Then, in descending order, is ease of use, quick downloads, and frequent updates. It's important for a website to be attractive and well-designed. First-time users take less than two-tenths of a second to form a first impression and decide whether they will continue, according to a study at the Missouri University of Science and Technology.

Making a Website Interactive

A unique characteristic of the Internet and the World Wide Web, which traditional mass media do not offer, is interactivity between the sender and the receiver.

One aspect of interactivity is the "pull" concept. The Web represents the "pull" concept because the user actively searches for sites that can answer specific questions. At the website itself, the user also actively "pulls" information from the various links that are provided. In other words, the user is constantly interacting with the site and "pulling" the information most relevant to him or her. The user thus has total control over what information to call up and how deep to delve into a subject.

In contrast, the concept of "push" is that of information delivered to the user without active participation. Traditional mass media—radio, TV, newspapers, and magazines—are illustrative of the "push" concept, as are news releases that are automatically sent to the media. Another dimension of interactivity is a person's ability to engage in a dialogue with an organization. Many websites, for example, encourage questions and feedback by giving an e-mail address that the user can click on to send a message.

Unfortunately, the ideas of being "interactive" and encouraging feedback are more buzzwords than reality on many websites. A 2012 study by McKinsey & Company, for example, found that most Fortune 500 companies were behind the curve. Half of them didn't provide Twitter or Facebook links on their home page, and 90 percent didn't bother to provide an e-mail address.

Providing an e-mail address or another way of contacting the organization is a good strategy but tends to damage a corporation's reputation and credibility if it doesn't respond to a consumer query in a timely manner. Reporter Thomas E. Weber of the *Wall Street Journal* wrote a somewhat humorous article about his experience. He e-mailed two dozen major corporate websites and reported "Nine never responded. Two took three weeks to transmit a reply, while others sent stock responses that failed to address the query. Only three companies adequately answered within a day."

Managing the Website

An organizational website must serve multiple audiences. Consequently, the overall responsibility of managing the website should lie with the corporate communications department, which is concerned about the needs of multiple stakeholders. One survey of corporate communications and public relations executives by the Institute for Public Relations, for example, found that 70 percent of the respondents believed that an organization's communications/public relations function should manage and control all content on the website.

The reality, however, is that a successful website takes the input and knowledge of several departments. Information technology (IT), for example, has the technical expertise to create a website. In addition, marketing also plays a major role to ensure that the website includes information and links enabling the purchase of products and services. Consequently, the practical solution is a team approach, where representatives from various departments collaborate.

The advantage of cross-functional teams is that various members bring different strengths to the table. IT can provide the technical know-how, public relations can share expertise on the formation of messages for various audiences, and marketing can communicate the consumer services available through the site. Even human resources, as a team member, can contribute ideas on how to facilitate and process employment inquiries.

Webcasts

A website is enhanced and supplemented by using webcasts. Indeed, webcasting has become more common as bandwidth has increased and technology has evolved. In fact, one survey found that more than 90 percent of public companies use webcasts for everything from employee training to briefings for financial analysts and news conferences launching a new product. One big advantage is that webcasts save time and money because they eliminate the cost of travel for participants.

A good example of a media-oriented webcast is the one hosted by the Chocolate Manufacturers Association (CMA) and its public relations firm, Fleishman-Hillard. The CMA sponsored a chocolate-tasting webcast for food writers around the country, who also received a "tasting kit" before the event. They could taste various chocolates as they viewed the webcast, which featured experts on chocolate. By having a webcast, the organization doubled attendance from the previous year.

A variation of the webcast is live streaming, the broadcasting of live video content over the Internet. An event such as a concert, a fashion show, or even a demonstration can be live streamed in much the same way as a webcast, but conducting "chats" is a popular second use. Kevin Foley, owner of KEF Media Associates, writes in *O'Dwyer's Report*, "Chats are streaming video conversations between spokesperson(s) and audience hosted on a web site, micro site, Facebook account, YouTube channel, or a

similar platform.” Webcasts tend to be for specific, invited audiences such as financial analysts or journalists, but chats are more open to almost anyone on a social network who wants to click in and participate.

Podcasts

The term “podcast” comes from “pod” as in Apple’s iPod and “cast” as in “broadcast,” meaning to transmit for general and public use. It is somewhat like a webcast but designed to be distributed over the Internet using syndication feeds (RSS) for playback to computers, MP3 players, iPods, and even smartphones.

Many podcasts are audio only, but video podcasts are also on smartphones, websites, YouTube, and other social networking sites. The three major advantages of podcasts for distributing messages are (1) cost-effectiveness, (2) the ability of users to access material on a 24/7 basis, and (3) portability. For example, a person can listen to an audio podcast while driving to work, walking down a mountain trail, or even while gardening. Simply put, podcasts have many of the same advantages as traditional radio.

Organizations use podcasts for a variety of purposes. These may include (1) news about the company, (2) in-depth interviews with executives and other experts, (3) features giving consumer tips about the use of products and services, and (4) training materials for employees. Some examples:

- Whirlpool produces a podcast series titled “American Family.” Topics range from advice and discussions about traveling with kids, weight loss, stroke in women, and even snowmobile safety. The idea is to build customer loyalty and connect with women, the primary audience of Whirlpool.

Podcasts

Companies such as Purina are increasingly using podcasts to reach audiences about pet care and, of course, their products.



- Purina, the maker of pet food, has a podcast series that gives advice to pet owners. The series’ introduction on the company’s website gives the essence of its content: “Is it unusual for a cat to use the toilet? Is your dog bored out of its skull? Can cats and dogs suffer from heart attacks? Get answers to these questions and more in season two of Animal Advice, where veterinarians field questions from pet lovers like you.” See the Purina podcast illustration.
- Disneyland has podcasts as part of its global campaign to generate interest in the park. The content includes interesting facts about the park’s history, current attractions, and in-depth interviews with employees about their work at the park.
- The University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School produces podcasts that primarily feature insights from professors at the business school regarding current trends and issues.
- Greater Rochester Enterprise repackages its hour-long “Eyes on the Future” radio broadcasts as podcasts for area business people and accessing anytime.

A podcast should not be an infomercial or the recording of an executive’s speech. Like radio, a podcast

must be informal, be conversational, and have useful practical information of value to the consumer. Here are some other tips about podcast content: (1) Keep it to less than 15 minutes, (2) use several stories or segments, (3) don't use a script, (4) create an RSS feed, and (5) produce new podcasts on a weekly basis.

Blogs: Everyone Is a Journalist

Blogs, dating back to 1998, have now become mainstream media in terms of numbers and influence. In the beginning, they were called *weblogs* because they were websites maintained by individuals who wanted to post their commentary and opinions on various topics. Today, the abbreviated term "blog" is commonly used.

