

The PR Report

THE TOP 20 TRENDS FOR PR
PRACTITIONERS IN 2012



PLEASE
KEEP OFF TURF
WHEN FROSTY

Introduction: The Top 20 Trends for PRs in 2012

This report is about the trends that will influence our lives, our careers and our organisations in the months and years ahead.

Our mission with this report is to be relevant and insightful to PR practitioners in Australia. The PR Report has about 7000 subscribers; you come from many different sectors, and about 50% of you are in-house PRs (corporate, Government, NGO, Charity) and 50% work within PR agencies.

Let's remind ourselves of the key issue – managing reputation – with a quote from Warren Buffet:

“ We can afford to lose money – even a lot of money. But we can't afford to lose reputation. ”

Warren Buffet, Memo to Berkshire Hathaway Managers

First, the good news

The transformative power of information to change lives

The digital age has brought a greater level of transparency to the world of public relations and corporate communication. To some communicators, like Steve Davies from OzLoop, we are now in a period of “radical transparency” – a step change in the relationship between all organisations and consumers.

According to Davies;

“ People are increasingly cynical about government and business. WikiLeaks has played a major role in the emergence of radical transparency. People – as citizens and consumers – are more attuned to the power of the Internet to expose wrong doing and dishonest conduct. The real point, however, is that expectations are higher. ”

This is an opportunity for PRs to work on influencing and directing the culture of their organisation in a positive and beneficial way; to help organisations be “the authentic organisation” led by the authentic CEO. This positions PR practitioners at the head table.

The web changes lives; 2011 brought amazing changes around the world; changes initiated and driven by access to information and social media technology. Previously only the domain of the wealthy or the state, the web gives ordinary people the ability to be broadcasters. The two global stand-out changes for 2011 were:

- (1) The Arab Spring; sparked by demonstrators frustrated at living in dictatorships and angered by information released by WikiLeaks about the extent of corruption, and,
- (2) the Occupy Wall Street movement, that spread around the world after a blog post calling for people to demonstrate against greedy CEOs and bankers. This movement will usher in a new era of change. Whilst this will be difficult for business and political leaders, the end result will be more open and transparent economies.

There was good news in the technology sector; new platforms, new devices, and falling price of gadgets, like smart phones. Facebook will IPO, making the founder and current owners billions. Crucially for PR people, the money raised will be used by Facebook to offer many more exciting new services. Facebook will continue to grow in terms of number of users, but also in the way users share information; a growing number of users will share information via their mobiles, a trend we see continuing. Mobile devices are also cameras and videos; everyone is now a potential citizen journalist, and has an easy medium to share their stories. Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg has stated he wants Facebook to be “social by design” – a trend we see influencing public relations in a big way (see Trend # 4); as social by design can easily result in “anti-social” for the unwary, and the unethical or unresponsive organisation.

Now, the bad news

Economic changes brought on by the Euro and US debt crisis have only just begun to play out; the Euro/US countries are facing a collective recession for 5-7 years as these countries pay off (or default on) their debt. It's highly likely Greece will default on debt repayments; much like Argentina did back in the 1990s; or Greece (and others) will agree a debt swap that is tantamount to default. There will be social unrest and politicians will feel the backlash. Recessions in Euro-land and the USA have led to a realignment of global politics with China as the economic (and soon to be a political) superpower.

There were, sadly, many disasters around the world, including floods and cyclones in Australia, reinforcing the need for excellent crisis communication, before, during and after an event. Train your CEO on media engagement; if there's one thing we learnt from the Victoria's Black Saturday bush fires and the BP disaster in The Gulf of Mexico, you need to train and manage the CEO more closely than you manage the media.

The big long term change (globally)

China is (unofficially) the new world bank. In the coming decades, the Chinese will use their power in the same way every other superpower has over the centuries, from the Persians, Romans, Ottomans, French, British and Americans, to get what they want, which diplomats call "acting in the national interest". The Chinese already hire former Australian Ministers to lobby for them in Australia.

2012

Minority Government worked in Australia in 2011, in the sense that, with the passing of legislation, things didn't grind to a halt. In the run up to the Federal election (2013), be prepared for lots of "good news" from PM Gillard now that she's made the tough choices. Expect the ALP, Greens, Independents and Liberals to be in "election mode" from February 2012 onwards. Specific groups, especially those in marginal seats, will be the recipients of Government largesse. Lobbying opportunities abound for those who know the geo-political landscape. PM Gillard will battle low ratings, and struggle to fend off suggestions KRudd wants the job back (as at time of writing; who knows what will happen next week).

A number of the issues will surface in 2012; we've tried to pick the top 20 for this report. There are some other close contenders, and, although we haven't analysed them here, they are worth noting, especially if you're in the sectors affected:

- The loss of manufacturing jobs in Victoria and NSW coupled with the continued rise of the "two speed economy" powered by growth in the mining sector in WA and QLD.
- The erosion of retirement savings by the baby boomers (those people born after WW2, up to Gen X) who are now retiring; many boomers will have to continue working.
- Possible restrictions on alcohol advertising.
- The end of tobacco brands.
- Possible removal of additives from food, and the food chain (pesticides and chemicals.)
- And finally, a growing focus on workplace bullying; a trend that impacts all PRs, especially those with responsibility for crisis communication. As Rob Hadler suggests "Workplace bullying is replacing harassment as a key management focus."

You are the media

The power of the web is that it offers anyone the ability to create and engage an audience; and that audience can spread the message faster than any other media. The web is not just a platform for selling products; it's the best way to sell ideas. Audiences have always been the currency of power in public relations; and the web offers mass market audiences as well as niche audiences. In-house and agency PRs can engage audiences directly rather than through (traditional) media; this doesn't replace media relations, it adds to the complexity, diversity and opportunity for practitioners.

An example of the complexity PRs have with social media is highlighted by Peter Witts, founder of Agenda PR, who says: “we will see more situations where mainstream media - so called - use social media as a source.”

If you're on social media, you could be the source.

PR is still reputation, reputation, reputation

As Warren Buffet says: “We can afford to lose a lot of money, but we can't afford to lose our reputation”

Some PRs still don't get the transparency thing, and were up to their old tricks of manipulation in 2011; editing Wikipedia for example. According to Eva Maclaine, Principal of Maclaine Communications, and Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) in the UK:

“There have recently been instances of PR agencies changing Wikipedia entries to enhance their clients' image. Instead these have had the effect of bringing to light their clients' shortcomings and doing reputational damage to both client and consultancy... anyone editing Wikipedia in subterfuge is behaving unethically. They will find that their actions are counterproductive and will work to the detriment of their clients.”

UK's CIPR is working with Wikipedia to provide members with guidance on how to interact with the Wikipedia community.

The key is to understand the need for honesty in communication. Peter Witts of Agenda PR suggests that “in a world of faster, even instant, global communication and greater transparency, the key to reputation management will itself be greater transparency.”

Glass half full

Whilst many PRs like to think they “own” the corporate relationship with social media, the advertising folks also have the same view (which no doubt confuses non-marketing savvy CEOs when both claim they should own/control social media). Integrating the two previously separate disciplines (PR and advertising) will be a challenge, but social media has been a force for disintermediation in every sector of business, and for every service, and will continue to change the communication function. PR understands that social media is a dialogue, not a one way message delivery channel, and this is PRs greatest asset, and should, with effective internal lobbying, ensure the CEO delegates control of social media to the PR/comms people, rather than the advertising people. The changes social media brings to how an organisation communicates offers opportunities for both in-house PRs and PR agencies, and will do so for many years to come.

