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STRATEGIST

A circular arrangement of stylized business professionals in dark suits and dresses, some holding briefcases, some using tools like a megaphone, a telescope, and a magnifying glass, all set against a teal background. The central text is overlaid on a light blue circular area.

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From the Editor

In this issue, several contributors offer insights on 2017 and beyond.

Leading off, Keith Burton explores critical questions that leaders must confront in the corporate sector, while Jeff Corbin addresses content trends for the New Year. In addition, Renée T. Walker, APR, offers insights on communications after the 2016 Election.

For a broader look at the world and what lies ahead, Sheryl Connelly, Ford Motor Company's in-house futurist, is a sought-after source. She forecasts trends based on changing consumer behaviors — insights with broad ramifications for society that also affect how the automaker designs, builds and markets cars.

With the December release of the Looking Further with Ford 2017 report, Connelly outlined global trends to watch in 2017, based on a survey of 8,100 people across the globe.

Five years ago, Ford began documenting public mistrust of corporations, governments and media.

"Where truth was once indisputable and often self-evident, today's 'truths' are often heavily influenced by perceptions and reinforced by like-minded viewpoints," Connelly's report noted. For marketers, transparency is more important than ever.

The report also concluded that "punctuality is a dying art." In India, 63 percent of respondents agreed that "procrastination helps me be more creative or productive." (Thirty-four percent of U.S. respondents agree.)

Her team's research began in early 2016, when the U.S.

presidential race had yet to be decided, and Brexit hadn't happened.

However, "we had this sense of a growing restlessness," Connelly told *Fast Company*.

And now we enter the year facing unprecedented change and uncertainty. "Everyone is reassessing their priorities, rethinking what they thought they once knew," Connelly said.

Facing the future

Connelly was a General Session speaker during the PRSA 2015 International Conference in Atlanta. Her wisdom remains timely today. Connelly, who has led the Global Trends and Futuring department at Ford for more than a decade, offered six tips on how to become a futurist:

- You can't be afraid of the future.
- Explore the things you can't control or influence.
- It is better to be generally right than to be precisely wrong.
- Be provocative.
- Be plausible.
- The best way to predict the future is to create it.

She also said that people must realize that the past is not a good indicator of the future.

"Looking to the past is a bit like looking in your rearview mirror while driving down the highway. It's a horrible compass," said Connelly, who mentioned that examining trend lines and sales history "will give leaders a false sense of confidence." It's best to explore global trends and their possible repercussions on your market, she said.

Looking at the year ahead

On the topic of 2017, here's our editorial calendar for the coming year:

- **Spring** — Thought Leadership/The Interview Issue
- **Summer** — Silver Anvil Special
- **Fall** — The Crisis Issue
- **Winter** — On the Horizon/What's Next in PR

Please let me know if you are interested in contributing to the magazine. I'm always happy to talk about possible story ideas or interview subjects. You may reach me at john.elsasser@prsa.org. And now, here's to a great New Year! ■

John Elsassser
@JohnElsasser



As of Jan. 3,
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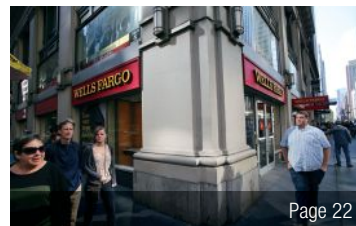
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Communications Still Underappreciated in C-Suite, Survey Finds

Communications executives are getting time with their CEOs, but they usually don't feel heard, says a recent survey by APCO Worldwide. Eighty-nine percent of chief corporate communicators surveyed said they have direct access to the CEO, and 75 percent indicated that their CEO understands the value of their company's reputation.

However, only 52 percent of respondents report directly to the CEO, and just 26 percent said their opinions always matter when critical business decisions are being made.

Twenty-nine percent of top communicators said they are a business adviser to their CEO.

When asked how to elevate the importance of communications in the C-suite, those surveyed recommended always showing value and return on investment through measurements; knowing the business and its priorities; becoming an expert on the competition; educating the C-suite on the value of reputation; developing a finance and accounting acumen, as well as relationships with C-suite executives; having a voice, being confident and pushing back; and telling the truth. ■ — *Greg Beaubien*



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Connecting Millennials to Company Purpose Starts with Communication

Just 40 percent of millennial workers feel strongly connected to their company's mission or purpose, and even fewer, about a third, strongly agree that their organization's purpose makes them feel that their own job is important, a Gallup report from November says. The millennial generation currently makes up about 38 percent of the U.S. workforce.

Most workers who feel a high sense of their company's purpose have leaders who motivate and inspire them, Gallup research finds. Companies with motivated workers realize performance gains — including increased employee loyalty and retention, greater customer engagement, improved strategic alignment and enhanced clarity about work priorities.

Connecting millennials to company purpose requires consistent communication, Gallup says. At every opportunity, managers need to show how each contributor and team advances the organization's overall goals. ■ — *G.B.*



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Creativity Is Good for Business, Adobe Study Says

Does expensive software encourage creativity, which in turn boosts business productivity? That's the implicit message in a new study from Adobe,



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which concludes that companies that "invest in creativity" — presumably by purchasing Adobe products for graphic design and other visual media — enjoy benefits ranging from "higher income to greater national competitiveness and productivity."

An Adobe survey of 5,000 adults in five countries links creativity with personal and professional success, innovation and benefits for society. Eighty-five percent of U.S. respondents say creativity makes them better leaders, parents and students, and people in all countries surveyed who identify themselves as "creators" report earning household incomes 13 percent higher than those of "non-creators." ■ — *G.B.*

The Tricky Business of Delivering Negative Feedback

Negative feedback in employee performance reviews could be hurting your team. Researchers at Harvard University and the University of North Carolina found that criticizing someone — even in the spirit of helping improve their performance — can make them avoid you. "I am struck by how difficult it is to have a helpful conversation at work," said researcher Francesca Gino.

But feedback that's difficult to hear is often the kind that people need most to develop. Walling off constructive criticism can block your professional progress. In her own career, Gino said, the people who've been most important in helping her grow into a better scholar — or even a better person — were the ones who gave her feedback she didn't want to hear.

Those receiving negative feedback should be aware of the avoidance tendency, so they can overcome it and get the information they need to improve their performance, researchers said. ■ — *G.B.*



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4 Traits of Successful Leaders

The most successful leaders consistently demonstrate four fundamental traits, Marilyn Hewson, chairman, president and CEO of aerospace and defense company Lockheed Martin, wrote on Oct. 18 on Fortune.com. Strong leadership demands a lifelong commitment to sharpening these skills, she says.

- **Trustworthiness:** Leaders can only earn trust through their everyday actions, thereby setting high standards for everyone in the organization. Demonstrating positive energy and enthusiasm for shared purpose allows leaders to connect with employees and customers. A culture of trust makes communication, accountability and continuous improvement possible.

- **Compassion:** Organizational success flows from the hearts and minds of the people you lead, so treat them how they would like to be treated, Hewson



says. Small gestures like face-to-face meetings or personal notes are big morale boosters.

- **Decisiveness:** In uncertain times, employees crave clarity. As a leader, you won't have all the answers, so listen to others and learn from them. Once you understand a challenge and the options available, make bold, optimistic decisions. From a foundation of trust and compassion, you can share your vision and inspire people to act.