Although the vast majority of blogs are still the province of individuals who post their diaries and personal opinions, they are now widely recognized by public relations personnel as an extremely cost-effective way to reach large numbers of people. The format and mechanics of blogs make them attractive for several reasons:

- Almost anyone can create a blog with open-source software. A blog is as ideal for a small business as it is for a large company.
- There are virtually no start-up costs.
- The format and writing are informal, which can give an organization a friendly, youthful human face.
- Links can be made to other blogs and web pages.
- Readers can post comments directly on the blog.
- Material can be updated and changed instantly.
- Extensive uses of syndication technologies allow aggregation of information from hundreds of blogs at once. An organization can immediately assess what customers and various publics are saying about it.
- Blogs give an organization an outlet to participate in the online dialogue already going on in other blogs and message boards.
- They allow organizations to post their own points of view unfettered by the editing process of the traditional media.
- A blog(s) on organizational websites dramatically increases indexing by Google and other search engines.

Susan Balcom Walton, writing in *Public Relations Tactics*, says organizations enter the blogosphere for four reasons:

- To achieve real-time communication with key stakeholders
- To enable passionate, knowledgeable people (employees, executives, customers) to talk about the organization, its products, and its services
- To foster conversation among audiences with an affinity for or connection with the organization
- To facilitate more interactive communication and encourage audience feedback
- To dramatically increase the indexing by Google and other search engines

Public relations writers are usually involved in three kinds of blogs: (1) corporate or organizational blogs, (2) employee blogs, and (3) third-party blogs.

Organizational Blogs A corporate blog, unlike an employee blog, is usually written by an executive and represents the official voice of the organization. In many cases, someone in the public relations department actually writes the blog for the executive. Some corporate blogs are now even being outsourced to public relations firms, but some critics say this is a guaranteed way to ensure that the blog is artificial and full of “execu-babble.”

Larry Genkin, publisher of *Blogger and Podcaster* magazine, gives a good description of what a corporate blog should be. He says:

In its best incarnation, corporations will use blogs to become more transparent to their customers, partners, and internally. By encouraging employees to speak their minds, companies will be able to demonstrate their heart and character. Not an easy trick for a faceless entity. This will facilitate stronger relationships and act as “grease in the gears” of a business operation.

An example is how Southwest Airlines uses its blog, “Nuts About Southwest.” Posts on the blog may come from the blog’s editorial team, employees, or even airline customers. Content comes from the CEO, baggage handlers, and customers who mention an interesting experience on Twitter and even YouTube videos. The blog’s editors constantly look for content on Southwest’s intranet, e-mails, and other social networking sites. The team contacts the employees and customers to flesh out a story for details and even video clips and then packages them for the blog. One blog post, for example, featured a marriage proposal on a Southwest flight. The blog is further amplified through the airline’s 1.3 million Twitter followers and more than 3 million Facebook users who see links to each post.

Employee Blogs Many organizations also encourage their employees to blog on behalf of the organization. Sun Microsystems, for example, has more than 4,000 employee blogs, or about 15 percent of its workforce. More than half of them, according to the company, are “super-technical” and “project-oriented,” which appeal only to fellow computer programmers and engineers. Others, such as those written by the CEO as well as managers in human resources and marketing, are more general in subject matter.

Companies, however, do need to establish some guidelines for employee blogs and how they comment on social network sites. Cisco, for example, tells employees, “If you comment on any aspect of the company’s business . . . you must clearly identify yourself as a Cisco employee in your postings and include a disclaimer that the views are your own and not those of Cisco.” See the following Ethics box for more guidelines.

Third-Party Blogs Organizations, in addition to operating their own blogs and providing guidelines for employee blogs, must monitor and respond to the postings on other blog sites. The products and services of organizations are particularly vulnerable to attack and criticism by bloggers, and an unfavorable mention is often multiplied by links to other blogs and search engine indexing.

Dell, for example, experienced the wrath of bloggers about its customer service, which caused sales to decline, but the company learned a good lesson. Today, according to the *New York Times*, “It’s nearly impossible to find a story or blog entry about Dell that isn’t accompanied by a comment from the company.” Comcast, a cable giant, also gets its share of consumer complaints on blogs, but it also has stepped

on the job

ETHICS

The Rules of Social Engagement

Companies increasingly are adopting policies to instruct employees on the appropriate use of blogs and social networking sites on the job. The goal, of course, is to ensure that the organization isn't embarrassed by an employee making "stupid remarks" or that proprietary information is disclosed.

The Gap, for example, provides social media guidelines and training to its 134,000 employees, saying "These guidelines are important—because if you don't follow them a few things could happen; your posts can get deleted, we could lose customers and investors, we could get in trouble, or,

worse of all, you could even lose your job. . . . So do the right thing, stick to the guidelines."

Consequently, employees have an ethical responsibility to their employers and to themselves to follow some basic guidelines. Brian Solis, author of several books on social media, has posted 25 employee guidelines (<http://www.briansolis.com>), including some of the following:

- Ensure that you honor copyrights and promote fair use of content
- Protect confidential and proprietary information
- Don't trash the competition; focus on points of differentiation and value
- Take accountability for your actions and offer no excuses
- Always disclose your identity and affiliation in any posts about your employer or client
- Practice self-restraint; don't get into a shouting match
- Keep things conversational as they apply to portraying and reinforcing the personality and value of your brand and the brand you represent

up its Internet monitoring and has customer service representatives follow up with anyone who posts a complaint.

It's now common practice for organizations to establish relationships with the most relevant and influential bloggers who are talking about the company. Rick Wion, interactive media director of Golin Harris, told Susan Walton in *Public Relations Tactics*, "Treat them the same as you would any other journalist. In most cases, they will appreciate the recognition. By providing materials directly in a manner that is helpful to bloggers, you can build positive relationships quickly."

A good example is how Weber Shandwick works with about 20 influential food bloggers on behalf of its food industry clients. The public relations firm regularly monitors their posts to find out what the bloggers are saying and which hot-button issues they are discussing. This, in turn, allows the firm to build relationships with the bloggers and offer information that they can use in their blogs. Janet Helm, director of the food and nutrition practice at Weber Shandwick, told *PRWeek*, "They are an influential source, and we can't leave them out of the marketing mix."

Wikis: Saving Trees

Interaction between individuals working on a particular project is facilitated by what are known as Wikis. Basically, Wikis are a collection of web pages that enable anyone who accesses them to provide input and even modify their content.

Ward Cunningham, coauthor of *The Wiki Way: Quick Collaboration on the Web*, gives the essence of Wikis:

- They invite all users to edit any page within the website using a basic Web browser.
- They promote meaningful topic associations among different pages.
- They involve visitors in an ongoing process of creation and collaboration.

General Motors, for example, created a Wiki site for its employees and customers as part of its centennial celebration. The site encouraged individuals to contribute first-person experiences—via stories, images, video, and audio—related to the company’s history. The advantage of the Wiki was that individuals could comment on other contributions, correct inaccurate information, and even add supplemental information regarding their experiences and viewpoints.

Wikis also are used by public relations departments and firms to keep employees and clients up-to-date on schedules and plans for executing campaigns. Joel Postman, EVP of Eastwick Communications, told *Ragan.com* that the firm’s Wiki “allows almost everyone in the agency to set up a well-organized, attractive, customized workspace for any number of tasks.

