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Social Media for PR and Communications

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What the Icons In Salesforce Marketing Cloud Ebooks Mean:



Quick, handy information designed to on-ramp you quickly



Extra, relevant information that deserved to be called out for more attention



Software, website or other tool that will help you get a job done well



A story about a brand illustrating a concept in the book



Helpful hints to keep you from making a mistake online



Relevant stats to support the facts and best practices outlined in the book



Where to find other resources and further information about this topic

Introduction

Social media often gets lumped into the same basket as public relations and communications. There is a reason for that; the always-on personal reach of social media and public relations and communications goals go hand in hand.

In spite of this happy juxtaposition, it can be hard for traditional public relations professionals to let control of the brand message move from their domain into that of the masses. It takes a solid but flexible strategy to successfully handle public relations and communications for a brand online.

Once your strategy is in place and your social media practice is flexible and fluid, public relations professionals can take advantage of the deeper level of metrics that social media provides. Social media gives public relations professionals like you a way to dig deeper than surface numbers like the old-school AVE and track your true reach and effectiveness.

Chapter 1 / Content Development

Content and creative are often the first point of contact with the public for public relations pros. Having excellent content marketing in place allows you to reach your audience and shape the initial brand message. The concept of shaping the initial message is an important one to understand. Once your message is out there in the wild, an engaged audience will take it and run with it.

As your message is carried across the internet, it will get changed, commented on, debated, fact-checked, quoted and shared over and over again. This is the kind of reach that public relations pros have always dreamed of, but the ability of strangers to alter or debate your brand message so easily can also give you nightmares.

The key here is to learn to create the kind of written, visual and audio content that encourages sharing, commentary and engagement, then learn to listen and engage with the audience once the content is in the wild. This is where communications skills will become important: following your message as it travels the internet, then being available and ready to respond to any response it may get.

When publishing content, it's important to think about day 90 as thoroughly as you think about day one. That way you have a plan for responding now and in the future. Compelling content gets the most traction. How can you ensure that your content is shared and reaches a wider audience? With the one-two punch of great storytelling and SEO.

The content that has the most power online is content that tells a story well. Every brand has a story — it's up to you to make that story compelling and engaging. Every brand customer has a story as well, a story that is woven around the brands and products that they have in their lives every day. Social media allows public relations and communications pros to find and tell the stories of their customers as well.

CASE STUDY



JUNE 25 | PRIDE

Oreo Cookie conducted a [100-day campaign](#) called the “Oreo #dailytwist” in the summer of 2012 in which they used visual content featuring their cookies to tell the story of various holidays, major current events (like the Mars Rover landing), cultural touchstone moments (Gay Pride Day) and more, all in real time. The cookie brand did not make a single “ask” of their customers - they simply shared great content. Their reach increased, their fan base increased and their sales increased, but more importantly, the attachment people felt to the brand increased. As a brand, try to leave people feeling better than they did when they first interacted with you.

What makes a good story? That’s easy: stories that aren’t just about the person (or brand) that is telling them are the ones people listen to most. Stories told from the perspective of “me me me” are the ones people tune out. Make your story about more than just the corporate party line. Make each story resonate. Make the stories you tell reach your customer in new ways that they can relate to, that makes them say, “That’s my story, too. This brand ‘gets’ me.”



TOOL

Use this short [guide](#) to writing sharable social press releases

Once you’ve learned to craft a good story, you will want to measure the impact. This is where great SEO comes in. Having excellent SEO in each blog post or in your long-form content (like an ebook) makes it not only easy for your readers to find, but also easier to share, and easier to track with your metrics later.

In fact, paying attention to your social shares (the ways people share your stories with others online) and your metrics can help you fine tune your SEO strategy for your content. By knowing which words, phrases and concepts resonate most not only with your industry but with your brand, you can release more effective content, consistently.

