



## THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN MODERN PUBLIC RELATIONS

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**Abstract :** *It's no secret that the Public Relations industry is a continuously evolving field, transforming to meet the needs of an ever-changing world. Public Relations has been flooded with new technology, innovative trends, and progressive strategies in the past few years alone, leading to unexpected developments within this fast-paced arena. For those familiar with its landscape, it's clear that Public Relations professionals must keep up with these changes to remain competitive and stay ahead of their competition. But for business owners wondering what these recent advancements mean for their brand you've come to the right place! In this blog post, we'll unravel emerging trends and technologies driving the future of Public Relations so that you can leverage them today.*

**Key Words :** *Public Relations, Social Media, Technology, Industry, Communication*

### INTRODUCTION

Technology has created a revolution over the past few decades. Primarily information and communication technologies have been strong growth drivers connecting the world, shrinking the globe, and humanity to flourish. Unimaginable have been the changes in our ways to make outreach, discuss, interact, share, and communicate over the past few decades. What was once available to the privileged few while the technologies were being launched, today they are in ubiquitous abundance and available for every one of us. Media is often an early adopter of new technologies by the sheer availability of early information and accessibility of the technologies to them. Corporate communications and public relations professionals are usually the immediate lots to play the role of adopters and even influencers. Recall the mid-90s when mobile phones were launched in India, they were valued more than precious gems in society. Only the rich and privileged in

the society had access to them which they could flaunt. In those days, a global public relations agency, that had made a recent entry then into the Indian market would give their executives mobile phones for work purposes. That was by far a big statement from the organisation on one hand, and on another hand became a great facility for the executives to carry out their profession.

### 5 ways technology is changing the PR Industry

With new technological advances always around the corner, the PR industry is constantly evolving. Public relations now predominantly happen in the digital space. Customers interact with brands through social media, websites, and mobile apps. PR professionals must determine how best to leverage technology to remain competitive and relevant in the market. The role of technology in public relations is more crucial than ever. Technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual Reality (VR), and Application Program Interfaces (API)



are changing how brands connect with their audience. Only those companies who adopt new technologies and fully embrace digitization can stay ahead of the curve and meet customers' demands.

### **1. Monitoring social media**

PR is all about dealing with the media. In the past, this usually involves monitoring the newspapers, radio programs, and television channels to find out what the public thinks of your brand. But nowadays, almost everything has moved within the digital marketing arena. More brands advertise and sell their products online. And one of the best places on the internet where you can find and listen to your customers is on social media channels. Nowadays, media monitoring includes social media impressions. This is one of the ways how has technology changed public relations. Most conversations about brands, products, and services could be found on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok. In fact, almost everyone and everything can be found there. Since social media channels are accessible, free, and wide-reaching, literally anyone can share their thoughts and opinions online. Hence, there is a lot more data to be monitored on the internet compared to newspapers, radios, and televisions.

### **2. Tapping into influencers**

The widespread popularity of social media channels has introduced a new way of promoting your brand. And that is through social media influencers. These are people in social media who have sway over a particular audience due to their popularity and credibility online. Influencers have specialized knowledge or insight into a specific subject which they use to create digital content. Most importantly, they have a large following of

people on their social media channels, making them useful launching pads for brands looking for credibility. Influencers can be anyone these days. It can be celebrities, industry experts, bloggers, content creators, or ordinary customers with an impact on social media. This is another impact of technology on public relations wherein you now have new access to customer engagement and brand reputation through the voice of the customers.

### **3. Tracking performance results**

Before, PR companies only had access to newspapers, television, and radio to gauge outcomes. But thanks to technology, you can have a more comprehensive and in depth view of your performance results. For instance, behavioral changes, attitudinal changes, and preferences can be measured by leads, conversions, and web traffic. Most importantly, technology provides accurate and real-time data on your campaign's performance, making it easier to measure its effectiveness in the process. Technology also allows you to assess other important KPIs for PR. Modern software solutions allow you to customize data analytics and reporting. Hence, it's all up to you on what key performance indicators you want to measure. This way, you can pattern your KPIs to align with your PR goals and business objectives. Are you looking to increase brand awareness? Boost call to action? Improve reputation? Or increase web traffic? You can gain insights into all of these through modern technologies.