Wikis and collaboration is a space we and many people in the industry are using now as opposed to just sticking to dry e-mail.

Jorand Chanofsky, CEO of Fusion Public Relations

The Tsunami of Social Media

Using social media has become the number one activity on the Web. One study by *Creativa.com* found that 40 percent of its respondents said they socialize more online than they do face-to-face. In addition, an Experian Hitwise survey in 2013 found that 27 percent of the time Americans spend online is devoted to social media. And one-third of all adults under 30 years obtain their news from social networks.

Thus, the term “social media” has now entered the mainstream as what Paul Rand of Ketchum communications calls “one of the most dramatic, if not revolutions, in history.” David Bowen, writing in the *Financial Times*, adds, “Social networks are all about a shift from vertical to horizontal communications on the Web.” More to the point, this social media conversation is not organized, not controlled, and not on message. Instead, the conversation is vibrant, emergent, fun, compelling, and full of insights. Social media is also a place where a single posting can go viral in a matter of hours and reach millions of people around the world, as in the logo for marriage equality shown on page 369. Some experts have even called social networks the world’s largest focus group (Figure 13.2).

The tidal wave of social networks, which exploded in 2007, has also changed the landscape of public relations in three ways:

- Listening and two-way dialogue are the basis of today’s practice. According to the Institute for Public Relations (IPR), “Social media has provided an opportunity to truly put

Collectively, the social media—including blogs, social networks, RSS feeds, podcasts, wikis, reviews, bulletin boards, and newsgroups—have the power to support or destroy a brand or reputation. Transparency is the key; but it’s risky business and requires a new mindset and toolkit.

Markovsky Company

on the job

SOCIAL MEDIA IN ACTION

Marriage Equality Symbol Goes Viral

A simple red box with two pink bars in the middle doesn't sound like much, but it became a viral social media sensation within 24 hours.

The symbol was launched by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) in April 2013 as the U.S. Supreme Court started to hear arguments about the right of same-sex couples to marry. HRC, as the nation's largest LGBT civil rights organization, wanted to show support for marriage equality by changing its traditional blue and yellow symbol to red in its profile image on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, and Pinterest. The idea caught on, and millions of individuals also replaced their profile image with the red box symbolizing equality to show their support for marriage equality.

"Red is a symbol for love, and that's what marriage is all about," HRC spokesperson Charlie Joughin

explained to *MSNBC.com*. "We wanted to give people an opportunity to show their support for marriage equality in a public and visible way."

The symbol was further promoted and displayed by public officials, celebrities, and even companies. A number of U.S. Senators changed their Facebook profile image and celebrities from Beyoncé to George Takei shared the symbol with all their followers. In addition, Bud Light put the symbol on its beer cans, Martha Stewart incorporated it into a red velvet cake, and GroupOn posted a video showing dozens of employees wearing red shirts. In fact, the social media campaign also encouraged a million Facebook users to wear red on the day that the Supreme Court started to hear the legal briefs.

The symbol also gained popularity because it generated dozens of



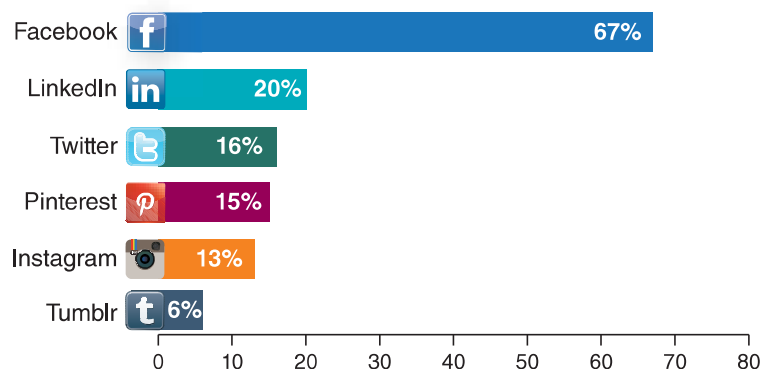
iterations. Many individuals superimposed the equal sign over personal photos or integrated it with other images. The popular TV shows *True Blood* even shared a version of the photo with vampire fangs as part of the equal sign.

With the social media a sea of red, traditional media also picked up the story and amplified it throughout the 50 states and the world. Not bad for a simple red box.

Figure 13.2 The Use of Social Media Sites by Online Adults

There is an increasing number of social networking sites, and this chart shows the relative popularity of the major sites in terms of usage. The largest percentage of social media users are between 18 and 29 years, followed by the 30–49 age group. The primary users of Facebook tend to be women, aged 18–29 years.

Source: Pew Research Center, 2013.



the public back into public relations by providing a mechanism for organizations to engage in real-time, one-on-one conversations with stakeholders.”

- Organizations must perform and behave because society expects greater transparency and accountability. Communication must be more authentic and credible.
- Social media is now fully integrated as a major tactic in almost every public relations program or campaign. Public relations firms and departments are now hiring individuals who are specialists in social media and digital media management. See the Insights box below about the life of a social media manager.

The following sections provide a snapshot of today’s most popular social media and how they are being integrated as an essential strategy in almost every public relations program and campaign. There is a discussion of (1) Facebook, (2) Twitter, (3) LinkedIn, (4) YouTube, (5) Flickr, (6) Instagram, and (7) Pinterest.

Facebook: King of the Social Networks

There are multiple online social networking communities, including the business-oriented LinkedIn, but MySpace and Facebook established early leads in popularity. Facebook, in 2013, was the most popular site, with more than 1 billion users worldwide, of which 70 percent are outside the United States.

With such numbers, Facebook is clearly the most visited social network in the United States, with more than 150 million visitors daily. In addition, visitors spend almost seven hours a month on the site, according to *Ragan’s PR Daily*, compared to its nearest rivals Tumblr and Pinterest, where visitors spend only 1.5 hours a month.

on the job

INSIGHTS

Some Misconceptions About Being a Social Media Manager

By Michelle Kraker

Today, businesses of every size are realizing the importance of having a qualified, capable, full-time staff engaging and elevating their social media presence. However, because this role is still relatively new, some people think the job is best suited for a young intern or their tech-savvy granddaughter.

But let me tell you from experience, social media is a tough gig. It’s

a vital role that’s demanding, constantly changing, and often a career that has many misconceptions. Let’s discuss some of them, shall we?

It Can Be Done by Anyone

There’s a specific skillset and dramatic learning curve. Techniques are key when it comes to managing your online reputation and to be frank, not everyone has the natural knack for

communicating your messaging appropriately. The social media manager is responding to customer service questions, setting the tone and personality for your brand, and curating content that your followers will resonate with. If the person you hired is not immersed in the industry you’re targeting, chances are you’re going to get a whole lot of inspirational quotes and Internet memes for content.

All We Do Is “Play” on Social Media All Day

There’s always “that person” who will ask you what you do for a living and if you reply that you work in social media, they sometimes say (or think), “So are you just playing on Facebook and Twitter all day?” And after I imagine myself pouring hot grease on them, I calmly tell them about how social media management requires a tremendous amount of strategy in order to yield a positive ROI. A social media manager’s performance should be measured with inbound marketing analytics from campaigns, content, and engagement.