Being consistent with your content and your SEO pays off, especially in public relations. If you are known for being reliable and consistent then your message will be trusted. Trust is a key building block to success online. Brands that don’t have trust, don’t have control of their message and don’t have the engagement needed to handle a crisis, launch products or even simply promote themselves.



Social Media Week in London had [great SEO tracking](#)

Chapter 2/ Crisis Prevention & Resolution

“Crisis mode” is something that many public relations and communications pros are all too familiar with. While a large part of the job of PR is to get the initial message out there about a launch, a new hire, a new service or some other corporate news, it often falls to PR to handle a crisis when it erupts.



In All-Star Social Media Crisis Response for Brands you can get a solid plan for agile crisis response that will help you involve all departments in the resolution - PR pros no longer have to shoulder the burden alone!

We touched on the concept of push vs pull marketing when we introduced the idea of incorporating SEO in all of the content that you release. Traditionally, PR has been strictly push, push, push - broadcasting messages out to a receptive (and in the case of TV and radio - somewhat captive) audience. Layering SEO into content makes each piece capable of being both push (sent out) and pull (drawing people in).

In a social media world, you want all content and all engagement to become pull PR - drawing people in. Broadcasting a message with no engagement and no measurement, staying in the push zone, does you no favors in social media. People expect more from the brands they use and trust - they expect a two-way dialogue. In some public relations circles, we refer to that as “picking up the phone”, or [engaging the customer wherever they are](#).

Public relations pros have a direct line from brand to consumer now that wasn't there before. It can be intimidating to think about the consumer having more control, but in the end it is only a good thing for any brand that is ready for the dialogue.



Companies like [Ford](#), [Oreo](#), and [Sharpie](#) are all executing the kind of content-plus-engagement strategies on multiple platforms in multiple formats that pulls people in toward their brands and makes deep consumer loyalty possible. In the case of Ford, pull marketing and excellent content and engagement has helped them revive their brand in the face of trying economic times, helping their bottom line (and their shareholders) and making their public relations team's job much easier.



DIG DEEPER

Take a look at this episode of [Radian6 TV](#), where we help you identify a PR crisis.

That kind of excellent content-plus-engagement speaks directly to crisis prevention. What happens to the public relations professional and the brand they represent when a crisis does erupt? With a plan in place to hear what customers want and need in near-real time, crises can be addressed much more completely, flexibly and quickly than ever before.

Social media allows public relations pros to communicate faster and more effectively when a crisis erupts, to address the real problem underlying the issue, to find and address the people most affected by the crisis, to pull in response from the right department from day one, and to follow up and follow through on the crisis after it is resolved. This gives you serious power for effective crisis resolution that you never had before.

Chapter 3 / Campaign Development

One of the essentials of great public relations and communications using social media is the ability to marry online and offline campaign efforts. The New Hampshire resort The Balsams did a great job of this when they embarked on their “Inn-Bedded Resorter” campaign. That was a social media and offline push to have someone live at their resort and enjoy all of their amenities for two months in 2010.



The push to become the “Inn-Bedded Resorter” through online contest channels and the ensuing engagement and social shares added up to measurable results offline with their best opening weekend in ages, and a strong bookings start to their season. The winner of the “Inn-Bedded Resorter” kept the momentum going: blogging, creating visual content and sharing during their stay. This gave the resort content that added a boost online and off; continuing to drive real sales to the resort.

Healthy Choice did a great job with an online plus offline campaign as well using the concept of a Facebook-based progressive coupon. The coupon began with a low cash value and increased over time as the brand’s Facebook page got more likes and more engagement.

The brand used metrics to find key drivers and engage with influential bloggers and social media personalities, bought ads on Facebook to reach people that were not already identifying with the brand, and did an extensive email marketing campaign. They also encouraged social sharing around both the acquisition of and actual use of their coupon. Their goal was to increase their Facebook fan base. With a jump from 6,800 fans to 60,000 during the campaign, it’s safe to say they achieved their public relations goal.