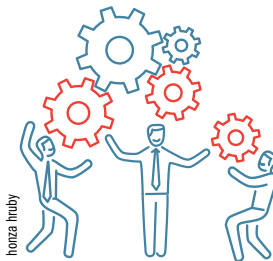
- **Innovation:** Leaders must adapt to rapid change and help their teams do the same. Leading a culture of innovation requires courage and willingness to move beyond your comfort zone and take measured risks, Hewson says. ■ — G.B.

As a Boss, Do You Mandate or Facilitate?

Most bosses fall into one of two categories: those who dominate people and those who want to be liked and admired, says Prof. Jon K. Maner of Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. Dominant leaders mandate their own vision, while "prestige leaders" facilitate their group's vision, Maner told *The New York Times* on Oct. 30.

With many species, including primates, "the biggest and the strongest usually wins and ends up on top of the hierarchy," says Maner, who has conducted research on leadership styles. Among people, dominant bosses speak louder and more often. They hoard information, closely monitor talented group members to keep them in line and prevent subordinates from forming close social bonds with one another. But being liked and admired can also propel a person to the top. Prestige bosses tend to lead in areas where they have expertise, but they may lack a strong overall vision, and so spend more time listening to other people and synthesizing their contributions.

Maner says the best leaders know how to use both styles as the situation warrants. ■ — G.B.



Research Suggests a Greater Appreciation of Communications

Data from the Society for New Communications Research of the Conference Board reveal that as companies better appreciate the strategic importance of the communications role and expand its scope, they choose to invest in developing internal capabilities and attracting specialized skills, despite a continued need for professional services from PR agencies and ad firms.

In particular, 61.6 percent of non-financial services companies used their expanded budgetary resources to increase their communications team size and hire new talent, and 30.8 percent reported size increases ranging from 10 to 15 percent. ■

Older CEOs Staying Put Longer, Study Finds

Chief executives are remaining in their jobs longer than they used to, a new study says. On average, a departing CEO last year was 61.2 years old and had held the post for 10.8 years, compared with 7.2 years for those who left in 2009.

The analysis from the Conference Board, an independent business-membership and research association, looked at CEO departures from S&P 500 companies and found that from 2009 to 2014, chief executives ages 64 and older had an average turnover rate of 25.5 percent, compared with about 8 percent for younger CEOs.

But in 2015, "for the first time, we see a significant reduction" in the difference between when the two groups leave the top job, said Matteo Tonello, who oversees corporate-leadership research at the Conference Board and co-wrote the study. "The generational shift in leadership that pushed out essentially older CEOs after the financial crisis seems to have run its course." ■ — G.B.





Co-Opting the Fourth Estate

The New Rules of Public Relations Post Election 2016

By Renée T. Walker, APR

Whatever your political stripe, the 2016 presidential election cycle was unprecedented in many ways. And, there will continue to be revelations during the post-election aftermath for our nation, the global community and, most important, the mass media and the PR profession in the foreseeable future.

While every presidential election cycle rewrites some rules and even moves the needle with the advent of the latest technology and the newest communication channels, the 2016 presidential election undoubtedly will be remembered, discussed and analyzed for decades to come.

One of the most striking strategies employed by the Donald Trump campaign was the efficient and successful co-opting of the Fourth Estate — the mass media. It is likely that the President-elect honed his media knowledge and formidable strategy execution during his reality television days.

As a former political operative, it was beyond interesting to watch Trump lead the media through one rabbit hole after another, to control the news cycle almost daily, to defy conventional PR rules, to upend long-standing political traditions and to clearly demonstrate — at least in the confines of this election cycle — that all publicity, including the good, the bad and the outrageously ugly,

can deliver unexpected results.

From the nonstop, wall-to-wall media coverage of his campaign events to the relentless stories of Trump's never-ending tweet storms to win the network rating wars and to fill their coffers, broadcast and cable media executives opted for the short-term gains rather than addressing the long-term and significant issue of the public's eroding trust.

According to a *Mediapost.com* article published in August 2016, for the trailing 12-month period, Trump amassed \$4.6 billion worth of earned media versus Clinton's \$2.5 billion.

Following months of criticism, CNN President Jeffrey A. Zucker admitted the outlet's excessive and unfiltered coverage of the Trump campaign was likely too much as reported by *Politico*. "We probably did put on too many of the campaign rallies in the early months, unedited," Zucker said. "In hindsight, we probably shouldn't have done that as much."

A matter of trust

The Fourth Estate continues to grapple with the impact of fragmented consumer news habits, the pressure to generate revenue in a hypercompetitive and shifting media landscape, a plethora of both reliable and unreliable news options, and the growing reliance on social media platforms as a preferred information source.

Another significant issue is the erosion of the American public's trust in the mass media. In the search for revenue, ratings and relevance, the free and democratic press has lost its way, achieving the lowest public trust rating since the initial Gallup Poll in 1972, with only 32 percent of poll respondents having "a great deal" or "a fair amount" of trust.

The public's confidence in the mass media has slowly and consistently diminished for more than a decade, and has been fueled by a perceived media bias, the onslaught of competition from social media, the increase of news consumed on mobile devices, and the lowering of journalistic standards, and the influence of headlines that appear in personalized social media and news feeds.

Historically, the public's highest trust in the mass media was recorded at 72 percent in 1976, during the era of investigative journalism around the time of the Watergate scandal and the war in Vietnam. To effectively compete, mass media will need to address its credibility and trustworthiness issues through the resurgence of investigative journalism rather than via the current "infotainment" and sensationalism approach.

While the seismic shift — created by the Trump phenomenon — is still emerging as of this writing in late November, its impact on the PR profession and the





“Working with the mass media will always be the cornerstone of the PR profession. However, the Trump phenomenon is a game changer and has ushered in new rules of engagement. Employing mobile and social platforms to communicate directly with audiences must become a significant strategy in our toolbox.”

mass media business has been immediate, and offers unmatched opportunities for our profession to embrace the rapidly evolving communication and media landscapes and invent new strategies and methodologies to increase client value.

As veteran PR professionals, we should conduct a post-mortem on this election cycle and examine the lessons learned regarding the power of dogmatic branding, the celebration of unapologetically resisting the status quo and the

new rules of media engagement. With the public’s trust of the mass media at its lowest (and which has been trending downward), evaluating the traditional media as the principal communications strategy is imperative.

Working with the mass media will always be the cornerstone of the PR profession. However, the Trump phenomenon is a game changer and has ushered in new rules of engagement. Employing mobile and social platforms to communi-

cate directly with audiences must become a significant strategy in our toolbox. ■



Renée T. Walker, APR, is the president of Renée Walker & Associates, a strategic communications consultancy. Walker served as the political director for the Clinton/Gore '96 Michigan General Campaign. She is the author of “Brand Power for Small Business Entrepreneurs.” Visit reneetwalker.com.

Media Trends: A Look at What’s to Come

The 2016 presidential election cycle introduced new terms, changed the rules and created several new realities. Here’s some food for thought:

➡ **Defend against fake news.**

First, it is important that fake news is not legitimized in the industry lexicon. However, these pranks, propaganda and misinformation efforts are a real and growing problem. Identifying potential exposure scenarios and developing strategies and protocols to address the issues for your organization or clients, should they occur, is ideal.

➡ **Realize that headlines matter now more than ever.** In our rapid-fire information consumption culture and with the growing preference to receive news and information from social media platforms,

on demand and on mobile devices, studies have found that upward of 60 to 70 percent of Americans will share a link based on reading the headline only. To break through the noise, hone your headline writing skills.