Integration with the company’s overall marketing strategy should be an intricate part of the goals and objectives. Identifying and nurturing leads should be among the primary goals of social media strategy, and the sharpest brands are working to find ways to identify and reward their brand evangelists.

That Our Job Stops at the End of the Workday

Wouldn’t that be nice! Alas, there is no 9 to 5 in the social mediasphere. A social media manager is expected to be “always on.” There are constant notifications up on my iPhone. Between customer service questions on Twitter, thoughtful comments that need responses on Facebook, and notifications on LinkedIn, there really is no down time. And don’t even get me started on



Michelle Kraker

Instagram. It’s a common theme among my family and friends that I Instagram, like, everything. The perfect shot, the right angle, the perfect crop, the artistic photo filler, the compelling caption and just the right hashtag. I probably put more thought into my Instagram account than I do what I’m making for dinner.

It’s a Job with No Pressure

Social media managers are tasked with building out the personality and reach of the brand, yet some professionals don’t value the role. It’s our responsibility to stay up to date on social topics, trends, changes, and tools. Our strategies and platforms are always changing, being added to, and growing in influence. We’re putting out fires where there’s a fire and even shaping

perceptions about brands that need to repair their online reputation.

Our Mistakes Are the Biggest Mistakes

Forget the pen; the send button is mightier than the sword. Every email you send goes right to the recipient. Every tweet I send goes to tens of thousands of people. It’s critiqued, talked about, torn apart, praised, or shared. For most of you, your completed tasks go straight to your boss—whereas mine go to several different clients across hundreds of networks. Just about every day you hear about a social media manager that gets fired for posting the wrong post or tweeting the wrong tweet.

Don’t think for a second that this article is all about “woe is me” attitude when it comes to my job. I do this because I love it. I love the pressure. I love the pace, and I love the reward of engaging people online.

Michelle Kraker is the CEO and founder of SOHO, The Social House, in Nashville, TN. She attended Olivet Nazarene University and has worked in the ever-changing landscape of Social Media Marketing for more than 10 years. She has utilized marketing tactics to help enhance the personality, content, and reach of many major brands. Despite the variety of social networks, stilettos are still Michelle’s favorite platform.

According to Nielsen research, almost 20 percent of time spent online via personal computer is on Facebook. A profile of Facebook is given in Figure 13.3.

The popularity Facebook has been noted by advertising, marketing, and public relations professionals. *Advertising Age’s* top 100 advertisers, for example, have Facebook pages, and they see the site as an excellent opportunity to make “friends” in several ways. A survey of executives by TNS Media Intelligence/Cymfony, for example, found that marketing and public relations personnel believe networking sites are vital for (1) gaining consumer insights, (2) building brand awareness, and (3) creating customer loyalty.

Figure 13.3 A Snapshot of Facebook in 2013

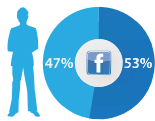
Facebook in 2013



1.5 billion active users worldwide



700 million people log onto Facebook daily



Users are 53 percent female, 47 percent male



Photo uploads are 300 million daily



4.75 billion pieces of content are shared daily



50 percent of 18–24 year-olds go on Facebook when they wake up



Average time spent per Facebook visit is 20 minutes



25–34 is the most common age group on FB (30 percent)



Over 50 percent of the population in North America use Facebook

We use tools based on their strengths, and each of the entries in the social media space offers its own strengths and weaknesses, possibilities and limitations.

Shel Holtz, social media guru at an IABC workshop

Accomplishing these objectives, however, takes a great deal of thought and creativity because the public relations professional must shape messages that are relevant and interesting to the company's "friends." This often requires techniques such as humor, short video clips, music, contests, and audience participation.

A good example is Yoplait. It grew its Facebook "likes" by 800,000 in one year by decreasing the number of product promotions and hiring a social media manager known to its Facebook users as "Yoplait Sara." She became the personality of the brand by drawing on the aspects of her personal and family life in Minnesota and weaving in Yoplait references. She, for example, talked about her latest garden project that, of course, includes nurturing seedling plants in Yoplait containers. Yoplait also restructured the page by

Figure 13.4 The Top 10 Organizations with Facebook and Twitter Followers

Facebook	77 million
Coca-Cola	51 million
MTV	42 million
Disney	39 million
Starbucks	35 million
Converse	33 million
Red Bull	31 million
McDonald's	23 million
Snaptu	22 million
Wal-Mart	21 million

Source: Top-Business-Degrees.net and Ragan's PR Daily News Feed.

changing product-centered tabs with more consumer friendly topics such as “Feeling Good,” “Looking Good,” and “photos.”

Coors has also expanded its traditional advertising and product publicity to embrace social networking sites. One initiative on Facebook enabled visitors (those aged at least 21 years, of course) to send friends a “Code Blue” alert inviting them to meet up for a Coors Light. They could even use Facebook maps to direct their buddies to the nearest bar. Aaron, one of Coors’ almost 2,000 fans, gave the site five stars: “This app is epic. I used it to set up my birthday party and it was so easy to invite everyone.” Another example of an excellent Facebook page is Springfield Clinic, which is shown on the next page.

Springfield Clinic in Illinois has a Facebook page that encourages consumers to interact with the page. The clinic posts a new article every morning that deals with such topics as the latest medical news, background information on current event in the health industry, and new scientific studies. It was named the best Facebook page in 2012 by *Ragan's PR Daily*.

Twitter: Saying It in 144 Characters

Twitter, a social networking and microblogging site launched in 2006, had about 300 million active users worldwide by its seventh birthday. It has grown rapidly if the number of tweets sent daily is any indication; it was 50 million a day in 2010 but had reached 400 million daily by 2013. In addition, about 85 percent of the world’s largest corporations now have one or more Twitter accounts to issue micro news releases, give updates of an evolving situation or crisis, pitch a journalist about a story, or to offer discounts on goods and services.

Twitter is Web based, so its major advantage over texting is that posts are now indexed by Google and readily available to anyone with Internet access. Twitter, as it matures, is getting more robust. A tweet can now provide easy links to documents, websites, photos, and videos. In 2013, the site began to introduce new apps such as Vine that allows a user to post a six-second video. McDonald’s, for example, used Vine to promote its new menu item, Fish McBites. There is also convergence with mobile apps. One creative use was Tweet-a-Bier at the Southwest by Southwest Interactive



Festival (SXSW), which enabled users to buy someone a beer via Twitter. The idea was the brainchild of Waggener Edstrom, a public relations firm that wanted to show off its digital capabilities.

The following are some examples of how organizations and their public relations staffs use Twitter:

- Qwest Communications, a telecommunications company, uses @TalkToQwest to handle customer questions, concerns, and complaints.
- The Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) used tweets to give 24/7 updates on the situation in Japan's nuclear plants after the 2011 tsunami.
- Both the Israeli Defense Force and the Hamas military use tweets to communicate their viewpoint to foreign government officials and the public.
- The Phoenix Suns, as well as other professional teams, uses team and player tweets to update fans and build brand loyalty.