The Healthy Choice campaign in 2010 touched on the edge of gamification; by encouraging folks to share the increased value of their coupon, they encouraged competitive sharing behavior. Since 2010 the public relations arsenal has gotten more interesting, with true gamification available to savvy pros thanks to better, more readily-accessible technology and greater public adoption of online game play and brand engagement.

Not all brands are ready to use advanced gamification tools like augmented reality. Consumer education is still catching up to many of the more advanced tools available. That doesn't mean you can't use gamification in unique ways to get your public relations message across. Even healthcare is getting "gamified".

GE Healthcare is now in the middle of its second hybrid campaign using gamification and social media to increase cancer awareness and encourage cancer prevention. This campaign is called **#GetFit** and encourages people to share their behavior patterns on Facebook, Twitter and Weibo with the campaign hashtag. The sharer gets points for each update or post, competing with other people all over the globe to reach their goals faster. There is also a Facebook app called HealthyShare that goes along with the campaign and adds a game layer of challenge completion to the mix along with the social sharing aspect of the campaign.



 **SIDEBAR**

You might be thinking that all of these ideas about content creation, engagement sharing and offline outreach and gamification are interesting, but hard to measure. In reality, measuring the success of your public relations campaigns has never been easier or more able to be tied to real ROI.

First, you need to lay a measurement foundation. Plan ahead for SEO, keyword tracking, influencer discovery and tracking, key driver tracking, social share tracking, hashtag tracking and landing page and conversion tracking. You may want to use a great spreadsheet system to compile the data on all of these, coming in from a variety of sources and tools, so it's easy to read and decipher.

Second, you need to work with other departments to make sure everyone is using the tracking tools for the campaign - you don't want to miss any data. This includes working with the IT department to create great backend metrics on the website as well as working with the person or department who owns your social share tracking (assuming that you aren't a team of one).

Third, incorporate weekly reporting during the campaign from all departments. This reporting will make it easy to translate your campaign into a case study later for use in marketing, sales and public relations. It will also make it easier to tie the campaign to your goals for sales, leads and increased brand awareness during the campaign so you can adjust on the fly as needed. These weekly reports also allow you to easily create a full-campaign report that can be repurposed as a presentation to your executives.

 **TOOL**

*Use this quick **checklist** of tools any public relations pro can use for their campaigns.*

Chapter 4 / Community as an Asset

Your influencers and key drivers are important, it's true, but your community as a whole is the asset you need to be spending the most energy nurturing. It's not just the influencer who can help you in a crisis, it's your community that is your foundation. When Oreo's campaign touched on a potentially sensitive issue, gay pride, it was their legion of Facebook fans that carried the burden of resolving the crisis and supporting the brand. They barely had to lift a public relations finger, and the crisis was averted.

That kind of loyalty doesn't happen overnight. Sure, it's easy to love a cookie, but even tasty chocolate with a cream filling doesn't automatically guarantee consumer loyalty. Oreo has worked hard providing consistent excellent content, genuine engagement and brand authenticity online to build trust over time that the brand "Oreo" appreciates it's customers and is accessible to them.


TIP

Use tools like Salesforce Marketing Cloud to find and connect with not only your influencers but your regular fans and customer that may not have directly engaged with you yet.

Your community is important not just for brand perception and crisis resolution but also for brand outreach, market research and influencing the perception outsiders have about your brand. In Agile Market Research With Social Media we give you the tools you need to use social media and your community as a focus group, to bring products to market (or not) and to make better decisions as a brand for you and for your customer.


TOOL

Download your copy of our ebook [Agile Market Research with Social Media](#).

As you become more and more adept at social media for public relations and communications, it's important to make sure you are engaging responsibly for the brand and the consumer. Outreach can have an amplified effect for all brands in a connected world, and it helps to have solid guidelines on what is expected for those representing the brand, in addition to metrics, campaigns, and goals.