### **4. Prioritizing research**

Businesses are more data-driven than ever thanks to technology. Before, PR can only collect information from limited sources like newspaper press



releases and lists of marketing agencies. But with modern digital tools, PR companies can easily access and analyze larger and more complex sets of data from multiple sources. They can gain insights into their target audience by researching market trends, behavioral patterns, and customer feedback via the internet. In just a few clicks, Google can provide you with statistics and information about customer preferences and more. You can also invest in software solutions with robust analytics and reporting features so that you can access big data in real-time.

### 5. Valuing online reputation

The internet plays a huge role in people's lives. Almost everyone is hooked on it whether it's for work, entertainment, school, or shopping. In fact, it is on the internet where customers would usually have their first encounter with a certain brand. It can be through a friend's post on social media, a review from a review site, a comment on your webpage, or a search engine result. Your online reputation can make or break the company. Hence, it's important that you manage and take care of your brand's online reputation. You can do this by optimizing your brand storytelling online. Nowadays, you can leverage different tools to create engaging and moving content for your customers. You can make videos, blog posts, and graphics to tell your business' story. And by posting such content on the internet, your story can reach more audiences around the globe. Technology can also provide you with tools to improve your brand storytelling. Daylite, for example, is an all-in-one platform that combines CRM, project management, and lead management tools in a single software. Having all these tools in one place makes it easier to collaborate with your customers and find out how best to tell

your story that would appeal to their preferences.

### PR in the future

As the world plunges into the digital age, the roles of technology in public relations are more visible than ever. You need to invest in modern tools if you want to remain competitive and relevant in the market. Fortunately, technology is more accessible and affordable than ever. So what are you waiting for? Go ahead and explore what latest technologies you can use for your PR.

### Disruption in Public Relations

In its roots, disruption changes business models and the way people think and act. It requires people to adapt to the new ways of communication. Disruption leads to the emergence of new ideas and expectations and requires PR professionals to be creative and innovate. It also requires businesses to keep up-to-date and stay ahead of current trends and be competitive and desirable for their audiences. Disruption in PR happens because of technology, gadgets, automation of processes, social media, or innovations in terms of products and services. This affects the stages of planning, executing, and managing a communication strategy. Today, we are talking not only about pure PR (usually associated with media relations). Communication processes are integrated; campaigns are integrated, mixing different communication tactics. Today, campaigns blend digital and non-digital tactics allowing to reach target audiences in the best way possible at the right time with the right content.

### Prove that your PR really works

What's very important is that customers want to know what impact



their PR approach has had. It has been a challenge for PR pros for years to prove how PR results brought success to brands and companies.

With digital transformation, the results became even more valuable. A good aspect is that technology allows to monitor and track consumer behavior in real time and get performance analytics. Based on analytics, you can change your strategy, shift and adapt messages, talk to customers, etc. Thanks to technology, software, and systems professionals can track the journey of their stories, analyze their performance, and get insights about the consumers who interact with the story. A good way to measure the results is to use the AMEC methodology. If we'd like to find out if our campaign has been effective, we must measure our communication plan and tactics in an interactive way. It's not only about the number of media publications and impressions; most of all, it's about actual business results for the brand/company. The AMEC methodology is an integrated evaluation framework that guides you through the process from aligning objectives to establishing a plan, setting targets and then measuring the outputs, outtakes, outcomes, and the impact of your work. Anyone can use it, it's free and non-proprietary, allowing any organization to benefit from its approach.

### **Develop inbound PR & Marketing Service**

United Partners has recently announced it became a Certified Agency partner of HubSpot. The team is working for developing inbound PR and marketing service for Bulgaria (UP is the first agency in the country to offer inbound PR and marketing) and for the SEE region. A while ago, a fellow professional came up with the term Inbound PR. Global

Partner Program Manager at HubSpot, writes a lot about inbound PR and marketing. "Inbound PR refers to a new way of thinking about modern Public Relations. Inbound PR combines the best of two worlds PR's core strength in content and writing and inbound marketing's ability to plan with numbers in mind and measure throughout the way."