- Krazy Glue conducted a contest (#KrazyBigFix), asking users to submit photos and videos of how they used the product to repair something.
- Burson-Marsteller writes promotional tweets on behalf of Kim Kardashian who is the paid celebrity spokesperson for the frozen dessert firm, Millions of Milkshakes. See the following Insights about Justin Bieber's 37 million followers.
- Many organizations (as well as individuals) expressed shock and sympathy via Twitter after the act of terrorism at the Boston Marathon in 2013.

Public relations professionals who use Twitter, however, should be aware of some basic guidelines. They include:

- **Think outside the box.** Use Twitter to create ways to engage the public, make the organization stand out, and bring awareness to the brand.
- **Tell a story.** An interesting story about a product is better than a pitch to buy the product. Coca-Cola got massive re-tweets by just posting "When you open a Coke, 12,067 bubbles are born. Happy Birthday, bubbles!"
- **Avoid bulletin board syndrome.** Don't just post announcements and links. Instead, use Twitter to engage in a conversation with your followers.
- **Don't be a "twammer."** Limit the number of tweets that you post. Post only important and relevant information.

on the job

INSIGHTS

Does Justin Bieber Really Have 37 Million Followers?

Probably not. *SocialBakers*, a social media analytics company, found that the likes of Justin Bieber, Lady Gaga, and Katy Perry are all followed by tens of millions of fake accounts. In fact, it was found by *digitspy.co.uk* that 45 percent of Bieber's followers are fake accounts, while many of the other top Twitter users also had high percentages of dubious accounts following them.

It's not uncommon for musicians and other entertainers, according to *bbc.co.uk*, to buy YouTube views, Twitter followers, and Facebook likes in order to promote themselves and

increase their online social status. It's possible, for example, to buy 10,000 YouTube views for less than \$50 and thousands of Twitter followers for about the same amount.

The companies selling these services set up fake accounts and then post to them automatically using computer software. A variety of IP addresses are used



to avoid detection by major social networks that strive to delete all fake accounts.

- **Update on a daily basis.** Although you should not post excessive tweets, it is a good idea to tweet about something once a day. It keeps your name in front of your followers.
- **Use Twitter in a crisis.** Twitter is an ideal form of communication when there is a crisis or fast-breaking news. It is one of the first steps an organization should take to provide up-to-the-minute details—or reactions—to a crisis. See the box on Spirit AeroSystems in Chapter 10.
- **Think twice before posting.** An inappropriate tweet can cause major problems for you or an employer. A Ketchum executive, visiting client FedEx in Memphis, tweeted, “I’m in one of those towns where I scratch my head and say, I would die if I had to live here.” FedEx officials were not amused, and Ketchum had to quickly issue an apology to save the account.

LinkedIn: The Professional Network

This social networking website primarily connects individuals in professional occupations. It has about 200 million users from around the world, but about half of them live in the United States.

The site works on several levels. First, it allows individuals to connect with other professionals in their occupational field or area of interest. There are also more than 1 million interest groups, including several hundred in the public relations field that individuals can join to get information and exchange ideas.

On a second level, LinkedIn has become a major resource for finding a job and advancing career opportunities. It’s a site where users post their profiles, their updated résumés, and even recommendations from work colleagues and former employers. Users can search for a job in several ways. They can search by job position (e.g., account executive for a public relations firm), or they can also research the hundreds of organizations that have pages on LinkedIn to find out about the organization and what jobs are currently available. LinkedIn also enables the individual to apply online for the job. One note of caution: Employers often look at the user’s LinkedIn profile and the submitted résumé to see if they match.

YouTube: King of Video Clips

YouTube is the second most popular search engine site after Google and gets more than 4 billion views a day. According to data from Nielsen, more than 150 million people watch online videos an average of four hours in a typical week. In terms of sites, the *Socially Aware Blog* says that in a single month, YouTube averages 3 hours compared to Hulu and Tudou with 2.5 hours. Of course, Netflix is the feature film king with 10 hours monthly.

The popularity of video is not lost on organizations who want to reach and influence audiences. David Murdico, writing in *Ragan’s PR Daily* (www.prdaily.com), cites some statistics from various sources:

- Videos have appeared in almost 70 percent of the top 100 search listings on Google in 2012.
- Almost 180 million Americans watch 33 billion online content videos in an average month for an average of 17.4 hours per viewer.
- More than 80 percent of companies use online video content in their marketing programs.

- People share video 12 times more than links and text posts combined.
- Users share 700 YouTube videos on Twitter each minute.
- Photos and videos drive the most engagement on Facebook's top 10 brand pages.
- More than 60 percent of consumers in one survey will spend at least two minutes watching a video about a product.
- Consumers are much more likely to buy a product after seeing a video than those who do not.
- Online video is now 50 percent of all traffic on smartphones.

Most videos are posted by individuals, but organizations have also established their own YouTube channels and have upgraded their websites to include more video content as part of their marketing and public relations outreach. Research firms such as Nielsen/NetRatings have found that the 35 to 64 age group constitutes about 50 percent of YouTube's audience. Another large audience is college students; research shows that 95 percent of them regularly view videos online.

About 48 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute of the day so public relations professionals must be creative thinkers and produce engaging content. As Murdico writes, "Everyone is watching video. You need to be making ads, promos, branded entertainment, Web series, video blogs, funny viral videos, videos of your cat, your dog, your cat riding your dog—whatever style and format that best reaches your customers."

Humor and parody are often used to attract viewers. H&R Block, for example, used a fictional oddball character to talk about the joys of online tax preparation and spoof popular YouTube shorts such as the precision treadmill routine team. Smirnoff launched a new iced tea malt beverage on YouTube showing three blond men in polo shirts at a yacht club rapping lines such as "Straight outta Cape Cod, we are keepin' it real." It worked because the parody of fashionable white men rapping isn't typical rap imagery.

However, not all YouTube videos have to be humorous and entertaining in order to be successful. The United Steelworkers, during a strike against Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co., posted a 30-second video spot on YouTube that showed a photo montage of auto accidents. As a sport-utility vehicle flips over, a question appears on-screen: "What tires do you plan to buy?"

Less startling but just as effective is a series of videos by Cisco Systems about cities of the future such as Songdo, South Korea. The video series was distributed on its YouTube channel, the company's online newsroom, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. The videos had more than 61,000 views and were shared more than 100,000 times via social channels. It's not exactly a "Gangnam Style" viral video with 1 billion views, but Cisco did position itself as an innovative technology company with a vision for the future. YouTube also played a role in the Department of Energy's Decathlon, which is highlighted on page 378.

On occasion, a YouTube video posted by a third party can do considerable damage to a corporate reputation. United Airlines found this out after refusing to compensate Canadian musician Dave Carroll, when baggage handlers broke his guitar. He composed a video song, "United Breaks Guitars," and posted it on YouTube. It became a hit and was played more than 3.5 million times over the next several months.