Middle East revolutions demonstrate power of social media

Democracy requires free access to information; Twitter, Facebook, WordPress and others, when not banned (eg Facebook in China), offer access. Democracy opens the door to the private sector, which creates opportunities for PR. The fastest growth area for PR in the next few years will be the newly liberated countries of the Middle East (assuming the deposed military dictators aren't replaced by clerical dictators, like Iran in 1979, when Ayatollah Khomeini replaced The Shah)

Twitter boomed in 2011. Twitter was the platform that triggered journalists into adopting social media. As **Dan Nolan of Al-Jazeera** says; “I went to cover Cairo's revolution with 600 followers [on Twitter] and came home with 23,000! Finding a way to overcome Mubarak's Twitter restrictions was part of that but constructing the right message in 140 characters was def the key.”

Media scandal: it was an inside job

Last year's report (2011) is available and you're welcome to read what we discussed. One of the trends covered was "Data security" as a reputational risk for PR practitioners. WikiLeaks inspired the Arab Spring by publishing US Government documents revealing details of corrupt practices, assets and business dealings of various Middle Eastern dictators and regimes. The information came from a source inside the US Government.

Data security is a trend PRs must understand and have a policy to deal with worst case scenarios. As we put more of our lives online, from family photos on Facebook, to banking apps on our smartphones, to making data available to the public, or internally, an ever-expanding class of hacktivists, cyber-criminals and disillusioned staff will hack, steal, sell or copy our data. This applies to corporations and Governments just as much as individuals (such as identity theft).

As the UK Police and phone companies found out, the weakest link is often internal; it was their own staff who sold data to journalists. Be prepared.

News Corp

The data security topic exploded onto the front pages again in mid-2011 in the form of the News Corp phone hacking scandal, centred on the British tabloid newspaper, The News of the World. The phone hacking scandal quickly became a full blown crisis, leading to the closure of the Murdoch owned tabloid, resignations of Editors and Police Chiefs, a House of Commons enquiry, more people being sent off to jail, and, no doubt, much more to come.

The irony is that the largest and most powerful media group in the world, News Corp, an organisation whose staff are used to demanding answers from others, couldn't extract themselves from their own mess, and turned to a PR firm for help. News Corp hired international PR firm, Edelman, to assist with their (crisis) communication and reputation management. A long contract we're sure.

The appointment of Edelman PR by News Corp is the clearest example of how powerful PR is. When powerful people need help, they call in the PR people.

Why PRs* should read this report

The PR role is to; protect and enhance reputation, be an advocate, engage and influence stakeholders (not just communicate with them), use PR to boost sales and increase shareholder value (private sector), and ensure policy objectives are explained and achieved (Government). We hope reading this report helps you, as a PR practitioner, to analyse the risks and the opportunities.

As for our cover photo, we always have a wry take on communication and hope you like our 2012 picture. For a full explanation, please go to the last page in this report. As always, your feedback is welcome.

Kind regards,
Glen Frost

Editor & Publisher, The PR Report.
Tel: +61 2 9476 3333 or email: glen@theprreport.com
Website: www.theprreport.com

Note: * Assuming you're comfortable with being in PR; see trend number 13

THE TOP 20

TRENDS FOR PR PRACTITIONERS IN 2012

- 1 Defending the 1%
- 2 The Asian Century PR opportunity
- 3 Worst case scenario for The Liberal Party?
- 4 Mandatory pre-commitment (to social media)
- 5 The power of lobbying
- 6 The ABC partners with GetUp! (unofficially)
- 7 Increased use of infographics
- 8 Carbon Monsters
- 9 The fall and rise of the ABC
- 10 Ideas are the global currency for PR
- 11 iPads are for girls
- 12 It's all video, video, video
- 13 Are you embarrassed to be in PR?
- 14 We need a health communication revolution
- 15 The rise of product placement
- 16 Gamification
- 17 Political communication wakes up to the web
- 18 Ref check my boss
- 19 What will analytics do for PR?
- 20 Measuring digital reputation

PR is the voice of the company, and the CEO. PR must be an advocate for the corporation, and the CEO. The Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement's chief claim is that greedy CEOs are the problem. Their message is coupled to a broader narrative claiming ineffective regulation, calling for an end to Government funded "no strings attached" bank bail-outs, and an end to casino capitalism. It's a complicated narrative and to simplify this complex story, OWS focused on one thing that people would understand – the "greedy CEO"

OWS focussed on how CEOs are the 1%. Because PRs report directly to CEOs, PRs are included in the 1% and are positioned by the OWS movement as defenders of the problem, as apologists for corporate greed. Corporate greed is not a problem with an easy fix.



OWS started with a blog post on the non-profit website AdBusters and spread because of easy-to-use Twitter hash tags for cities around the world; each city had a ready-made broadcast channel.

Will OWS continue to grow? Yes. People are angry; "They've been made to pay for a crisis that they didn't cause.." said Peter Vaughn, an Occupy LSX campaigner in a debate in Time Out Magazine (26/1/12). There is a crisis in confidence in capitalism, and the people who profit from it. US Republican Presidential candidate Mitt Romney, who's worth US\$200m, pays 15% tax; until that changes you can be sure this issue will roll on. Companies are in the spotlight too: Google Europe is based in Ireland to avoid (not evade) tax rates in countries like UK, which are higher than Ireland's corporate tax rate. The OWS movement wants systemic change, and wants political leaders to take action.

Points to note:

- 1 This crisis will produce a closer relationship between the CEO and PR, and an increased investment in resources (budgets) because of the increased risks.
- 2 This crisis is a wake-up call to use social media. Create and use Twitter hashtags for your issues. You must be an advocate for your brand online. Go mobile; equip and train key staff with mobile devices
- 3 Be prepared. In 2012, OWS protestors may move from targeting Wall Street to Your Street. #occupywallstreet might change to #occupynab or #occupygoogle - OWS may target CEO bonuses and brands not perceived as paying their "fair share" of tax



Asia is booming and China is a financial superpower. Tall buildings convey a message of strength and power: nine out of ten of the world's tallest skyscrapers are in Asia (including Dubai). China's economy might be slowing from double to single digit growth, but the growth in the service economy offers opportunities for Australian PRs.

The Government of China has forced a contract on its people; the politicians deliver exceptional economic growth, pulling hundreds of millions out of poverty, but keep a lid on democratic reforms; this is "the Chinese economic model".

Corruption in China is rife, possibly endemic, and with no free media, corruption will stay. Everything in China is open to bribery; from sport to buying Australian resources. Occasionally, extreme corruption is settled in a public manner; state executions are the preferred method of warning the greedy. The contaminated milk scandal is an example. Given China has no free media, understanding what's going on is a huge issue. China is often suspicious of outsiders; with good reason; the Opium War with Britain is one example seared into the Chinese worldview. Trust is key.

China has been on an infrastructure binge for the past 15 years and has created a housing bubble. The build-phase will slow and the Chinese will move on to the next binge: food, consumer goods and services.