➡ **Communicate directly to audiences.** Identifying and developing direct communication channels to key audiences should be a central strategy for most communication programs. Working with mass media is always an option, but should be augmented by a more direct path. Bypass the media and communicate directly whenever appropriate.

➡ **Resist the urge to pivot.** The campaign surrogates were relentless and highly ineffective with the use of pivoting as a messaging technique and, unfortunately, they

reintroduced spin into the conversation.

➡ **Prepare for the resurgence of investigative journalism.** In the era of “infotainment,” sensationalism and the occasional crisis situation, it’s never too early to polish your skills. When the mass media decides to address its credibility issue and improve its trustworthiness numbers, watch for the signs and stay ahead of the curve.

➡ **Listen more often and with intent.** A key takeaway for the Trump campaign is to be purposeful in listening and authentically connecting with the targeted audiences. Don’t dismiss the social media voices as they provide an unfiltered “reality check” and should be used to make well-informed strategy decisions. — *R.W.*

The Future of Corporate Culture

How to Achieve Excellence in Internal Communications Management

By Keith Burton

Decked out in black anodized aluminum and gray-tinted glass, the iconic Mies van der Rohe-designed IBM Plaza rises like a sentinel along the Chicago River. In the early morning hours, shafts of sunlight sprayed into empty cubicles and offices, tracing along carpeted hallways that a week earlier teemed with people. Now everyone on the floor was gone — thousands falling victim to a major downsizing spawned by the earliest reengineering project in American business.

In the wake of the employees' departures, the floor was cluttered with the personal artifacts of their work and "I Bleed Blue" careers at IBM Corp. Huge wheeled dumpsters filled with bulging manila file folders and computer printouts sat in quiet testament to the corporate carnage that had taken place. The IBM leader accompanying me stopped to examine a few of the files and shook her head as we moved down the hall.

In assessing a critical challenge during a change process — that of communicating clearly to cut through information overload, she said, "It's funny. Today we're 'gagging on data and starving for information.'"

And so it began. The reengineering of IBM in 1992 was like the first orchestral movement of an Aaron Copeland symphony that would echo through more than 25 years of successive waves of corporate change.

We're still enduring change related

to the corporate restructuring, downsizing, postmerger consolidation and growing globalization of great corporate brands: In 2015, global corporate M&A activity of \$4.7 trillion eclipsed all prior years, while 2016 was breaking records for deals that soured without being consummated. New generations of employees have ascended to put their imprimatur on corporate culture and the values that guide their beliefs and behaviors.

And developments in technology — the introduction of text messaging; VoIP services like Skype; apps like Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and Facebook; multiplayer games; and leaps in PDA

still gagging on data and starving for information. Just ask the frontline managers and supervisors at the ExxonMobil refinery in Torrance, Calif., who once reported receiving more than 100 emails daily, wading through multiple overnight voicemails and enduring a procession of teleconferences and meetings with their leaders before finally turning their attention to direct reports in the remains of the day. Or Facebook's millennial employees, who have all the social and digital tools and streams of data any New Age worker could ever imagine, but long for seasoned, experienced managers more advanced than "twentysomething" who can provide critical context for their work.

What does good look like?

Alex Thursby stared down his glasses as he asked this question in his conference room at the National Bank of Abu Dhabi's headquarters in the United Arab Emirates. Through the windows behind us, the late-afternoon sky was a pinkish gold, and the sun was beginning to bow to the waters of the Arabian Gulf. "That's what I want to know," Thursby continued.

"What *does* good look like?"

Then CEO of NBAD, the laconic Thursby was driving a new strategy that would fuel the bank's expansion in the West-East corridor, from the Gulf region into India, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and China. Strategic employee engagement would be critical to his strategy, and the Australian executive wanted his corporate communications



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technology accelerated by the warp speed of Moore's Law, to name only a handful — have resulted in revolutionary changes to the way we communicate in the workplace and how we interact with friends, family and society, anywhere and everywhere.

In our 24/7/365 worlds, where work can be unrelenting and unyielding, we're

team to know *and* adopt best-in-class practices that would help educate, inform and align his employees with the strategy.

Not only did our global consulting team show Thursday a clear, measurable strategy through qualitative research and by applying proven models; we also delivered a program that enabled employees representing more than 30 ethnic groups and a multitude of differing cultures to coalesce and expand NBAD's footprint in key commercial hubs across the West-East corridor.

As practitioners, we face challenges more dramatic than at any time in our history. These include:

- Structural challenges related to the globalization of companies and the ascent of matrixed leadership models
- Workforce challenges tied to information overload, the fast pace of the workplace, finding skilled workers, generational differences, morale issues and a failure to recognize the contributions of frontline employees
- Media challenges related to bad press, misinformation, the consolidation of global media and "citizen journalists" who are at the core of Andrew Keen's *Cult of the Amateur*
- Product challenges related to recalls, shortages, quality issues, distribution problems and the need for applying new, more innovative technologies
- Marketplace challenges — competition that is ever-changing, everywhere, as well as our ability to quickly read and respond to fast-changing customer needs

To 2020: Where do we go from here?

Over the next five years, more than 21 billion information devices will be installed globally, dramatically influencing how we engage with others. In the U.S., minorities will be the majority by 2020, and millennials will be the dominant generational group, easily eclipsing Generation-X and Boomer employees. Forty percent of all large American factories closed their doors in the 2000s, and 5.7 million manufacturing jobs were lost,

mostly to overseas markets.

As its middle class rises, China, too, will lose jobs to countries in Southeast Asia like Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines, bringing even greater competition in that geographic theater.

Regrettably, we can expect to see a continuing growing gap between the rich and the poor throughout the world.

There will be critical questions that our leaders must answer:

"What about corporate culture?"

"Empathy is in short supply among managers. Why?"

"The world is going to college, but does it really matter when jobs aren't available. Why train or educate people when we can't hire or advance them?"

"What happened to pay raises?"

"Where does work end and work-life balance begin?"

"Why do CEOs say one thing but act differently when it really matters?"

In 1992, when we created for IBM the very first receiver-based, omni-directional model for employee communication tied to research, metrics and integrated streams of information, we could not have anticipated changes like those I've referenced. And more change surely lies ahead.

While our model for employee communication has endured the test of time, I believe the 2020 model will be driven by analytics, business performance, outcomes and strategy socialization; steeped in discussion, dialogue and debate; optimized to enhance the organization's ability to communicate with its internal stakeholders; known for boundary-free, platform-agnostic, integrated, democratized, multiway, peer-to-peer channels; and segmented and targeted for influence, engagement and social prowess.

I leave you with a final story that's quite telling. While in Seattle for Boeing

"In our 24/7/365 worlds, where work can be unrelenting and unyielding, we're still gagging on data and starving for information."

many years ago, I paid a visit to Jerry Calhoun, the global human resources leader. As we sat down, Calhoun, who later led human resources for CEO Alan Mulally at Ford Motor Co., looked at me for a long time before speaking. Then he shook his head and said, almost prophetically, "This is the last time we'll ever meet here in the corporate office."

Thinking our firm had been fired before our engagement started, I recoiled and asked for clarification.

"Real work is done out in Renton, in Everett, and places where people build our aircraft and other products," Calhoun said. "That's where you need to be. Not here in the corporate office."