Conclusion

Social media is a powerful tool for public relations and communications. It takes a previously one-way profession and turns it on its head - opening the floodgates of dialogue and engagement. The savvy public relations pro will take this new connectedness and run with it, creating campaigns for their brand that resonate and expand.

Public relations and communications have never been more accessible or able to achieve these larger goals as quickly as they can today. In a world where you must be both analyst and catalyst, social media is the faster road to measurable, actionable success.

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How To Write A Social Media Friendly Press Release

You should still submit your press release to the media department of your local or national newspapers, weeklies, and magazines that relate to your topic. You should also submit it to the free and freemium press release outlets online such as [PitchEngine](#), PRWeb, i-newswire, Press Release 365. Don't overlook bloggers and your online influencers — they also should get (appropriate to them) press releases!

- ☐ **1. Logo** - Every press release needs a logo to create that visual connection between the reader, a brand and the news story being told
- ☐ **2. Media Contact Block** - This is where is where you place your company name, address, phone number, email, web address, social site links, and the name of your media contact. This gives blogs and news outlets the essential information they need to verify the news contained in the press release.
- ☐ **3. Snappy Headline** - The title of the press release should act like a news headline and be eye catching, setting up your news story and driving the reader to action. This is your chance to write a compelling headline using your SEO strategy.
- ☐ **4. News Summary** - Your opening paragraph should have the first live link to your website landing page, use active language and be peppered with action words - it acts as a summary of the story or announcement to come. Avoid writing in a passive voice for a press release.
- ☐ **5. Following Paragraphs** - There should be one paragraph for each point you want to make about your blog or event; however, your full press release shouldn't exceed two pages. These paragraphs need to tell a clear story.
- ☐ **6. Conclusion** - A closing paragraph that gives you the opportunity to make a last chance pitch to your readers or reiterate the point you want to drive home.
- ☐ **7. In Text Links** - Every paragraph needs at least one live text link back to your landing page or relevant campaign content. This ensures that even if your press release gets edited for space, your readers will have the information they need to act on your news item, and your SEO and inbound marketing benefits remain strong.
- ☐ **8. Visual Elements** - In an online age, press releases can (and should) be interactive. Use the capability of sites like PitchEngine or PRWeb to embed video, upload photo galleries and make your press release visually compelling.
- ☐ **9. Template** - Create a template you can reuse for each new press release. This will make writing press releases much faster.

Checklist: The Public Relations Pro Toolbox

- ☐ **Profile Templates** - branded, on message, deployable quickly on new platforms.
- ☐ **Engagement Platform** - a place to gather social media mentions, respond in real time, workflow the process throughout your organization (Salesforce Marketing Cloud, Hootsuite, Awareness, etc.)
- ☐ **Listening and Measurement Platform** - root out the posts, updates and status messages that matter and pull them out of the firehose of data (Salesforce Marketing Cloud, Google Analytics, etc.)
- ☐ **Excel** - spreadsheets make excellent dashboards for analytics and tracking campaigns.
- ☐ **Social Press Release Template** - template in your favorite word processor or web program than can be easily customized as a social press release and print press release, saving you time formatting.
- ☐ **Social Press Release Accounts** - an online database to house and share your social press releases (PitchEngine, PRWeb, etc)
- ☐ **Golden Rolodex** - a place to organize your traditional and social media contacts such as LinkedIn.
- ☐ **Email List / Campaign Management Tool** - a place to house your campaign and distribution lists (Constant Contact, MailChimp, etc)
- ☐ **Dark Website Templates** - website you hold in reserve, ready to deploy if needed (such as the Apple website honoring Steve Jobs after his death)
- ☐ **Analytics Tool** - measurement tool(s) such as Google Analytics for websites, landing pages, email and the “behind the scenes” stats behind social campaigns. Salesforce Marketing Cloud is helpful for measuring social reach and Insights.
- ☐ **Website** - landing page or microsite in place to provide customer resource during campaigns.