Embrace online video and watch how creative, genuine, and cool content becomes incredibly viral. Words can carry the message just so far, but video is an opportunity to showcase the product while entertaining viewers.

*Brian Solis and Deirdre Breakenridge,
authors of Putting the Public Back
in Public Relations*

PRCasebook

Social Media Fuel a Solar Decathlon

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) wanted to promote energy-efficient housing, but how do you design a public relations campaign to make the message newsworthy and mentioned on social media networks?

The answer is a Solar Decathlon that involves a biennial competition between college teams from the United States and abroad to build the most attractive, energy-efficient, and affordable house. Instead of just submitting a model or a blueprint, however, the teams actually design and build model homes that are exhibited in a single location over a two-week period. The 2011 competition, for example, was held on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

Not everybody, of course, could visit Washington to tour the houses so DOE and its public relations firm, Stratacomm, took a variety of steps to ensure that the public and Solar Decathlon fans from around the world could experience the competition online.

- The college teams were encouraged to have their own Facebook pages, blogs, and YouTube videos to tell about their house project and tell their own personal stories.
- More than 1,000 posts appeared on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Flickr in the eight months before the live house display in Washington, D.C.
- QR codes and Foursquare check-ins were introduced throughout the solar village.
- TweetChats and media webcasts were organized to let online audiences see and talk to student contestants and DOE representatives.
- Captioned photos were posted daily in Facebook, Flickr, newswires, and the DOE website, *Solardecathlon.gov*.
- Student teams were asked to shoot video and create computer-animated walkthroughs of their houses.



- An overview video and an online virtual tour of each house were posted to DOE's YouTube channel and its website.
 - An online newsroom was established, and a media guide featuring tips for reporters on what to cover was made available.
- Thanks to the extensive social media outreach, the Solar Decathlon achieved considerable visibility and engagement.
- Facebook users increased 289 to 7,700 percent. Facebook referred 25,900 visits to *Solardecathlon.gov*.
 - Twitter followers increased 588 to 5,300 percent.
 - There were almost 500,000 views of Solar Decathlon's YouTube channel.
 - Views of photos on Flickr tripled to 500,000.
 - Many student teams built their own YouTube, Flickr, and blog sites to further increase public awareness of the competition and promote energy-efficient housing.
 - Website traffic during the two-week event generated 1.2 million page views.
 - QR codes received almost 9,000 scans.

This success garnered even more publicity when it became a smash hit on iTunes, and Carroll made guest appearances on every major television network. All this, of course, ignited a firestorm on social networks as hundreds of individuals also shared their unsatisfactory experiences with United.

In another incident, two bored employees of a Domino's Pizza franchise in North Carolina decided to post on YouTube a video of them making a truly obnoxious sandwich that violated all health standards. The video went viral, and it took some weeks for the company to restore its reputation for serving quality food.

Flickr and Instagram: Sharing Photos

The popularity of YouTube has also led organizations to increase the use of photos and infographics to attract and engage audiences. A study by HubSpot, for example, found that 300 million photos were being uploaded on Facebook every day in early 2013, a 20 percent increase over the previous year. The study also found that photo posts attracted 104 percent more comments than the average post.

Studies indicate that 65 percent of Americans are visual learners, so public relations professionals are increasingly using visuals to communicate key messages. As Scott Signore, CEO of Matter Communications, writes in *O'Dwyer's Report*, "Visual storytelling helps clients tell their story better, and in turn do better business." The two major photo-sharing sites are Flickr and Instagram, which are described here.

Flickr. If YouTube is the king of video, Flickr is the queen of photo sharing by virtue of its age and inventory of photos. The site was launched in 2004 and acquired by Yahoo a year later. It hosts about 6 billion photos and has more than 50 million registered users, according to Wikipedia. For smartphone users, there's even an official Flickr app.

Ann Smarty, writing in the *Ragan Report*, says, "It is a place for people to show off their work, and it's probably the most popular photo site on the Web. It has plenty of professional portfolios, amateur albums, and even a Creative Commons item you can use freely for personal or commercial purposes—with proper credit, of course." In other words, public relations professionals use Flickr in two ways:

Brands of all flavors see higher engagement with their customers when they deploy visual content across their marketing disciplines, from social and public relations, to website content and even static materials like annual reports.

Scott Signore, CEO of Matter Communications

first, to find photos and even video clips they can use on an employer's website and social network pages, and second, to make photos available for possible use by other bloggers and individuals who post photos on their sites. Organizations may also post photos in more than 60 user groups that help gain visibility for the organization.

Flickr discourages photos that are too commercial in terms of displaying a product or service, but there are more creative ways for organizations to use Flickr. The Monterey Aquarium, for example, encourages the posting of photos taken by visitors at the facility. It even sponsored a photo contest in connection with World Ocean Day. The aquarium's public relations staff also monitor blogs, and if someone posts a good photo from an exhibit, they ask the individual to also post it on the Flickr site. Ken Peterson, communications director, told *Ragan.com*, "We've let some people know that we're interested in using their photos on the aquarium Web site or in other vehicles. That creates great word of mouth, since the photographer will likely tell his or her friends to visit the aquarium Web site—or Flickr group—and see the photo on display."

Instagram If Flickr is the father of photo-sharing sites, the ambitious son is Instagram that was launched in 2010. Acquired by Facebook in 2012, it rapidly grew to more than 100 million registered users the following year.

The primary selling point is that it enables users to take pictures on their smartphones, apply digital filters to them, and then share them on a variety of social networks such as Facebook or Twitter. In fact, one survey by *All Things D* found that smartphone users were spending more time on Instagram than on Twitter and noted "This is indicative of a broader shift toward visual content in digital space."

From a public relations standpoint, various brands are opening accounts to post photos, videos, and infographics that can be easily accessed by the public via smartphones, tablets, and regular PCs. Although Instagram started out as a mobile application, it has also added web-based profiles, expanding the service to the larger-screen Web. The top brands on the site in early 2013 were MTV (1.14 million followers), Starbucks (1.1 million followers), and Nike (880,000 followers). According to Cotton Delo, writing in *Advertising Age*, brands are ". . . intrigued by the prospect of having a place to showcase their content in one place and possibly to direct users there from other media."

Pinterest

A close cousin of Flickr and Instagram is Pinterest. It's a photo-sharing site, launched in 2010, for both companies and individuals, but also includes a wider variety of content such as infographics and even recipes that can be easily "pinned" by individuals to their websites, blogs, and social media profiles.

The travel, fashion, and food industries in particular have ample opportunity for visual content, but a number of organizations now use Pinterest because it's highly integrated with social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. In addition, the various topic boards and brand pages can be easily accessed via a Pinterest app available on iPhones and Android devices.

The following are some examples of how organizations are using Pinterest:

- Fashion designer Oscar de la Renta “live-pinned” photographs about a bridal show, which was re-pinned by hundreds of fans.
- Whole Foods created several Pinterest boards with such topics as urban farming and do-it-yourself projects using household items. The grocery store chain has also posted recipes that have driven traffic to its website, WholeFoodsMarket.com.
- The National Wildlife Association has more than 20 boards on Pinterest, including its “Shop NWF,” “#Squirrels4Good,” and “Wild Crafts & Recipes.” See the following NWF page.
- Beauty product line Elizabeth Arden supported its longtime charity partner Look Good Feel Better through a campaign, Pin It to Give It, in which each “re-pin” generated one product donation to cancer patients.