I never forgot this conversation. Like J.M.W. Turner, arguably Britain's greatest painter, who lashed himself to the mast of a ship to observe the foundering of the *Ariel*, a paddle steamer that would sink in a squall after leaving Harwich in 1842, I have forever been "strapped to the mast" — destined for client locations in the field that allow me to observe leaders, managers and employees, and to see how communication works where "real" work is done, where careers ebb and flow, where leaders struggle to cut through information overload and seize the day, where the people on the front lines we've forgotten to thank and recognize for their contributions await us.

Let me encourage you to get out of your office or classroom, to leave your teleconferences, your voice messages and your social media behind for a time, and to go see people where real work is done.

This article is adapted from Keith Burton's foreword to the forthcoming "Excellence in Internal Communication Management," co-authored by Dr. Shannon A. Bowen, University of South Carolina, and Dr. Rita Llan-juan Men, University of Florida, now awaiting release by Business Expert Press. ■



Keith Burton, principal, Grayson Emmett Partners, Chicago, is recognized as one of the world's leading employee communication consultants. He has been a PRSA member since 1984 and serves as chairman-elect of the Board of Advisors for the Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations and is a trustee and chair of the Commission on Organizational Communication of the Institute for Public Relations.

Rethinking Content Distribution

3 Trends to Look for in 2017

By Jeff Corbin

I have been in the PR profession for 20 years, recently as the CEO of a New York City consultancy and currently as the CEO of a tech company servicing the communications industry. Many people — among them VCs, technology analysts and fellow PR professionals — are now challenging me regarding the importance of content and want to know what is different about it today.

Here's the simple answer: As communications professionals, we ultimately want to ensure the proper, effective and efficient delivery of key messages and information (i.e., content) into the hands of our target audiences and constituencies.

Companies hire us or pay our firms to get information to prospective customers (to help make a sale), to investors (to help demonstrate the true value of their stock) or to employees (to build engagement and make sure they know about things such as benefits, company news, etc.).

In doing so, the challenge has always been to figure out the best strategies and tactics for getting the job done. This could involve traditional approaches like media relations and conference participation; more modern approaches like email campaigns and blog writing; or the futuristic and sometimes provocative methods like using chat bots. For those reading this article from my generation (somewhere between baby boomer and Gen-X) you probably understand what I mean by futuristic.

When you consider how the strategies we use to do our work have evolved over the past several decades, you realize that a change is upon us that is forcing us to rethink content and its distribution.

The last time this happened was in the late 1980s. Up until then, content delivery and distribution took place via paper (books, newspapers, leaflets — remember those?). With the commercialization of PCs, we rethought content de-



livery with respect to the television-like boxes that sat (and still sit) on our desks. Now we are being challenged again with respect to the 2 x 4-inch smartphone screens.

If you are like me, then your mobile device is with you 24/7. The first thing you do when you wake up is look at your phone to see what happened during the night (either by way of push notifications that appear on the home screen or by scrolling through the emails that were delivered to your inbox).

Given this, we need to rethink our work in light of the way content is now being consumed, but we also need to recognize the tremendous opportunity presented to us. Never before have we had the ability to push information and communicate so personally, directly and instantaneously with the people we want to reach.

The year 2017 has the potential to be a transformative one for us in the PR and communications industry. It will require that we acknowledge something

is different and then consider innovative ways of doing our work. It will also require asking our organizations to allow us to do things differently, and that may require additional resources.

To assist in making these requests for change, consider the following three trends that will undoubtedly unfold in the coming year.

1. The Digital Workplace is here and requires new, not old, ways of communicating.

Only a couple of years ago, Gartner, the leading technology industry analyst group, formalized its digital workplace practice, recognizing that a transformation was taking place in businesses as a result of new technologies like social media, mobile and others. In its recent “Cool Vendor” report with respect to the digital workplace (Monica Basso, analyst, April 27, 2016), Gartner says:

A digital workplace isn't a product one can buy. Nor can an enterprise reshape itself overnight as a digital workplace. Instead, a digital workplace is the realization of applied effort in multiple areas, and the result of partnerships between business, HR and IT departments. Gartner envisions that the digital workplace will enable organizations to attract and retain employees, increase transparency, and embrace the changing nature of work and collaboration. It will help organizations bring employees on board, give them the skills they need to succeed, enable them to feel valued and heard, and allow them to contribute.

In 2017, we will need to keep an ear out for discussions regarding the digital workplace but also strive to have a voice in them. This is not a conversation that requires IT expertise; rather, it's about the importance of content and its impact on business, regardless of function.

Whether it's sales, human resources, finance or R&D, the communication of information and delivery of content are critical to all. And the effective delivery of content is what we as communications professionals do for a living.

2. Working together, corporate communications, human resources and IT can become revenue generators, not cost centers.

Over the past couple of years, when consulting for companies on their

newly implemented mobile employee communications strategy, I have noticed something very interesting.

In many instances, professionals from corporate communications and human resources work collaboratively to ensure unified employee communications. And this totally makes sense given the commonality in their respective functions, which is to deliver content, albeit different types of content, to the same audience.

The same holds true for IT. In the past, IT professionals operated independently from the various business units within the same company. This was the case when their primary responsibility was to maintain the many computer servers on the premises.

However, with the shift to cloud computing, IT professionals now have the ability to provide a more consultative role when it comes to identifying new tools and solutions to accommodate the transformation to the digital workplace.

When communications, HR and IT work together, this can translate into greater productivity, customer satisfaction and profitability. Study after study demonstrates that those departments — which previously may have been considered cost centers — have an opportunity to become actual revenue generators, regardless of whether it's in an enterprise or a small- to medium-sized business. The good news is that this is starting to happen, and it's a trend that should continue in the years to come.

3. Legacy tools and systems don't cut it for millennials.

It goes without saying that millennials grew up with mobile devices the way their elders grew up with rotary-dial telephones. However, only recently have these devices become important in the workplace.

The legacy systems of yore (e.g., intranets, SharePoint) don't work well, if at all, on small screens. Something needs to be done about this if mobile devices

are to serve as a functional conduit for the delivery of information, workplace tools and solutions.

In 2017, look out for what Gartner refers to as the mobile hub. In a recently released “IT Market Clock for Enterprise Mobility” report (Bryan Taylor, analyst, Oct. 7, 2016), Gartner defines the mobile hub as follows:

Mobile hubs (formerly referred to as mobile collaboration) aggregate content and functions under a “single pane of glass” in a mobile app; on the back end, they integrate with corporate systems through an intermediate server or cloud component. Their main focus is gathering content from multiple sources and aggregating them into a single view for a smarter user experience. In addition, mobile hubs also may aggregate communications content such as messages, email and presence; relationship data, such as contacts; or project activities and tasks.

“When you consider how the strategies and tactics that we use to do our work have evolved over the past several decades, you realize that a change is once again upon us that is forcing us to rethink content and its distribution.”

Just as software was written for computers to enable workplace functions and to ensure an excellent end-user experience, the same is now happening for mobile. App-based products are on the market that make it easier to deploy mobile-based communications systems (i.e., mobile hubs). They're designed for the communications and HR teams to implement quickly and cost-effectively, without the need for heavy-duty development.