To sell Australian products and services, companies will need PR advisors to connect what the Chinese want to what we can supply. The lady in the picture above sums up the opportunity. She wants designer clothes, a bigger house, and a foreign University education (for her only child). She aspires to western brands, the current growth area for PR. One future trend is the growth of Chinese brands. As Steve Bowen, Corporate & Public Affairs Director at Burson-Marsteller Australia says: "Asian companies now make up the largest share of the Forbes Global 2000 list, yet Asian brands – both product and corporate – still lag behind more established global competitors... to raise brand reputation to a level commensurate with financial strength will require a significant investment in communications that goes beyond the wholesale purchase of advertising space."

Opportunities:

1. Lobbying for Chinese companies in Australia; eg Bespoke Approach (Alex Downer) and Huawei
2. PR accounts for Chinese brands in Australia: from Great Wall (cars) to Shanghai Tang (clothing)
3. PR jobs for Aussies in Asia (Walter Jennings is now in HK, Brian West in Singapore)
4. PR people with language skills; future PR pitches will be in Mandarin/Cantonese

A NEW CENTRE RIGHT PARTY EMERGES

If you're a betting person, Tony Abbott will be the next Prime Minister. There are 4 things that could stop Abbott becoming PM; a repeat of minority Government, a "Tony gaffe", an unsellable IR policy, or, a new centre right party emerges. We've identified the top political issues for 2012:

- 1 Wedge issues will be big in 2012.** A key wedge issue for The Liberals is immigration. Luckily for the Liberals, Labor struggle to be coherent on the issue. Luckily for Labor, Scott Morrison, the Liberal's Minister for Immigration, is also Abbott's main threat for the Leadership role. Immigration is Abbott and Morrison's key "battleground" issue; both MPs come from Sydney electorates that struggle with the subtleties of migration policy, and that Australia has the most successful migration program in the world. Abbott's electorate covers part of "the insular peninsula" and Morrison's electorate is Cook, home of the Cronulla race riots.
- 2 Future QLD mining royalties fund election promises.** The Libs won WA in 2008, Victoria and NSW in 2010 and 2011. There is an election in Queensland in 2012; expect change. Promises of new projects will be based on future royalties from new mining projects (aka the "mega mines").
- 3 Keeping the bastards honest.** There is a downside for The Libs if the States go Liberal. There is a feeling in the Australian psyche that to have either Labor or Libs in power at both State and Federal level is to have too much power in too few hands.
- 4 The Greens** have invested time and money in nurturing a member empowered grass roots base which has produced excellent results at the ballot box. The Greens are growing and have influence; you need to understand and engage them (they operate differently from the mainstream parties).
- 5 New parties** emerged last year. Bob Katter founded Katter's Australian Party. Katter is powerful in regional Queensland and his party may win seats there, but he lacks broader appeal. If The Liberals occupied the centre ground, as they did before Pauline Hanson came on the scene, then Katter could take Liberal voters, but the Liberals already appeal to the disaffected right, so growth in Katter's party will be limited. However, in a minority Government, every MP counts, so Katter is courted and listened to (although not necessarily understood)
- 6 The independent** MPs will be important in the lead up to the next election, mainly because they are independent, and can influence policy. Slipper's move to the speaker's chair has weakened their position; however, if the independents "all play together" they will be powerful.
- 7 The key issue to watch is if a group of centre right MPs from The Liberals split, and form a new party.** Continued positioning of the Liberals as a party of the far right alienates the moderate MPs. The Liberal Party doesn't like small "I" liberals. It is possible a new moderate conservative/liberal party may emerge, led by a moderate Liberal MP. It's a big prediction. What's the evidence? (1) a bruised, and very restless, moderate former Liberal leader Malcolm Turnbull; (2) we know moderate Liberals will leave their party (Oakshott, Slipper); (3) Turnbull likes start-ups (ex-banker) and taking on the establishment (remember Spycatcher and the ARM); so who's to say he wouldn't lead a split in The Liberal Party? Treacherous? Yes. Exciting? Yes. Turnbull would no doubt seek support from former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, who resigned his membership of the Liberal Party in disgust at Abbott's policies on immigration. Turnbull also knows who the disillusioned Liberals are; he'll only need 4 or 5 MPs to start a new political party that could hold the balance of power in a minority Government.
- 8 Australian politicians** know China is a superpower, but remain unsure of how to engage the Chinese diaspora, who, as citizens in Australia, will have a growing role in Australian politics. Australian politicians may implement legislation similar to the USA, where only a citizen born in the USA can become President. Perhaps PM Gillard (born Wales) and Opposition Leader Abbott (b. England) may find common ground.

MANDATORY PRE-COMMITMENT (TO SOCIAL MEDIA)

There are no formal rules in the social media playground, and large companies attract attention, as the examples below show. The lesson is that PR must now also be “social by design”, to borrow a phrase from Mark Zuckerberg. First the examples, then the suggested response.

The QANTAS #qantasluxury episode is a fine example of how one tweet set off a digital Twitter tsunami that led to a reputation meltdown. How could such a conservative company (Motto: Your safety is our priority), make such a mistake? Conclusion: **corporate and Government communicators/PRs must have a mandatory pre-commitment to social media that is based on the 5 point plan below.**

The past year has seen the rise in influence of a powerful group of commentators and campaigners; Mummy Bloggers. Brand Meets Blog’s Australian Women and Social Media 2011 Survey found two dramatic statistics: (1) Australian women online love sharing: 84% leave comments, and (2) 75% of those who read blogs, said a blog or blog post, had changed the way they felt about their life.

Case study. Ksubi Jeans and General Pants ran a campaign promoted by signage that Mummy bloggers deemed inappropriate (pic, right); Mummy Bloggers blogged, went on daytime TV etc; the window advert was censored within one week (pic far right), and removed within 2 weeks. Mummy Bloggers are now treated the same as Journalists (MEAA please note). Build relationships with Bloggers in your sector.



A 5 point PR plan for social media:

1. PR must be ‘social by design’ – social media must be a core part of your PR strategy. Tactically, begin by monitoring social media. Then join the conversation.
2. Move to being pro-active. Don’t give control of social media to the advertising people. There is a desire within all ad people to increase sales; don’t let it be at the expense of your reputation.
3. Become an online advocate for your business or issue. With social media; you are the media. Ensure you have separate roles for writer/PR and editor/PR. Journalists have Editors for a reason.
4. You are now “always on call”. As Rob Hadler from Coles says: “[social media] fundamentally changes the power paradigm with a shift from corporate control to consumer democracy, and shifts the working week from 5:12 to 24:7. Not many corporates are geared up for this.”
5. Share content. Which platforms should you use? This will depend on company size, stage of development, number of employees etc. Here is a simple guide: focus on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn for conversations, with links to your more formal content on your blog (Wordpress), YouTube (video), Flickr (photos) and Slideshare (presentations). Use an editorial process.

Keep up to date with changes. Jess Miller, founder of Goody Two Shoes, says: “One of the biggest changes in Facebook is the new timeline format. Touted by Facebook as the way for users to “tell [their] life story”, this new format marks significant events in a chronological format. While currently the timeline format only applies to personal profiles, smart PR peeps ought to be thinking about what the format will mean when applied to brand, organisational and high profile peoples’ pages.”