The following are some tips for public relations specialists using Pinterest:

- Use only high-quality photos that are creative and interesting because the site is all about “eye candy.”
- Write short 20-word descriptions of the photo or infographic because they are the most re-pinnable.
- Data and survey statistics should be made highly visual through the use of colorful, well-designed infographics.

Pinterest is a place for people to share photos, bookmark images, comment on posts and generate conversation around a visual centerpiece.

Amy Jacques, writing in PR Tactics

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) has a number of boards on Pinterest that display high-quality photos and illustrations. Such boards are a virtual store front for the organization. In addition, NWF photos can be found on topic boards such as “wild animals.”



- Publish your Pinterest activity on the organization's Facebook timeline.
- Tweet your pins to draw Twitter users to your profile.
- Add Pinterest "follow" buttons to the organization's blogs and websites.

Pinterest, by early 2013, had about 50 million registered users and continued to show major growth. The site is particularly popular with women; the company says about 85 percent of its users worldwide in 2012 were women.

The Rising Tide of Mobile-Enabled Content

The tsunami of social media is also a major contributor to the rising tide of mobile-enabled content. Indeed, most studies show that smartphones and tablets have now replaced PCs as the most common device for Web access. On a global basis, research firm Strategy Analytics reports there is now 1 billion smartphone users, or one out of every seven people in the world. And the firm projects that another billion will be using smartphones by 2015.

In sum, access to the world of information and social interaction is rapidly becoming available in everyone's pocket. Indeed, the ITU reported in 2013 that mobile penetration around the world has reached almost 100 percent. There are 6.8 billion subscribers among the world's 7.1 billion population, a number achieved in part by many people and organizations having multiple accounts.

In the United States, ComScore reports that there are almost 135 million smartphone users, or about 45 percent of the population, but the percentage will increase to 70 percent by 2017. Indeed, smartphones are already pervasive in most people's lives. A study by IDC Research revealed some the following findings:

- Smartphone users, aged 18 to 44, spend more than two hours daily communicating and using social media on their devices.
- Four out of five check their smartphones within 15 minutes of waking up.
- Eighty percent of users have their phone on or near them for all but two hours of their waking day.

We're really in a connected world. Our smartphone is not only the first thing we turn to the morning, but the last thing we check at night.

Mary Gorges, creative communications manager at Cisco Systems, writing in the Ragan Report.

Such findings amplify the point that millions of consumers (and journalists) now use their smartphones and tablets as their primary source of news and information. In one Pew Research Center study, more than 60 percent of U.S. respondents get news from their phones weekly; 36 percent get news from their phone daily. This means that public relations specialists need to master the art of crafting mobile-friendly content in order to effectively reach consumers and other audiences. It has been already noted that organizations have already discovered the value of using various social media networks to reach the rising tide of smartphone users, but websites, news releases, and other materials must also be optimized for viewing on mobile devices.

As Professor Gary Keibel of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln notes, "You don't create a mobile site by building a website and accessing it from your phone. You lose audience if your story, photo, or video is written and produced for the Web, and viewed on a phone." In other words, the standard website designed for viewing on a PC screen needs to be supplemented by a mobile version that

is much shorter and contains only the information that a person on the go would like to see. This approach is also applicable to news releases. McCormick & Company, for example, prepares news releases and recipes for standard Web distribution, but also re-formats them into short, narrow columns that fit a smartphone screen.

Organizations are also actively producing apps and using QR codes specifically designed for smartphones and tablets, which will be discussed next.

An Ocean of Apps

Back in the old days, the basic cell phone was a relatively simple device. It enabled people to call their friends from practically any location or even to send them a text message. Today's smartphone is less of a telephone than a small computer that allow users to download videos, surf the Internet at will, receive e-mails, post comments on blogs, and receive an extensive array of mobile-enabled content. In other nations, mobile phones are being used as virtual credit cards to pay bills and withdraw cash, as files that store a person's medical records, and even as a form of money that allows users to make a purchase by waving the phone over a scanner.

Making all this happen are various computer applications, which are now just called "Apps." In fact, research by the analytics firm Flurry found that U.S. consumers now spend an average of 2 hours and 38 minutes per day on smartphones and tablets, but 80 percent of that time is spent using various apps. Given the results, Flurry titled its research report, "It's an App World. The Web Just Lives in It." According to the study, the 10 most popular apps categories on smartphones are in descending order:

- E-mail
- Web browsing
- Facebook
- Maps/directions
- Games
- General search
- Share/post photos
- Read news, sports
- Local search
- Watch TV/Video

The number of apps keeps multiplying. In mid-2013, there were about 700,000 apps available for downloading at each of the Apple stores and Google Android stores. One estimate says that about 40 billion apps are downloaded worldwide every year. Increasingly, public relations professionals are using apps to reach audiences and provide information that they can use. In general, the best app advances a brand by providing useful, objective information without being too commercial. A good example is Kraft's Food Assistant app that provides a variety of recipes that, of course, include Kraft products. The app is available on iPhone, Android tablets, and Kindle Fire.

An app, as in the case of Kraft, must reinforce the brand in terms of informing or entertaining its key customers. Akron Children's Hospital, for example, created an app titled "Care4Kids," which helped parents find locations, contact the hospital, and get essential care tips for their children. Kendall-Jackson winery, on the other hand, needed to expand its market to the 25 to 40 age group so it developed a mobile app, "K-J Recommends" that paired wines—not necessarily with food—but with mood, social situations, and even the color of the table setting.

On a more entertaining side, the pet food manufacturer, Friskies, offered a “Catify App” in which users could use cat templates and insert their own facial photo to see themselves in cat form. Friskies also offers a variety of apps for cats and humans, including a game, “You vs. Cat.” See the box below about how Singapore created an iPhone app for Chinese tourists.

When creating an app for your organization, remember the following tips:

- Make sure the app is simple to use, meets the needs of consumers, and is original.
- Provide content that empowers the user to interact with the app.
- Publicize the app through social networking and mainstream media.

Quick response codes, known as QR codes, are two-dimensional matrix bar codes that serve as URLs to connect mobile users with an organization’s website and any number of apps. The idea is that the consumer or a journalist can easily access additional information in the form of articles, videos, and photos about an organization, a product, or even an event.

The ability to readily access and download information is particularly attractive to journalists who are often out of the office. Consequently, media relations specialists often embed QR codes in flyers, media kits, annual reports, brochures, and news

on the job

A MULTICULTURAL WORLD

Adidas, Singapore Campaigns Tap Social Media

Social media are often used to reach specific audiences. An Adidas campaign was focused on female teenagers around the world, and Singapore wanted to increase the number of Chinese visitors.