And this will become even easier given the closer collaboration between IT and business units, since they are now there to consult and assist. ■



As a PR consultant for the past 20 years, Jeff Corbin is pioneering the use of technology in the communications industry as the founder of APPrise Mobile, a business-to-business/enterprise native app. Prior to APPrise Mobile, he served as the CEO of KCSA Strategic Communications in New York City. You can follow and connect with him on Twitter @jcorbinIR.

Food for Thought

Winning 'Share of Mouth' in the All-Natural, High-Tech Future of Food

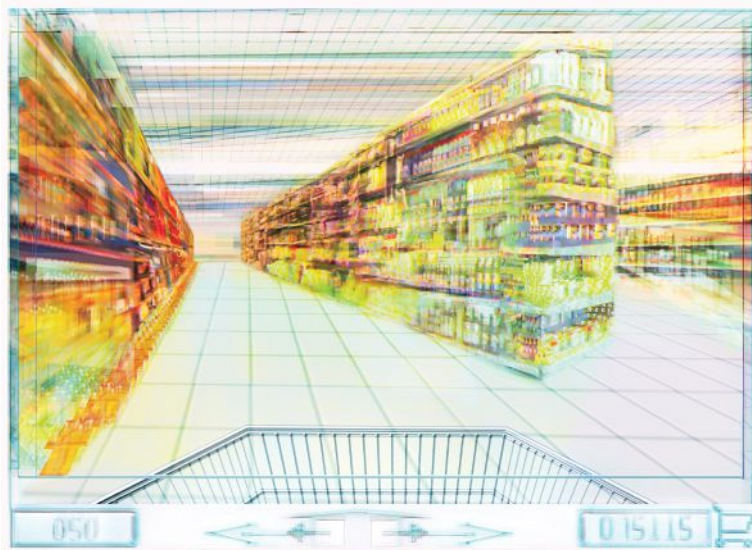
By Steve Bryant

Food and beverage marketing, once the bastion of the tried and true, has experienced a decade of turmoil as "Big Food" feels the burn from rising upstart brands. The growing premium segment, venture capital investments and the acceleration of technological innovation have conspired to turn the industry on its head. Where will this lead, and what role can communications strategy play in its evolution?

In a recently published global assessment of the Future of Food Communications from MSL-GROUP, I posited a paradox on which I believe the future of the industry hinges. It's puzzling on the face of it: Food consumers are reverting to the simplicity and trustworthiness of naturally grown foods fresh from the farm while at the same time benefiting from rapidly developing technologies that address the demands of urban living and the values of highly informed food and beverage consumers.

The resulting tension requires nuanced communications that help consumers navigate this new world and its unprecedented range of choices. This food industry shake-up is all part of what many are calling the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The World Economic Forum describes this revolution as such:

"The First Industrial Revolution used water and steam power to mechanize production. The Second used electric power to create mass production. The Third used electronics



and information technology to automate production. Now a Fourth Industrial Revolution is building on the Third, the digital revolution that has been occurring since the middle of the last century. It is characterized by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres."

In the context of this revolution, the demand for both all-natural and high-tech choices is not in opposition; in fact, they are natural partners. For example:

- Food technology can help bring us foods that are safe without preservatives, colorful without dyes and flavorful without artificial ingredients.

- Biological technology promises to deliver plant-based nutrition that allows us to maintain our "bloodlust" for a juicy burger.

- Agricultural technology now helps us harvest fresh food practically anywhere.

- Nutrigenomic technology recommends foods to favor and avoid for our personal benefit.

- Digital communications technology helps us discover foods, refine our tastes and determine which foods meet our particular needs and values, however specific.

- Biotechnology will help us feed a burgeoning population and adapt to an altered climate.

- Packing and distribution technologies are putting ready-to-eat food easily within reach at any time.

Smart brands will profit by finding these "natural tech" solutions, bringing them to market and communicating their benefits. At stake is "share of mouth" in the years to come as this revolution finds consumers prone to rapidly shifting their consumption habits and brand allegiances.

The Fourth Revolution is still in its infancy, yet it is already disrupting the historically stable food and beverage businesses. Big Food companies that once appeared on a steady march toward industry domination are starting to look like slow-moving dinosaurs.

Now, upstarts are winning through rapid innovation buoyed by eager investors and a democratized Internet that can rapidly popularize a new food or drink. Within a decade, the sector will be radically transformed on a global scale, and effective communication will be vital for any food and beverage marketer who hopes to stay relevant.

Opportunities for food technology

Technology holds incredible promise,

and consumers are excited about it. Still, communicators will be required to explain new technologies, cultivate trust in unseen innovations and popularize new ways of eating. In a time when knowledge of, and trust in, science has ebbed, this task is not without complications.

Take, for example, the genetic modification of food. Most scientists and policymakers agree that it is highly beneficial and, in fact, essential to our future food supply, yet consumers remain suspicious. Some say it's because the introduction of the technology largely left them out of the conversation, and its early benefits — tomatoes that would not go bad, crops that could fight weeds — seemed to favor industry more than consumers.

For another example, look at baby food, a category that was revolutionized by the introduction of pouch packaging, a solution that made parents' lives easier and empowered babies to feed themselves. The pouches are plastic and not recyclable, yet this packaging solution, which was introduced with an emphasis on organic ingredients from smaller-scale producers, is quite popular.

In each case, storytelling was a key determinant in the acceptance of the technology. And storytelling will be pivotal to the adoption of new technologies that will fuel our food in the future. It will reveal innovations, express purpose and encourage loyalty. For communicators and marketers looking to leverage this trend to capture share of mouth, some key lessons emerge.

Transparency

The increased pace of change and the growing scale of global food enterprises can spawn consumer suspicion, making transparency essential for winning acceptance. Food marketers who embrace transparency will win through enhanced reputations, heightened demand and more rapid adoption.

Trust in food companies has badly eroded. Even a brand like Chipotle, which pledged to lead consumers to the

promised land of natural food, sickened consumers with tainted food and didn't deliver on promises of wholesome nutrition.

Don't expect to hide in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Instead, tell all. Smart labels on food packages will allow consumers to use smartphones and QR codes to learn anything they could possibly want to know about a food product: ingredients, origins, genetics, allergens, nutrition. Full disclosure will prove they have nothing to hide.

Personalized innovation

The more consumers know, and the more choices they have, the more likely they are to prefer, even demand, personal solutions that are a match for their tastes, values, health needs and sensory desires. This phenomenon can fuel a high degree of market segmentation, but it also opens up opportunities for food makers and retailers who can closely personalize their offers. Personalization

is essential to sustaining a brand and a company, and this can come in many forms. Oreo, for example, is constantly evolving its varieties, its storytelling, its applications and its recipes.

Winning brands will innovate faster, over time, as options proliferate for consumers.

Communications will tell those stories but also contribute engaging content and media innovations. Speed is of the essence. Big Food today is famous for taking years to develop and introduce a product. It's a hopelessly dated practice in a world where growth is being driven by fast-moving upstarts.

Contrast giant food companies with some of the most promising new food business models: subscription and delivery services that offer a constantly evolving menu. Variety is an old strategy, but this is a new approach that relies on Big Data to reduce innovation cycles to weeks, not years.

Not only can these companies now understand the constantly evolving tastes and needs of their consumers,

they can also innovate and test in rapid response to them. It's a marketer's dream in a sector where tastes are now evolving at an ever-faster pace as consumers crowdsource their food tastes.

Communicators who are listening and reacting in real time will help brands keep up and stay relevant.