Miller advises the following: “For better or worse, Timeline means that personal stories will undoubtedly be linked to brands, for example, we’ll remember updates like: “Four hours waiting at the Brisbane terminal, This is it #Qantas, we’re done!” ... the same principles you would apply to protecting your personal profile ought to apply to protecting your brand.”



Online publisher Crikey named a PR practitioner as their “Person of the Year” for 2011. Crikey named Lyn White, Campaign Director for Animals Australia, as their Person of the Year.

According to Crikey: “Lyn White’s story *A Bloody Business* made an impact ... evidence obtained by White in Indonesia was provided to the ABC’s *Four Corners*, resulting in a Gold Walkley Award for Sarah Ferguson, Michael Doyle and Anne Worthington and the immediate suspension of the live exports to Indonesia along with public and political pressure to end the trade.”

This award is great coup for Lyn White and PR practitioners. BUT, the legislation they wanted wasn’t passed. There are two points to note here: great PR people often don’t have a background in PR, and it doesn’t matter how good the PR, a campaign can’t effect legislation without intense and sustained lobbying. And as proof of the last point, recall how the Minerals Council of Australia’s lobbying and advertising campaign led to the toppling of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, and a renegotiation of the mining tax (MRRT).

White is a former Policewoman, and is prepared to roll up her sleeves and get the evidence the journalists can’t or won’t get. White went to the abattoirs of Asia and filmed the evidence. She’s pretty vocal too. White issued a media release with this to say about the meat industry: “If the Prime Minister didn’t realise it before, she now has irrefutable evidence that the live export industry cannot be trusted... This is an industry that has made misleading the government, public and farmers an art form.”

Animals Australia organised a very effective and high profile campaign that influenced the media, the nation, and many politicians. However, a combination of Government and bureaucratic process and lobbying by the trade associations (esp the meat industry) meant that Animals Australia’s desired legislation was not passed.

Two trends to note:

1. Campaigns for legislative change at a national level require Canberra based lobbyists (in-house or agency). FIFO lobbying (fly-in fly-out) doesn’t match being there, and will decline.
2. Campaigns seeking legislative change require large budgets; according to Paul Barry in *The Power Index*: in 2011 “big tobacco .. spent \$14 million on fighting plain packaging; the Minerals Council of Australia and the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies spent \$6.2 million savaging the Mining Resource Rent Tax (on top of the \$17 million they spent the year before); the ACTU spent \$6.5 million on campaigning for the labour movement; GetUp! spent a hefty \$5 million; and Clubs NSW spent \$1 million in the early days of its campaign to kill Andrew Wilkie’s pokie reforms.”



ABC PARTNERS WITH GETUP! (UNOFFICIALLY)

Animals Australia (AA) went to ABC TV Four Corners with a story proposal including their research, and more importantly, some great vision (video footage). AA delivered the ABC a “doco on a plate”.

Usually, ABC Publicity works with ABC radio and various newspapers to promote a Four Corners documentary. This still happens, however, there’s a new partnership at play...

AA and the ABC went to independent online campaigners GetUp! and showed them the doco, explained the issue and asked them to get involved. GetUp! agreed. GetUp!’s role was to be an unofficial partner in the campaign and promote the upcoming ABC TV show and lobby their base into taking action.

GetUp! sent emails to their subscriber base, and continued the emails after the show went to air.

Politicians are very “tuned in” to the impact of an ABC Four Corners program; it’s one of the few TV shows that can speak to the nation. Voters will call and email their politicians demanding action following Four Corners docos. A politician’s first response is to “baton down the hatches” in the hope that the issue blows over and life returns to normal; it usually does, but not this time.

Why?

Using the GetUp! database to continuously send out stirring emails calling for change meant the issue was kept alive longer (than the week when the program went to air); the campaign eventually forced politicians to promise action (although by “promise action” politicians mean “we’ll look into it”)

PRs know that media organisations want (demand) exclusivity to run a story. PRs often have to make a decision as to who to run the exclusive with; a decision that will take into account media reach and the demographic profile of the audience.

The following statistics show why GetUp! is powerful:

The GetUp! email database = 590,000

Sydney Morning Herald (Mon-Friday) daily sales = 190,000

ABC News at 7pm reach = 1.025 million people

Network Ten’s The Project reach = 472,000 people

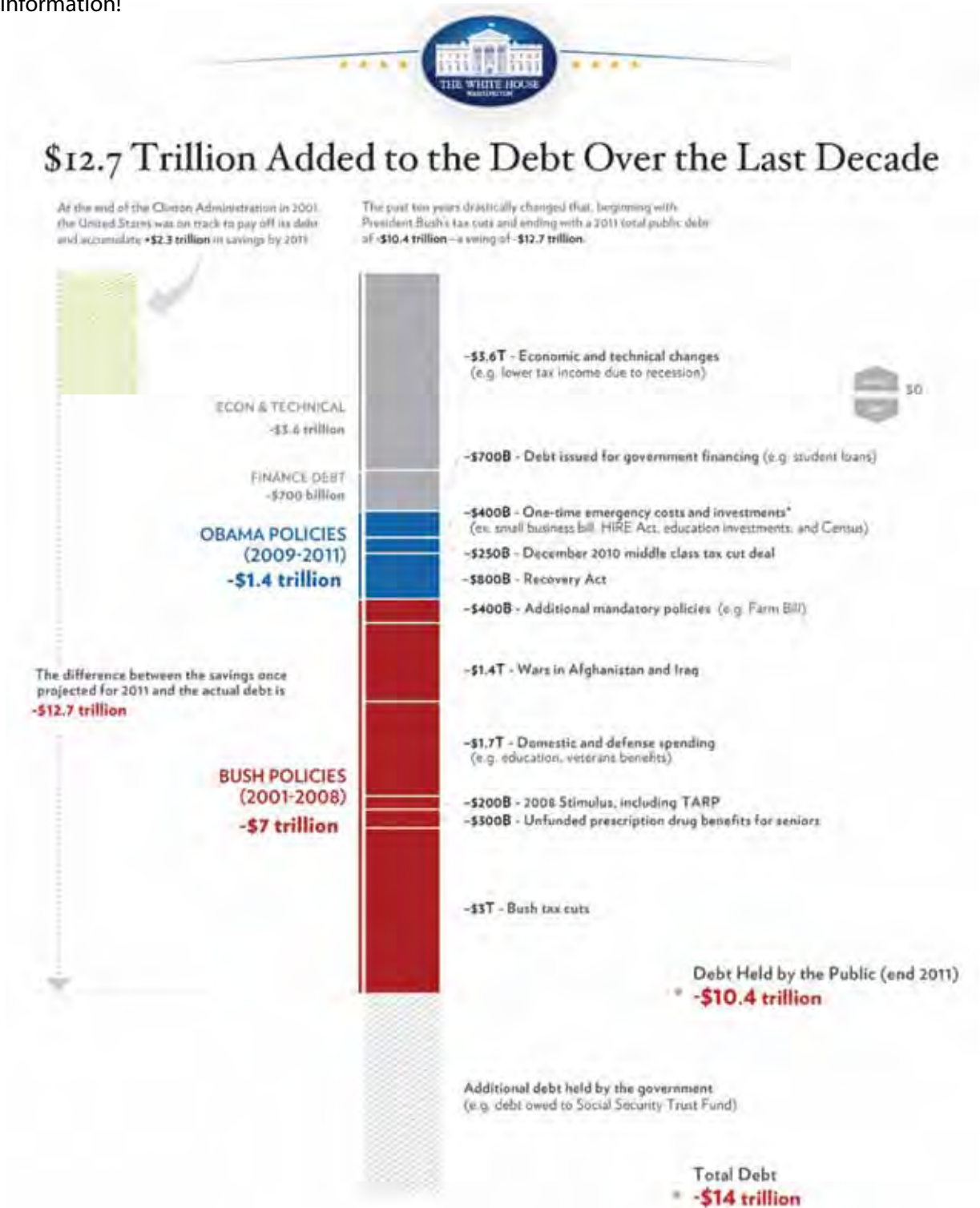
Trends:

- 1. The Australian media power dynamic is changing;** online is now equal to other media, and GetUp! are now a key player with influence. As the media industry grows, and becomes more competitive, some parts will become more sensational and partisan. When Senator Bob Brown talks of “the hate media” this is partly what he means.
- 2. The battle for the hearts and minds of the Australian public will intensify.** Wealthy individuals are increasingly investing in the media: they seek influence, and they will add diversity. Wotif founder Graeme Wood has launched an online news service with former ABC journalist Monica Attard; see www.theglobalmail.org. Gina Rinehart is a new investor in Fairfax following an investment in Network Ten. As the number of news/opinion providers expands, Australia will gradually see parts of the media focus on specific groups and campaign on specific areas/causes, especially mining and the environment.

INCREASED USE OF INFOGRAPHICS

Explaining complex issues to people is easier when pictures, graphics and films are used. An example is Al Gore's film, "An Inconvenient Truth" that explained climate change. However, films are expensive and take time to produce. Graphics are cheaper and quicker.

The graphic below is from The White House website: "To explain the impact various policies have had over the past decade, shifting us from projected surpluses to actual deficits and, as a result, running up the national debt, the White House has developed a graphic for you to review and share" – remember; ask people to share the information!



CARBON MONSTERS



There are 7 billion people on this planet pumping 10 billion tonnes of carbon emissions into the atmosphere every year. Both are growing.

If you want to change anything, you start by measuring it. It is now compulsory for large Australian carbon emitters to measure and report their carbon emissions, and from mid-2012, pay a tax on them. A Government department in Canberra collects the information on carbon emissions in a database and our data is added to others at the UN for a global figure.

Once measured, carbon emissions will be studied by scientists and politicians. Both will make claims about the speed at which the planet needs to take individual, or collective, action. The top level scientific message is agreed; we need to transition to a low carbon emission economy. There is a delay in agreeing a policy to tackle the issue. The political message isn't as clear; a price on carbon emissions (an externality of pollution) seems to be the preferred way to motivate behaviour (especially in the power generation sector), although different countries have different schemes, and many are open to political manipulation. There will be much debate about who pays what, and who has exemptions, which in Australia includes how to treat emissions from farming (emissions from animals).

Measurement of, and paying for, carbon emissions, will lead to two trends:

- (1) a growth in the environmental PR and lobbying sector as different organisations hire communicators to explain their message/research. Whilst a carbon price, and carbon accountability, ensures that lobbyists will only propose policy that is "evidence based", there will be much public debate; and,
- (2) the statistics will offer NGOs the opportunity to focus attention on the emitters at the top of the list. What better way for Australia's environmental lobby to position carbon emitters as the "baddies" than to have an annual award for the biggest polluter?

We might see the launch of "The Carbon Monster Award" for the Australian organisation with the highest carbon emissions; which this year would go to Macquarie Generation.

My year without ABC TV. I didn't watch the ABC Four Corners documentary "A Bloody Business". I was conducting my own research; how would I feel about not watching ABC TV for a whole year? The results? I missed Q&A, and there was an moment when my daughter wanted to watch Angry Boys, a comedy series, that because of the rating I wanted to pre-screen to check for obscenities. However, I watched it on the website, and recorded the show on the Foxtel iQ box, so the kids watched it the next night.

What was my experience when I returned to watching the ABC TV? I found ABC TV news and current affairs coverage bland; with only the occasional bright spot. The ABC's Managing Director, Mark Scott, said he wanted to "de-politicise" the ABC – this strategy keeps the Canberra politicians happy, but is a recipe for insignificance in the long term.

Ian Hislop, Editor of Private Eye, a satirical political magazine, recently gave evidence to the Lord Justice Leveson enquiry into the media in the UK, where he said: "If the state regulates the press, then the press no longer regulates the state."

Replacing "press" with "ABC" and you see the source of the challenge; direct funding from Canberra, and constant criticism from politicians, has led to a situation where our politicians control funding and regulate the ABC, and so the ABC is in serious danger of failing to regulate the politicians.

The Liberal Party often speaks of the ABC as "our enemies talking to our friends" – a brilliant sound bite. However, the quote should be seen as a compliment. The Managing Director of the ABC should have these words on his desk: "No politician loves us; we don't care"

Arguments about the national broadcaster, with or without culture wars, will always be with us. There are, however, two trends worth looking at; we'll call them "the digital dividend for the ABC"

The financial dividend. The transition to digital TV will be a financial benefit for the ABC. This is because the ABC is currently paying an external company (Broadcast Australia) to transmit TV signals in analogue and digital. Industry sources tell The PR Report this costs the ABC about \$400m a year. When the analogue service is switched off over the next few years, the ABC should be saving about \$200m a year – money it can then spend on Australian drama and news (if funding isn't cut). The ABC could produce a soap-opera for example. The key benefit of the move to "digital only" is the ABC's other TV channels. The ABC has embraced multi-channel digital TV; it now needs to fill them with Australian content. The next decade should deliver a new golden digital era for ABC TV.

The social media dividend. A feature of social media is the shrinking of storytelling. Stories need to fit the Twitter era character limit. Storytelling is evolving to fit the new media, and the preference for "short form" storytelling kills a lot of the story. As freelance journalist Widyan Alubudy says: "Yes, a narrative will always be vital to any news story, however, with the rapid proliferation of social media, stories are now shorter and straight to the point, missing out a lot of the narrative... people only want to read the headlines and a sentence or two about the story... and more younger digital native Journalists are being recruited primarily because of this."

In the social media age, which media outlet has the capacity to tell the same story in great detail across different devices, in both short and long form, and around the nation? The ABC.

The digital dividend should ensure the ABC is the powerhouse of Australian storytelling. Let's hope Mr Scott has the above sign on his desk.

IDEAS ARE THE GLOBAL CURRENCY FOR PR



The photos above were taken at the Zeta Bar in Sydney's Hilton Hotel in 2011. The Zeta Bar was transformed into a burlesque cabaret as part of a PR program designed to boost attendance. It worked. The campaign was created by a Sydney based PR agency in conjunction with Hilton's in-house PR.

Where did the idea come from? In 2008, a working men's club in Bethnal Green, in London's east end was facing closure. The club's manager hired a PR agency, who put on a burlesque night. With the judicious use of social media (news distribution), the event sold out. The club was saved and the agency's idea is credited with starting a burlesque revival that spread all over London.