Adidas

Adidas, the maker of running shoes and other athletic gear, launched an effort to get young women around the world engaged with the brand by having them share their athletic pursuits with each other. The central hub was www.adidas.com/mygirls that also provided linkage to Twitter and Instagram. The website provided Adidas-themed news, information about products, style trends, and how to get involved in community events.

There was also a series of videos at the MyGirls.Adidas.com site in which girls of various nations talked about the challenge of athletic training and dealing with local social taboos. One video, for example, was about a team of female boxers in Amman, Jordan. One boxer said, “I don’t care if it’s for boys or for girls.”

Singapore

Chinese tourists were the focus of the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) in an effort to engage them via social media. The major tactic was to encourage potential Chinese tourists to interact with Singapore’s official ambassador Stephanie Sun on China’s equivalent of Twitter, Sina Weibo.

MSL Group, the STB’s public relations firm, made the campaign interactive by asking users to design their own travel plans and upload Singapore shopping experiences and travelogues to www.yoursingapore.com. This tactic was so successful that an iPhone app was created to showcase user-generated content in the form of a travel guidebook.

The campaign, in part, helped generate a record-breaking 1.1 million Chinese tourists to Singapore in a single year. Singapore’s social media fans increased to almost 190,000, and almost 100 articles and features were published or broadcast about Singapore as an attractive destination for tourists instead of just being a stop-over city.



QR Codes: Rich Content a Scan Away

releases, and even pitch to journalists via a tweet or an e-mail. By scanning a QR code on a mobile-enabled device, both journalists and consumers can access a variety of content, including videos, photos, and additional background information.

QR codes can be used in a variety of ways, and some organizations are quite innovative in their use. The Sandy Springs (Georgia) fire department, for example, conducted a campaign to get more citizens trained in CPR so it embedded a QR code on business cards that were given out at meetings, school visits, and other speaking engagements. The QR code enabled individuals to access video and guidelines on how to recognize and treat sudden cardiac arrest. Deputy Fire Chief Dennis Ham told *Ragan.com*, “We’ve leveraged that technology to educate 10,000 people in Sandy Springs in CPR.”

The city of Cupertino (California) has even placed QR codes on the trees in its parks so visitors, using an Apple app, can get information about the name and background of a particular tree. And the Sonoma County Transit Authority (California) has a large QR sign outside the local airport so travelers can check local bus schedules. In another application, Heinz Ketchup put QR codes on its bottles to promote the Wounded Warrior Project. For each scan that prompts a user to send a thank you note to military service personnel, Heinz donates \$1 to Wounded Warrior. In this way, more than \$200,000 was raised.

Magazine ads and articles also have embedded QR codes so readers can easily access information and visual content. QR codes played a major role, for example, in a Gillette campaign for a new razor designed to remove hair from all parts of a man’s

body. The ad, of course, featured model Kate Upton in a swim suit sitting on a beach lounge chair with the caption, “How does Kate Upton like her man’s body styled?” In the thought bubble was a QR code that took the reader to a short video of Upton answering such questions as “How important is it for a guy to groom down there?” She answers “very important.”

Texting: Not Sexy but Pervasive

A new breed of apps such as WhatsApp or Kik is gaining popularity as new messaging systems, but SMS, like e-mail, is still an effective public relations strategy.

Nonprofits, in particular, have effectively used text messaging for providing information and fund-raising. Lifeline, a British nonprofit that provides drug and alcohol services, sends a weekly inspirational quote via text message that has helped the agency maintain regular contact with its clients. A texting program also raised millions for Haiti earthquake relief by enabling Americans to dial 90999 and automatically donate \$10 to the Red Cross that was billed to their cell phone accounts. Other health agencies, such as Planned Parenthood, have successfully used SMS to communicate one-on-one with teenagers who text questions relating to sexual health.

Summary

The Internet: Pervasive in Our Lives

- The worldwide adoption of the Internet and the World Wide Web has taken less time than the adoption of any other mass medium in history.
- The Internet is the first major revolution in communication since the invention of the printing press.
- The Internet has democratized information in the respect that nearly anyone can now send and receive vast amounts of information without journalists or editors serving as gatekeepers and mediators of that content.

The World Wide Web

- The new media, including the Web, have unique characteristics. These include (1) easy updating of material, (2) instant distribution of information, (3) an infinite amount of space for information, and (4) the ability to interact with the audience.
- A website is the organization’s digital front door; it must be well designed.
- Webcasts are now used for news conferences, briefing financial analysts, and training employees.
- Podcasts, readily available on mobile-enabled devices, can be either audio or video.
- Blogs are used by organizations, employees, and others to provide information and opinion in a more informal way.

The Tsunami of Social Media

- Social media provides public relations professionals with the opportunity to participate in social networking sites to get feedback and build relationships.
- Facebook is the largest social network in the world with more than 1 billion users.
- Flickr and Instagram are photo-sharing sites, with a large number of users.
- Pinterest allows individuals and organizations to “pin” photos and other infographics that can be “re-pinned” by consumers on their own social media sites.
- The success of YouTube and other sites such as Instagram shows the strong trend toward highly visual content on the Internet.

The Rising Tide of Mobile-Enabled Content

- Smartphones and mobile-enabled tablets are now the major devices for accessing the Internet and the social media networks.
- It is estimated that 2 billion people in the world will have smartphones by 2017.
- Individuals using smartphones spend most of their time accessing various apps such as e-mail or Facebook.
- QR codes can be used in a variety of ways to allow mobile-enabled users to access more information and visual content about an organization or a product.

Case Activity A Social Media Campaign for Yogurt Program

Happy Valley Yogurt distributes its products nationally and has about 25 percent of the market. It makes a variety of flavors, and about 80 percent of its sales come from individual packages of eight ounces. The company has done the standard marketing, advertising, and public relations activities, but your public relations staff believe sales could increase

with the use of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and Pinterest. Prepare a proposal to management showing how Happy Valley can tap social media for fun and profit. You need to consider the special characteristics of these sites and what kind of content would be appropriate.

Questions For Review and Discussion

1. In what ways has the Internet completely revolutionized a media system that goes back to Gutenberg in the 1400s?
2. What are the basic rules of social media engagement?
3. What are some characteristics of the Web that make it possible for public relations people to do a better job of distributing information?
4. Why is it important for an organization to have a website?
5. One example of Web interactivity is the “pull” and “push” concepts. What’s the difference between the two terms?
6. What’s the difference between a podcast and a webcast?
7. How can a PR professional use a webcast to organize a news conference and also brief journalists?
8. How can an organization use Facebook as part of its public relations strategy?
9. What are the challenges for PR when the company has an active Facebook presence?
10. In what ways is a blogger different or similar to a journalist?
11. Organizations now have their own YouTube channels. Visit three sites and write a critique of what you found in terms of content. What grade would you give the channel?
12. What are the major differences between Instagram and Pinterest? Which site do you think would have the best value in a public relations campaign for a cookie company?
13. Apps are designed for use on smartphones and mobile-enabled devices. What kind of app would you develop for the cookie company?
14. What is a QR code? Give an example of how you would use one in a public relations campaign.

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