Mobility

Food and beverage consumption is going mobile at roughly the same pace as communications technology. Consumers on the move require food on the move, as well as availability or delivery anywhere they might need it. As people can work, communicate and be entertained anywhere they wish — often, in fact, while in motion — then eating anywhere or on the move is becoming second nature. This requires smart storytelling to highlight food mobility innovations.

Old-guard companies are therefore scrambling to move from cereal to cereal bars, from salads to salad cups, from easy-prep meals to ready-to-eat snacks. The quaint habit of dining at a table will increasingly be reserved for special occasions.

Instead, look for foods that easily move with us and are always within reach, even in a "wearable" form. Autonomous cars will escalate the trend, prompting consumers to enjoy meals and snacks on their commute like never before.

At MSLGROUP, we believe the revolution facing the food and beverage industry requires a new communications planning model, one that leverages today's key drivers of food consumption. We've developed such a model to address new opportunities to engage consumers and win "share of mouth" from competitors. The model recognizes the primacy of well-targeted content for today's marketers and can help brands strategically prioritize opportunities and craft communications. ■

"Technology holds incredible promise, and consumers are excited about it. Still, communicators will be required to explain new technologies, cultivate trust in unseen innovations and popularize new ways of eating."



With 30 years of experience in food and beverage communications, Steve Bryant led the development of MSLGROUP's global Future of Food Consumption report and leads workshops to apply the agency's planning model, which prioritizes and leverages the six communication drivers of food and beverage consumption.



Communications and Workplace Predictions for 2017

To spot trends for 2017, the editors of *Fortune* magazine say they combined journalistic intuition with artificial intelligence from IBM that mined tens of millions of sources. With a note of irony, it predicts that virtual reality will not be the next big thing that gaming and entertainment firms have been betting on. So far, consumers are finding that novelty alone doesn't justify the high prices of headsets available in stores.

The internet will continue to be vulnerable to hacking in 2017, *Fortune* predicts. In October, Twitter, Amazon, Spotify and other major sites were knocked offline when a "bot" swarmed a New Hampshire firm that serves as an internet switchboard, hijacking "Internet of Things" devices such as surveillance cameras, toasters and other home appliances. Far from being fixed, the problem will only worsen as more devices are sold with weak default passwords.

For tech-savvy marketers, AOL could become cool again in 2017, as the Verizon unit builds its data-and-technology-based advertising platform ONE by AOL. Also in 2017, which will mark the 10th anniversary of Steve Jobs' original iPhone, the new iPhone 8 is expected to include a super-high-resolution screen that stretches from edge to edge of the device, and may even charge wirelessly.

The first Fortune 100 company will jettison the office altogether in favor of telecommuting in 2017, the magazine predicts. But as mentoring declines, laptop-bound workers report ergonomic issues, and employees burn out working from home, a backlash may follow. ■ — Greg Beaubien

Gen Z, Wellness Programs and Trends for the New Year

The U.S. job market will improve in 2017, giving job seekers and employees more leverage and flexibility, and pushing salaries higher, *Forbes* predicts.

Among other workplace trends, the magazine forecasts that the ongoing "war for talent" will see companies trying to improve experiences for job candidates and employees. In a recent study, nearly 60 percent of job seekers reported having a poor experience as a candidate, such as not being notified of their application status — and 72 percent of those people have shared their stories on employer-review sites.

Workplace wellness is becoming an important benefit for attracting talent and lowering health care costs. But at the same time, more companies will hire on-demand workers to cut costs by removing health insurance and other employee benefits. With younger generations expecting instant feedback — behavior they've adopted from using social networks like Twitter and Facebook — annual performance reviews are giving way to continual reviews. More companies will offer to help pay back their employees' student loans, according to *Forbes*.

In 2017, Generation Z, or people born in 1995 or later, will be graduating from school and entering the workforce, bringing new demands and further widening the technology gap between younger and older workers. A quarter of millennials and Gen Z workers want their employers to incorporate virtual-reality and augmented-reality technologies into the workplace, for training and other purposes. To accommodate the preferences of younger workers, organizations will also continue emphasizing team performance over individual performance. ■ — G.B.



Insights

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Push Notifications on Election Day Offer a Look at the Future of News Delivery

A record number of Americans learned of the Election Day results from their phones this year, including via mobile-device push notifications from news organizations, *Columbia Journalism Review* reported on Nov. 30.

These types of notices forward breaking news alerts or social media updates to the lock screen on a mobile device along with a tone, without the user having to open an app or log on to the device with a password.

According to the Tow Center for Digital Journalism, publishers sent a total of 469 push notifications on Election Day and the day after, including more than 60 from Yahoo News. *The Wall Street Journal*, by comparison, sent out fewer than 10.

The iPhone's new operating system lets publishers embed videos and images in expanded push notifications. On Tuesday, Nov. 8, the Guardian Mobile Innovation Lab, a team in

the media organization's U.S. newsroom, set up automatically updating alerts that continued to refresh throughout the night for users who had opted in. These alerts included news about electoral votes, swing states, the popular vote and percentages of precincts reporting.

Push notifications did not discourage visits to the Guardian's news app, according to the lab's editor, Sasha Koren. Some 230,000 subscribers to the alerts reportedly generated more than 800,000 page views. For breaking news or sports events, Koren said, many news sites still rely on live blogs that "were really built for desktop, beginning in the early 2000s."

Newsrooms will likely continue experimenting, as staffs grow savvier with presenting content on mobile phones, delivering content to reach readers. ■ — Greg Beaubien

Talent Show

How to Find and Retain Key Staff

By Wendy Lund



elhyrn/shutterstock

Finding and keeping top talent is a priority for every PR agency and, in fact, should be viewed as a top priority for leadership.

From interns to executive vice presidents, staff is the most valuable asset an agency has, and the critical thinking and skill sets they bring to the table are the reason many clients first engage with, and then ultimately stay with, an agency. Unless agencies are able to retain a happy, engaged and dedicated workforce, they won't be able to win and keep new business or meet

current client needs.

A variety of current social and economic factors (such as employee attitudes toward staying with an agency "too long" and local job markets) impact both the hiring and retention of employees at PR agencies.

As such, it's not surprising that according to a 2016 report by the USC Annenberg Center for Public Relations, both agency and corporate executives agree that the ability to attract and retain the right talent is the greatest challenge preventing them from achiev-

ing their future goals.

Although agency leads may be quick to blame talent turnover on millennial employees (according to a 2016 Gallup poll titled "How Millennials Want to Work and Live," 55 percent of millennials are not engaged at work, meaning they're keeping employment options open), the truth is that it's essential to engage employees of *every* generation to ensure agency success.

Recruiting properly

So what's the key to finding the

right talent? Needs vary from agency to agency, but in the simplest terms, we just need to find the people who are the right fit for the client. Then we need to make sure we're spending the time to refine these employee/client relationships over the long term. Once we have them, we want to make sure we keep them.

What do we mean by the "right fit"? In the health care space, employees generally fall into two categories: "science" people and "consumer" people.

That is, some employees embrace the more technical aspects of the work — such as data and regulatory milestones — while others lean more toward consumer-facing work, such as events and celebrity campaigns. Given that, GCI Health makes every attempt to feed

an individual's interest and give him the opportunity to take on something new and challenging. Experience shows that nurturing this interest is generally rewarded with superior work and outstanding results.

