

No 'cookie cutter' solution

 By [Tracy Jones](#)

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Traditional PR + Digital PR = A bold leap of faith for the survival of our industry. I don't need to preach to the converted. The role of PR is fundamentally shifting, and if we all don't evolve with it we run the risk of our agencies being obsolete in the next two to five years.

Advertising agencies have a certain niche for conceptualising campaigns that can be integrated across channels supported by marketing spend. Digital agencies are skilled at building the tools and platforms to start, promote and amplify brand messages.

As PR practitioners, we're at the forefront of being content generators who inform, excite and engage in meaningful dialogues across earned media (editorial) communication channels such as online sites, blogs, social media, podcasts, vodcasts, vines and YouTube, amongst many others.

The traditional press release has to morph into a variety of content formats in order to fit niche channels and hold high appeal to our target market, who individually pick and choose those that are personally engaging and easiest to consume for them. As an industry, this is an exciting and daunting prospect for a number of reasons. On the positive side, editorial coverage can now be used in other creative and exciting shapes and forms, and it becomes integral to the conversion funnel within a marketing strategy.



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The greatest challenge though, is that you need to evolve into digital PR by attracting and utilising digital skills in order to upskill your teams and to be able to incorporate digital into all future client campaigns. However, this need arises right now, when 80% of your current clients think what they need most today is traditional PR skills and your employment spend is, accordingly, invested in traditional PR skills.

Another challenge for the PR industry in transition is measurability.

How do we measure PR value on earned media that doesn't just show AVE x3 PR values or circulation?

- **Direct traffic increases:** when people read your article about your client's company and typed in the URL and came straight to the site.
- **Referral traffic increases:** when blogs or online media sites publish client articles and the audience can click on a link and get to the client's site.
- **Search traffic increases:** if the audience read about your client due to editorial and searched for your client.
- **Social network traffic increases:** Editorial (earned media) is getting other people to talk about your client's brand, which happens mostly on social media/digital channels.

The reality is that there is no 'cookie cutter' solution that an agency can implement overnight that is going to meet the requirements of all their clients. We have to build teams with diverse skills sets that are able to conceptualise and implement tailored (non-traditional) PR campaigns and communications solutions that are measurable and meaningful to clients. In the way that change brings about a certain amount of discomfort, many of us find ourselves currently with one foot rooted in the traditional PR landscape; while the other foot hovers over the digital arena as we tentatively explore the diversity of new content formats and the abundance of media channels.

We can't sustain such a balancing act for long. We have to now take the bold step of transitioning into the future where we confidently span both the traditional and digital PR spaces.

We make the choice to take this leap of faith for the survival of both our PR industry and our current traditional clients, whether they appreciate it yet or not!

Positive Dialogue was the Best Small PR Consultancy of the Year and Gold Prism winner for Best Use of an Event to build a reputation last year.

ABOUT TRACY JONES

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