### **Nurturing customer relationships**

In 2018, PR will be all about nurturing customer relationships. Thought leadership, for example, can do the charm. This way a brand/company shows they are trustworthy and can provide insights into the industry, talk about trends, show best practices, etc. All of this can help them build a connection with the audience. At UP, we have started a thought leadership campaign with Neticle, a platform for monitoring and analysis, which gives us data and analysis on hot topics so we can add some expertise from the point of view of the communication industry. Some of these thought leadership pieces were on GDPR and blockchain. Earlier this year, we also published an article about trends in the digital industry entitled "The State of Digital 2018." And, because it's all about customers now customers need to be the hero of the story brands/companies are telling. Global Partner Program Manager at HubSpot, writes: "Direct selling used to work once, it doesn't now. We don't live in the Mad Men era anymore. And so brands forget that "what's in it for me" and "how does this relate to me" is key. The hero of your stories can't be your brand or product, but your ordinary customer that normal person that can make a difference, an impact with your product or service, translating it into a normal everyday life that others can identify with."



### **Knowledge management**

In a large organization, it's easy to lose track of where specific knowledge resides. When top tier firms started promoting their "best teams" approach in the late 90s, they implicitly recognized the difficulty of bringing together the right talent for the right account. A "best team" could conceivably consist of a media relations expert in New York, a public affairs professional in Washington, and an individual with cardiovascular disease experience in San Francisco. To find the best people, agencies need to have access to the relevant information generally via an intranet with a robust people database. In corporations, the challenge is even more daunting, since corporate communications people may have to locate experts on a wide range of issues, from specific products and services to human resource topics (age discrimination, 401k plans) to the finer points of a company's environmental, health and safety record.

### **Knowledge sharing**

Even the best-run agencies in normal times at least experience staff turnover of 25 percent or more in an average year. Public relations people move easily from job to job, seeking new experiences and new challenges. In an industry where people really are a company's greatest asset, that creates real problems, because it means 25 percent of your institutional knowledge is lost every year. Knowledge sharing has become a priority for smart managers. Knowledge must become an institutional asset, and technology can enable that process, as companies create a body of knowledge that everyone can access. Beyond that, technology can help agencies share knowledge not only among their own

personnel but also via sophisticated extranets with their clients.

### **Empowering people to speak on behalf of the organization**

One of the realities of the modern communications environment is that everyone in your organization is a potential spokesperson. Not every media inquiry comes through the public relations department, and while smart companies will train their people to notify the PR department of every media contact, there will be times when non-communicators must respond to reporters' questions. In such cases, it's vital that non-professional spokespeople have access to corporate policies and message points developed by the professionals. Beyond that, it's important that everyone in the organization recognize his or her role in maintaining corporate reputation. Every contact an employee has with a customer, a member of the community, another employee, has the potential to enhance or undermine corporate reputation.

### **Beyond media relationships**

When it comes to media relations, there's no substitute for personal relationships. But in today's media environment, it's impossible to have a relationship with every journalist who can help tell your company's story, or who might uncover a story you'd rather not have plastered all over the front page of The Wall Street Journal. Media management software is a vital source of information on journalists, and available databases provide a depth of information beats, deadlines, pitching preferences, and more that can be customized and expanded for individual companies and specific clients. But you can also, by using databases intelligently, predict which reporters are more likely to give the story



a favorable hearing, and which industry analysts or activist sources they are likely to call to verify the story giving you an opportunity to reach out to opinion leaders before you pitch.

### **Adding reach to press releases**

The Internet has changed the nature of the press release. If you're writing a press release today at least, a press release that goes out over the newswires it's going to be read not only by the news media, but also by any stakeholder who has access to the Internet and sufficient interest in your company to do a search. Research conducted by PR Newswire at its website indicates more than 25 percent of those who read press releases online are shareholders of the issuing company, and 34 percent identify themselves as individual investors. About 13 percent identify themselves as business professionals, and almost 15 percent are ordinary consumers, looking to learn about the company, its products and services.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Modern technology enables public relations professionals to take measurement and evaluation to the next level, to analyze the success or failure of a campaign and of individual components of a campaign on a real-time basis. It used to be that evaluation was something PR people did at the end of a program, to figure out whether it was a hit. But today PR people are taking a leaf from the political campaign book and looking to evaluate programs on an ongoing basis. Thus, research has gone from a means of keeping score to a tool for adjusting and improving programs as they go along. Practitioners can eliminate what doesn't work and focus on what does, delivering greater value for money in the process.

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