Keeping talent on track

Once you've scored the perfect hire, the obvious goal is to keep her happy and continue the positive momentum. That's often easier said than done, but GCI Health's methods for nurturing employees has paid off. We've been able to achieve a high level of retention through traditional benefits as well as nontraditional, highly motivating, fun, hands-on engagement programs: Of note, our senior managers have been with the company an average of 11 years and for as long as 23 years, and we have 14 staffers who were hired at the junior levels who are now in senior positions.

Beyond the traditional benefits and competitive salaries, setting your agency apart with a host of nontraditional perks is also a great way to strengthen company culture and keep employees engaged. At GCI Health, nontraditional perks fall roughly into three categories: work-life balance, recognition and personal achievement.

Perfect work-life balance is the

proverbial pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, and it's an important component of job satisfaction. So while it's great to offer flexibility in work schedules, agencies should also consider other ways to help their employees balance work and life.

For instance, we've recently implemented a "Summer Lovin'" program as a thank-you to employees for the particularly hard work they're putting in with existing client accounts as well as new business. Among many components of the program (including meals, snacks, raffles and more), two of the most appreciated are the early closings and breaks we surprised staff with as we headed toward Labor Day.

In terms of recognition, there are so many ways to show employees they're appreciated. It's simply a matter of figuring out what's most meaningful to your staff. For instance, monthly shout-outs and small gift cards for great work (in GCI Health's case, we honor those who are "doing something differently") at all-staff meetings allow employees to enjoy the admiration of their colleagues and encourage them to strive for future accolades. Also, sending emails recognizing staff who participated in a new business win or a great client achievement goes a long way toward making employees feel their work is appreciated on a consistent basis.

Not surprisingly, food is also a successful route to employees' hearts as a way of expressing appreciation. The occasional free lunch, bagel Mondays and snack carts (GCI Health rolls out themed snack carts with treats and beverages) are ever-popular methods of showing staff how important they are to your agency. It also recognizes that employees don't always take the time to stop and enjoy a meal.

Finally, in terms of personal achievement, there are so many ways to ensure every employee is reaching his or her full potential and making strides within the agency. For starters, it's essential that each employee not only have a mentor to support, encourage

and motivate her (sharing advice for tricky situations, offering career guidance, etc.) but that each employee also meets regularly with his direct manager. Direct managers are held accountable within the agency to ensure employees are on the right track for career growth and that they're feeling professionally fulfilled as well. They should work with the employee to come up with solutions to any issues in real time before they escalate. In addition to internal management, you can foster an employee's sense of personal achievement by giving her opportunities to spread her wings within the agency.

For example, GCI Health's U.S. offices offer an "exchange" contest with our London office. Staff have the opportunity to pitch senior management on why they should be chosen to work in our London office (all expenses paid) to expand their global mindset; our London colleagues have the same opportunity to come to New York. The program allows participants to broaden their perspectives, foster collaboration and ultimately expand their thinking to benefit their clients. What's more, we also encourage employees (and top staff at every level) to participate both in real new business as well as new-business boot camp (a program we offer in which employees team up to practice the new-business process for a simulated RFP in order to hone and polish individual skills).

Across the board, there are multitudes of ways to keep employees engaged once you've found the perfect hire. Options are limitless, so I hope some of GCI Health's retention examples serve as an inspiration for you.

The point is to find what works best with your employees and have fun doing it, because as you recruit and support your most valuable assets, you're ultimately supporting the success of your clients, and we can all agree that's something worth striving for. ■

“So what’s the key to finding the right talent? Needs vary from agency to agency, but in the simplest terms, we just need to find the people who are the right fit for the client.”



Wendy Lund is CEO of GCI Health, an award-winning PR agency with professionals in the U.S., Canada and Europe. She was inducted into the 2016 *PR News* Class of Top Women in PR, was one of *PRWeek's* True Women Champions of PR and was a finalist for *PRWeek's* Agency Professional of the Year.

Measuring the Motivators

How Should Organizations Assess Leadership Communication Efforts?

By David Murray

Executive communication is often the most expensive function of a communications department. Ironically, by most measures, it's also the least strategically focused. The just-released 2016 membership study by the Professional Speechwriters Association (PSA) focused on "intentionality" in executive communication and came to these combined findings, which can only be described as twisted:

Although two-thirds of professional speechwriters are involved in annual executive communication strategy planning, only 23 percent say that it's their responsibility to place their leaders at the best forums to reach important audiences. It's hard to believe, but most speaking opportunities originate not from proactive speaker placement but from incoming invitations.

Only 41 percent of organizations even attempt to quantify the effectiveness of executive communications, which leaves at least 59 percent of organizations with not the faintest idea of whether they're spending the right amount, too much, or too little.

In any case, they're spending a lot. Speechwriters are the best-paid specialists in most corporate communication departments, some of them making a quarter-million dollars a year and more. And the obscured cost — the cost that doesn't come out of the communication



department's budget — is time spent by the executive preparing for the speech and traveling to deliver it. A prominent Fortune 100 speechwriter estimates the per-speech cost for his CEO at \$60,000, and he thinks that's being conservative.

And they're taking requests over the transom? It's even worse than that, actually, because a number of speeches every year are given as favors — to the executive's favorite charity, to an association run by her sorority sister, to a business conference run by his protégé. Imagine an executive trying to justify making an ad buy or an equipment purchase based on that.

And if corporate communication directors are peeved by the lack of strategic discipline involved in their executive communication operation, they're not as frustrated as the speechwriters, who want more than anything for their work

to amount to something more than a lot of one-off vanity projects. Asked by the PSA survey how the exec comms could contribute more reliably to organizational goals, they fairly shouted:

"If my boss didn't have a policy of speaking at every event she's invited to — doesn't leave a lot of time to be thoughtful and strategic, or to do research."

"If we brought some proactive planning to it. There's very little of that in my company."

"If we would execute the strategy and stop being so reactive."

"If we integrated across the organization — look at all leaders' speeches holistically."

"If we had fewer messages competing seriously with overarching messages."

Looking for measurement standards

Because it is so crowded with egos, executive communication will always run partly based on feelings — of obligation, of fear, of ambition. I have also observed that attempts to pin exec comm efforts strictly to strategic messages and key audiences often wind up generating matrices within matrices within matrices. "This year, Executive A is assigned three main messages

under one central theme, which she will deliver to one internal and one external audience per quarter via speeches, monthly via her blog and weekly on Twitter. Now, for Executive B..."

Measuring the effectiveness of executive communications amounts to little more than "The audience seemed to like it." Or if you want to drill down to the real bottom line: "The boss seemed pleased."

Measurement guru Katie Paine recently spoke at a PSA event and gave the speechwriters her usual rigorous talk, seasoned by three decades of experience quantifying the effectiveness of communication. "Helpful to think about ways to quantify our results," said one speechwriter afterward, "and also a little scary. Not sure I want to open the door to assessing my speeches based upon the outcome of some initial

or policy debate."

Another consultant poured her heart into developing a sophisticated software program that would quantify the effectiveness of a speech based on three dozen criteria. I was there when she presented

it to a meeting of exec comm people. Crickets. Who wants to pay good money to find out a speech that went over well was actually a 3 on a scale of 1 to 10?

Understandable. But then, how *should* organizations assess leadership communication efforts? How *should*

they tie leadership communication to measurable — or at least describable — objectives? Respondents to the PSA survey said they engage in leadership communication to achieve five primary objectives: to show executives to be thought leaders, to enhance the organization's reputation, to build the brand, to get media coverage and to engage employees.