You can't copyright an idea. Kitchen based reality TV shows exploded recently; Hell's Kitchen, Masterchef and My Kitchen Rules; all similar, but all different enough to keep the lawyers away. Once you have a format, you can tweak it for every market; America's Funniest Home Videos is the same as Australia's Funniest Home Videos (including the song). There is a formula that is used for reality TV shows worldwide:

Overseas idea + our celebrities + our media + our PR = event success

The formula works for PR. PR is often about creating news and photo opportunities for journalists – and an event is the best way to do this. So what do PR people need to create news-worthy events?

1. Something to announce ("Today we are launching..." or "Round 2 of...")
2. A clear written brief with the results you want defined in advance
3. Who does what jobs, and when - ideas require planning, promotion and execution.
4. A defined budget (including contingencies). Remember celebrities are only free to charities.
5. Asking agencies to pitch. If you ask PR agencies for their ideas, don't be upset if they refuse; there's a long history of clients stealing pitch ideas.

Photos: copyright Hilton Sydney.



Apple won't tell you this but here's a technology secret; iPads are designed for girls.

Over the past year, The PR Report has conducted our own proprietary research, and our conclusion is that Apple has made the leap, hitherto unheard of, and made a computer product that appeals to females.

The iPad is the first computer that women have actively gone into shops and bought, loved, and used in the open. Part of Apple's iPad success is to allow the user to comfortably sit on the sofa with it. Apple offers lots of quality, and colourful, accessories to personalise the iPad.

Price is not the issue here. The PR Report visited a number of Dick Smith stores in Sydney; crowds of people around the iPads, no-one playing with the PC laptops. They'll be giving PC laptops away with mobile phones in five years time.

It's the right size. Right size for using on the train, at work, at home, fits in the handbag/workbag. Most tech gadgets are designed and created by blokes, who add too many features that are hard to find/use.

One touch and the iPad is ready. One more touch and you get to your application. Who wants wait while the software fires up, then worry about software crashing and viruses? (ie the PC experience)

iPads offer great games, some of which your kids (or partner, parents etc) can play in the car, on the train or whenever the little darlings need entertainment when you're too tired/busy/stressed (or all 3) to talk to them because you're juggling work, dinner, relatives, the kid's social lives, your friends and all the other tasks that by default you get to do.

The iPad is the antidote to the trend of "**Technollusion**" – people who are disillusioned with I.T. and technology companies' ultra slick PR that's over promising and under-delivering.

Trend: the iPad will change the world because women will now engage more with IT/computers and we'll see women becoming a larger part of the web innovation culture. Apple has found a way to communicate the value of IT/computers to 50% of the planet who previously thought computers were the domain of geeks. The next Facebook might be designed by a female.

Here's to Steve Jobs for opening up IT to a wider audience; he was in touch with his feminine side.



Australians will be getting the National Broadband Network (NBN) very soon. Despite the unexciting name, the network will offer lots of exciting opportunities for PR practitioners. The immediate opportunity is making videos for everything.

Why video? Minister Conroy has approved spending A\$38 billion (ish) on the NBN. In telecoms language he's building a "big fat pipe" around the country, and he'll want to "fill" that pipe with data. The easiest way to do that is to get people using video. Video uses more bandwidth than all the other things you use broadband for.

Whilst the biggest user of bandwidth in Australia is ASIO (spying uses a lot of video), the next biggest users of bandwidth are the corporate and Government sectors (ie B2B customers).

The NBN's challenge is to get everyone using, and sharing, video; Federal departments, councils, hospitals, schools, and utilities will all be asked to do their bit for the NBN. Once people have broadband, they use it; there are 3 billion views on YouTube every day.

Federal grant money is already being spent on video and animation communication projects, and smart PR people are tapping into this trend. What can PRs do to help?

Companies: video your CEO's speech; your next product launch.

Departments: Ministers video message in English, Greek, Italian, Cantonese... (get the picture?)

Councils: Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) sheet in text on website? Use video FAQ

ARE YOU EMBARRASSED TO BE IN PR?

The International Association of Business Communicators (Australia) and Ogilvy PR Australia conducted a survey in 2011 that found their staff and members in Australia don't like the term "PR" to describe what they do (76% survey respondents preferred the term "communications professional" instead of "PR professional"). Some PR agencies don't use the term "PR" anymore. They prefer Strategic Communication Agency.



The January edition of the QANTAS in-flight magazine lists Alan Kohler's numerous guests on his "Talking Business" channel; one of whom was Sue Cato. Sue is described in the magazine as follows: "Sue Cato, a corporate communications professional and principal of Cato Counsel. Her firm deals with the planning and execution of corporate and public affairs campaigns for leading companies" - no mention of PR.

There are three trends:

- (1) The PR industry is expanding and becoming more diversified. Agencies are looking to specialise, and position themselves as experts in specific categories (eg strategic, healthcare, digital). It's inevitable that a variety of phrases will be used by practitioners to describe what they do.
- (2) The industry responsible for reputation is getting a bad reputation. The criticism is that some PR people, and agencies, use underhand techniques; astro-turfing, manipulating the facts, re-packaging the truth, to re-position a person or organisation in the eyes of the public; generally called "spin". Creating new reputations is a large part of PR, and this is always fraught with risk, and always will be (especially if clients demand reputations get "fixed" quickly). However, the web (esp WikiLeaks) has ensured abuses often go viral, and the ability to expose PR practitioners is holding the industry to account.
- (3) PR agencies are worried about advertising and marketing agencies, and new entrants, such as the accounting firms' consultancy divisions, taking their clients. This is especially pertinent for the strategic PR and communication advice, which is the high margin end of the PR industry.

What is the future for PR? According to Louise Pogmore, Expression Director at Naked Communications (note no use of PR): "PR should be integrated into the broader [marketing communication] process and have a seat at the table working alongside clients, and their agencies, to input into the planning stages as opposed to advertising agencies developing campaigns and PR getting told to 'PR it'"

Improving the reputation of the PR industry. As the industry body, the PRIA does push for PR to sit at the top table. To support their reasons for PR being at the top table, the PRIA must have the ability to expel agencies and individuals from the association who have brought the industry into disrepute. The current self regulatory system is toothless and would not be tolerated in other professions.

WE NEED A HEALTH COMMUNICATION REVOLUTION



In Australia, Doctors are writing an average of one prescription (for medication) per person per week. Hospitals can't keep up with the demand for operations. Are all these prescriptions and operations having the desired effect? There is ample evidence that for many problems, it's not.

The following example is typical. A 70 year old woman goes to her doctor with knee problems; she is using a cane to walk and is in pain. The doctor happily says he can offer either knee surgery, or a cortisone injection. The patient declines both and seeks advice from friends, and another doctor. She is recommended cod liver oil tablets. Within one month of taking cod liver oil tablets, she is pain-free and walking. This example is not unique. Doctors are not offering patients a full range of choices. As cost pressures on healthcare budgets increase, pressure will be brought on the medical profession to change. It's not just Doctors who need to change, in many instances patient lifestyles are the problem. The challenge will be to persuade or "nudge" people into healthier lifestyles. This is where PR can help.

We don't need more prescriptions and operations; we need a "health communication revolution"

An example of a revolutionary approach to health communication is the US Government's "Let's Move" campaign, championed by the US First Lady, Michelle Obama. The campaign brings together community leaders, teachers, doctors, nurses, and parents in a nationwide effort to tackle the challenge of childhood obesity. The First spokes-Lady even goes on US chat shows to discuss the issues.

Technology will be a key part of health PR campaigns. A recently launched iPhone app by BUPA, called Food-Switch, allows users to scan the barcode of packaged foods using their iPhone camera and receive immediate, easy to understand nutritional advice using the traffic light food labelling system. Importantly, it also displays healthier choices.

The traffic light system will spread to other products and services. Why? Because the traffic light system is "simplified communication" (see the pie charts on the labels in the above picture). The information helps consumers decide which product to buy based on relevant information as opposed to a purchase decision based on having seen an advertisement.

Next up? Financial services. Simplified communication will be applied to financial services. ASIC has asked ASFA and the FSC to develop a risk measure for financial services products. The outcome? Possibly a traffic light system for financial services; and, just like the BUPA app, if the finance industry doesn't help communicate to stakeholders, other people will.

TREND #15

THE RISE OF PRODUCT PLACEMENT



Australian TV is at a tipping point. A massive 45% of homes have a digital recording gadget (TiVo or Fox-tel IQ); perfect for skipping television commercials (TVCs). The decline in influence of TVCs is matched by a rise in product placement. Have you seen the video of FLO RIDA's song "I get a feeling"? There's a scene where he jogs next to a Mini. Is this paid-for product placement? We don't know.

Doco maker Morgan Spurlock picks up on this trend in his latest film "The Greatest Movie ever sold" (picture, left). Spurlock raised US\$1.5m from sponsors (including Mini) for a film with the express intention of showing how brands pay for product placement in films. Spurlock discusses the methods, and ethics, brands use to get their product into the scripts, or mentioned by an actor. Has Spurlock been spun by a PR agency? Notice the sign behind the interview subject? (picture, right)

Spurlock's previous doco, Super Size Me, was an expose on the fat content of fast food. As a result of the film, and lobbying by protest groups, fast food outlets added lower fat options to their menus.

The next Bond film (due 2012) is rumoured to have US\$45m in product placement. In Bond's previous film, fans had to watch 007 drive an inappropriate car (a Ford), talk inanely about his (Omega) watch, and look at a mobile handset for a few seconds longer than is natural (Ericsson).

Australian readers may recall Matt Preston using a specific tissue brand to mop up an "accidental spill" on the set of Masterchef. Other product placement examples are Channel Seven's No Leave, No Life which is backed by Tourism Australia, and TV series The Block has too many gadgets and cars to list. Australian broadcasters have digital editing suites that allow new content (pictures, text etc) to be added in after production but prior to broadcast; i.e. new adverts into old shows.

Three issues for PR practitioners:

1. Product placement will get brands on the ABC. If a company places a product in "Midsommer Murders" this will appear on the ABC; prime time advertising you can't (officially) buy. Given Australian broadcasters buy a lot of TV from the UK and US, ABC viewers will get UK/US product placement by default.
2. Product placement is dominated by specialist US based agencies. Australian brands looking to get into the product placement sector will need relationships with these US specialists, or work via agencies here.
3. Expect increased lobbying to pressure the Federal Government to require Australian broadcasters to commission more Australian content (currently a woeful 40% of total programming)



GAMES ARE FUN AND POPULAR. IS THERE SOMETHING HERE FOR PR PRACTITIONERS? GAMIFICATION IS ABOUT (DIGITAL) ENGAGEMENT, AND SINCE PR IS ABOUT ENGAGEMENT, PRS CAN TAP INTO THE GAMIFICATION TREND.

Wikipedia states that: “Gamification is the use of game design techniques and mechanics to solve problems and engage audiences. Gamification works by making technology more engaging, by encouraging users to engage in desired behaviours, by showing a path to mastery and autonomy, and by taking advantage of humans’ psychological predisposition to engage in gaming.”

The idea is that PRs can use games to encourage people to perform tasks that they would ordinarily consider boring, such as completing employee satisfaction surveys, helping others fix technical problems, or learning new things. Using the excitement, and addiction, of games offers PR practitioners an effective way to get their message across, and motivate people into adopting new behaviour.

Some of the techniques include: offering achievement “badges” or positions on “leader boards” – these aspects of gamification are used by companies like Apple on their help desk website – where customers help other customers, and are rewarded by badges showing how helpful they’ve been.

Gamification requires a system of rules that allow for a variety of actions, such as awarding, redeeming, trading and gifting.

How could challenges between users be adopted by PRs? Internal communication, where PR practitioners are involved with engaging employees in training programs, or fitness and other personal activities, that benefit staff wellness are possible examples.

Perhaps the two biggest opportunities are financial services and health. Financial services providers’ (and regulators) key challenge is to educate and motivate people on their use of financial services, an area where many people struggle with comprehending the complex array of financial services they’ll use throughout their lives.

The downside is that gamification is a new skillset requiring a large investment of time. Games take time to develop, they can cost a lot of money, and some games flop. Handle with care.



“Web 2.0 in Government” is when Government releases information in digital form and lets other people use it, without pre-approval on the intended service. There are great aspects to web 2.0 such as web applications that allow information sharing and collaboration. This often leads to lots of other benefits, like suggestions for improving Government services. Web 2.0 is a great idea for PRs. Why? Because sharing information with others, who then use it in ways Government hadn't thought of, helps people make better decisions.

Here's a popular question from parents: can I get access to school exam results so I can decide where to send my kids to school? The Government's MySchool website initially crashed due to the large volume of parents logging on. The tabloids did a beat up, but the issues were discussed, and the debate moved on. Our politicians are gradually embracing the idea that Government data belongs in the public domain (taxpayer money paid for it after all).

The challenge is how to lead a public discussion on the meaning of the data without things turning into a tabloid-induced frenzy. This requires leadership communication.

The conclusion for PR practitioners is this; releasing more data/information requires more explanation, and this can be done by BOTH the PR people and the journalists. To prevent us drowning in information without understanding it, we need it analysed and explained – this is the opportunity for communications practitioners. There will always be a media frenzy when new data is released that has previously been secret (eg exam results by school); this is simply pent up demand. It's no excuse for hiding the information.

Web 2.0 for Government can involve collaboration between public and private sectors; an example of this is the very practical website, ancestry.com

Web 2.0 services can involve the private sector helping the public sector for no charge. A fine example of this is the campaign for the Garage Sale Trail (GST). Billed as “collaboration for sustainability”, the GST website encourages people to have a garage sale (yard sale) on a day in April. GST makes this fun. People get a bit of cash and meet their neighbours. The big benefit is that it helps Councils by reducing the number of items people leave outside their apartments/houses – things that the Council would have to collect and send to landfill. The key is great technology (easy to navigate website) plus great PR (well done Republic of Everyone). Mark your diary for 10th April and organise your garage sale.

There's an old saying: "people join companies, and leave bosses"

Historically, the bosses have had the upper hand when a prospective employee is attending an interview looking for a job; the boss has your CV, they interview you and they call your references to ask all sorts of questions about you. Have you ever asked a prospective boss for a reference? Thought not.

They reference (ref) check you, but you can't ref check them. Prospective employees have very little way of finding out about the character of their future boss.

The web has ushered in a new era of openness and transparency for everyone, including CEOs. Google allowed people to search the name of their prospective boss and read up about them. The boss-employee relationship is now even more transparent with the uptake of LinkedIn. Now, fortunately, you have a way to get a better understanding of your potential boss because LinkedIn allows people to create detailed profiles of themselves; those profiles can tell you a lot.

Information helps people take decisions, and LinkedIn gives you the ability to make a judgement on a prospective boss. As an example, let's say you want to get a job at a PR agency; you might draw up a list of your prospective bosses, with information gleaned from LinkedIn as follows:

Name & Company	Contacts	References from:			Full Bio?	Displays Groups?	Displays Blog?	Personal info?	Transparency Rating
		Clients	Staff	Colleagues					
Richard Lazar PPR	178	0	0	0	no	yes	no	no	Fail
Christine Jones B-M	291	1	4	4	yes	yes	no	yes	Good
Sue Cook H&K	311	0	0	1	yes	yes	no	no	Average
Vanessa Liell n2n	249	0	0	0	yes	yes	no	yes	Average

Notes:

Statistics from LinkedIn as on 12/1/2012

The PR Report's Transparency Rating based on a scorecard: points for references and number of positive categories

In the above example, The PR Report has chosen a random sample of four PR agency CEOs, and looked at what information they are willing to share, and what other people think of them. The four CEOs weren't told about this research (and may have subsequently updated their profiles since this report was published). The CEOs listed have been graded on the premise that the more information and ideas people share, and the more other people have recommended them, the better they'll be as a boss.

The PR Report has given each agency CEO a rating (see last column) based on what they share and if they've been recommended by others.

BEFORE YOU JUMP TO YOUR NEXT JOB, REF CHECK YOUR NEXT BOSS.



Here's an example of the holy grail of digital PR; a Sydneysider is on a laptop in a coffee shop catching up on emails and news. She's on Facebook and she sees a post by a real estate PR person about the Sydney apartment market. She happens to be looking for a new apartment to rent, so she clicks the link; it goes to an article that is followed by a list of 3 apartments near her post-code. She calls the real estate agent to view a property. The benefit (to the PR industry) is that the real estate agent can track this story and measure the ROI.

But it's never, ever, that easy. Understanding what consumers want to read in the digital media is difficult. The process starts with listening. According to Will Ockenden, Account Director, Lucre: "Companies will need to invest time in monitoring public sentiment through social media listening as a means to genuinely understand public mood... listening will become as important as outbound communication."

The trend in the data-driven world of the web is that PRs are seeing the rise of metrics. It was hard to measure audience impact in traditional media, now it's not. According to Carden Calder, MD of BlueChip Communications: "Web analytics could be our (PR's) greatest curse or greatest boon depending on whether our traditionally innumerate profession can get their head around "big data" and what it means for PR strategy and tactics."

Calder explains: "What does it mean for media relations? It means we can understand more deeply the content a particular journo needs and serve it to them without needing to speak to them. And suddenly PR goes 'direct' – enabled by customer analytics."

Social media monitoring shows what people are saying. This is invaluable for understanding stakeholder sentiment and helps PRs manage reputation, do good 'social customer care' - and link digital PR to sales.

What analytics will do for communication, beyond social media monitoring, is the ability to really understand consumer behaviour. This is a game changer for PR.

Even if you are listening to social media, it doesn't mean you (or your agency) appreciate the zeitgeist. As Will Ockenden says; "Beware trying to cynically leverage events. #OWS has already seen companies trying to jump on the bandwagon. Take Bank of America's recent "Together we are 100%" campaign, leveraging the movement's anti-greed sentiment. While it's a well planned and executed campaign, it's not gone down well in the blogosphere..."

Organisations, be they business, Government or NGOs, are in love with clear and simple statistics: we measure GDP, profit figures, share prices, or we track the unemployment rate, or life expectancy. We measure things so we can improve them.

For many years the PR sector used Advertising Value Equivalents (AVEs) to measure effectiveness. Many still do. Now, it's easy to measure lots of activity in the digital world; the number of Twitter re-tweets or Facebook likes. A key challenge for PRs is to prove business value and ROI beyond these metrics. As Simon Fitzgerald of Text 100 says; "we will be held accountable and need to display action-oriented insights from our metrics such as engagement, distribution, clicks, reach and downloads, sentiment conversion and number of leads."

But wouldn't it be handy if a PR practitioner could give their CEO, or Minister, one figure that encapsulated everything digital PR does? Media coverage, influence, sentiment, issues management, stakeholder engagement, reputation, all wrapped up into one figure; call it "our credibility".

Now you can. It's called Kred. According to their website, Kred "measures influence in online communities connected by affinities. Kred values audience quality and engagement over audience size by assessing anyone's ability to inspire action (Influence) and propensity to engage with others (Outreach)"

Klout is another platform that can offer you a simple score out of 100. Note that both Kred and Klout cover digital media only. Not fully comprehensive, but an excellent insight to the PR practitioners reporting toolbox.

The key trend for PRs to note is that digital engagement, creating and disseminating good content, and having others forward your content are the three drivers to attain good Kred/Klout scores. Will PRs get obsessed with endless re-tweets or other tricks to try and influence Kred, Klout and Google. Beware, Google knows all these tricks and is altering its algorithm to ensure the tricksters aren't rewarded.

Leila Henderson, Founder of Swave and Newsmaker explains: "PR's contribution to quality content is underestimated but this year will be a turning point, due in part to Google's continual tweaking of its "panda algorithm" to downgrade link farms and copy written purely for keywords... Google made major changes to its search algorithm to target websites with low quality content, that is, content that is scraped from other sites, or created in what are known as "content farms". Low quality means too many keywords rendering the content meaningless, plagiarised content, badly spelled or poor syntax and so on. The Panda algorithm, so named by Google apparently after a Google engineer, also penalised sites that had "shady" linking practices - and that included JC Penney and Forbes, among other major brands."

The trend:

FOCUS ON CREATING AND SHARING GENUINE AND ORIGINAL CONTENT. YOUR GOOD WORK WILL BE RECOGNISED, AND YOUR CREDIBILITY AND REPUTATION WILL GROW ACCORDINGLY.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.

- 1 Please send suggestions for next year's report: glen@theprreport.com
- 2 If you want a high resolution version of this report for printing, please email me.
- 3 The PR Report is a free monthly newsletter. Subscribe here: www.theprreport.com

Front cover photo explained: clarity and simplicity in communication

This photo was chosen as the cover photo because:

- (a) You probably won't have seen it before
- (b) It demonstrates that effective communication is an art. The sign is clear and simple, yet it's not quite right. Communication is a fundamental part of human interaction, but it's subjective, and the difference between good and average communication is occasionally humorous.
- (c) The photo was taken at Parliament House in Canberra in November 2011.



A white wooden sign with red text is positioned in the foreground on a green golf course. The sign is mounted on a metal post and has two holes at the top and bottom. The text on the sign reads "PLEASE KEEP OFF TURF WHEN FROSTY". In the background, a large, white, modern building with a distinctive spire and a long, low profile is visible under a clear blue sky. The building's spire is a tall, thin structure with a pointed top. The building's facade is white with some rectangular openings. The golf course green is well-maintained with visible mowed stripes. The overall scene is bright and clear, suggesting a sunny day.

PLEASE
KEEP OFF TURF
WHEN FROSTY