"Measuring the effectiveness of executive communications amounts to little more than 'The audience seemed to like it.' Or if you want to drill down to the real bottom line: 'The boss seemed pleased.'"

Pretty important goals, those. Too important to base executive communication largely on who happens to invite executives to speak. Too important to not seek some way of knowing whether the program is getting the proper bang for its buck. And certainly too important to throw up our hands and resign ourselves to operating by gut-feel this pricey, labor-intensive and intellectually demanding PR function. Speechwriters shouldn't view leadership communication as a means of ego gratification, and their bosses shouldn't view it that way either.

Speaking of speeches, John F. Kennedy gave one once: "We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things," he said, "not because they are easy, but because they are hard."

If a speech can send a man to the moon... ■



David Murray is executive director of the Professional Speechwriters Association. He is also editor of *Vital Speeches of the Day*, a monthly magazine that collects the best speeches in the world.

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Moving the Agenda

3 Common Fears That Arise in the Face of New Ideas and How to Overcome Them

By Samuel B. Bacharach



As PR professionals, we are constantly asking others to consider new ideas. We're always pitching new projects or plans and looking for buy-in from a diverse group of stakeholders. That's why it's important to anticipate how people will react to new ideas and be prepared to deal with any fears they might have.

Three fears, in particular — fear of failure, fear of the new, and fear of turf encroachment — often arise in the face of new ideas. These are discussed in my latest book, *The Agenda Mover* (Cornell University Press, 2016). Here are tips for responding to each:

Fear No. 1: Failure

When you propose a new idea, you are not only asking for acceptance, you are looking for support. Essentially you are asking individuals to invest time, effort and money in a project that has an uncertain outcome. Given that most of us are risk-averse, the fear of failure is a huge source of anxiety and resistance. The challenge is to get buy-in from others by demonstrating that your project is viable.

Solution:

You can help others face their fear of failure by framing your intent

vis-a-vis their reality — that is, viewing your agenda from their perspective and illustrating how it relates to their goals and aspirations. Beyond that, you have to set forth concrete ideas. Certain ideas are rejected because they are too sweeping. Rein in the scope and focus on exact costs and timelines. Don't promise more than you can deliver.

Fear No. 2: "The New"

Humans necessarily routinize behaviors, processes and methodologies, and nowhere is this more evident than in organizations. Fear of the new is potent. Habits are powerful motiva-

tors, as there is comfort in doing things the same way every time. People know what to expect; anything different adds a layer of confusion. In organizations, patterned behavior becomes institutionalized and repeated, and when it is challenged, there is resistance: "That's not how we do things here."

This fear is far more subtle than the fear of failure, and the person moving the agenda must deal with it directly.

Solution:

When you are trying to get individuals to support your agenda, you need to communicate what resources will be at their disposal during the transition. Hollow reassurances of "It's going to be okay" are not enough. You have to let them know in very specific terms how you will be there for them. You need to make the unfamiliar feel somewhat comfortable for them if you want your new idea to become a reality.

"When you propose a new idea, you are not only asking for acceptance, you are looking for support."

Fear No. 3: Turf Encroachment

When faced with a new initiative, individuals or groups may fear they will lose their identity, or the power and ability to control their own destinies.

A bit of paranoia about turf encroachment may be justified. The introduction of new ideas can create a shift in priorities and resources that will make some feel alienated, undervalued or nervous. Broad change initiatives can make it difficult for people to protect the old ways of

doing things.

Solution:

You must take these concerns seriously and think of ways to preserve the status and resources of key stakeholders while implementing the new agenda. While it may be necessary to encroach on someone's turf to move an

agenda forward, it is also important to find a way to recognize and value the parties involved without giving them the sense that something is being taken away from them. For example, you can accentuate the social prestige and recognition they will likely receive by joining your efforts.

You may have a great idea, and others may actually want to join you. However, if you want their buy-in, you must give them a sense that they will both benefit and be safe. This means focusing on the fears of those whose support you need. Simply put, you must always think of your audience and their world. ■



Samuel B. Bacharach is author of *The Agenda Mover: When Your Good Idea Is Not Enough* (Cornell University Press, 2016). He is also co-founder of the Bacharach Leadership Group, which focuses on training leaders in the skills of the Agenda Mover, and is the McKelvey-Grant Professor at Cornell University.

NEWS BRIEF

Do You Need a Meeting Before Your Meeting?

When planning a meeting about a contentious issue, you might want to hold a "pre-meeting" first, *Harvard Business Review* suggests. The best way to gain acceptance for a new idea, these preliminary huddles are opportunities to gather information, test and refine arguments, and build trust with allies and detractors alike before the official meeting occurs, the post said.

Rather than inviting everyone who will attend the official meeting, try to line up whoever will be directly affected by the decision that will eventually be made, and those who have the most political influence in your organization.

Gain a clear understanding of their perspectives. Also listen to stakeholders who have a different point of view, so you can anticipate objections and incorporate their thinking into your proposals at the subsequent meeting. Be forthright about possible points of contention, and frame the problem as something that you're working together to solve.

Present contentious issues in ways that resonate with other people, the post said. For example, if someone is afraid

of rocking the boat, then frame your initiative as incremental and endorsed by upper management, not as something revolutionary or risky. When talking to a risk-taker, explain how your idea is a bold move for the company.

Of course, both personalities might be present at the pre-meeting, but everyone will be more likely to accept your ideas if you've treated them with dignity and respect at this initial stage. — *Greg Beaubien*



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Anatomy of a Scandal at Wells Fargo

If you're looking for a case study in how to avoid, manage or recover from a corporate crisis, then don't look at Wells Fargo. It's hard to find anything that the company's leaders did correctly.

When analyzing how executives of companies get their organizations into crisis situations, certain words commonly pop up: insular, entrenched, unethical, insensitive. Every one of those terms applies to Wells Fargo.

Leaders of the San Francisco-based company seemingly looked the other way while outrageous wrongs were being committed against its customers and employees. They included:

- ◆ Opening more than two million unauthorized deposit and credit card accounts over five years
- ◆ Collecting thousands of dollars in fees through some of those transactions
- ◆ Creating a high-pressure atmosphere that many employees say caused them to take illegal and/or unethical actions and resulted in serious damage to their health
- ◆ Minimizing the situation and blaming "rogue" employees when the scandal broke
- ◆ Failing to tell its own board

In the C-Suite

By Virgil Scudder

that it had fired 5,300 employees — 1 percent of its workforce — before regulators made the fact public

Perhaps worse, Wells Fargo stonewalled many questions from legislators and inquiries from news media about sales practices that eventually led the bank to agree to a \$185 million fine and regulatory enforcement action.

The company's first mistake was to ignore explicit and repeated warnings over five years and even some earlier employee warnings. Some employees reported the practices to incoming CEO John Stumpf as early as 2005. He didn't take any action.

Then, according to Stumpf, a board committee became aware of the fraud "at a high level" (his words) in 2011. There still wasn't any action.

The *Los Angeles Times* detailed Wells Fargo's questionable sales structure in 2013. No indication of any action.

The city of Los Angeles filed a law-

suit against the bank in 2015, alleging that it pressured employees to commit fraud. Still, there wasn't any sign of any remedial action beyond the ongoing firing of employees — many of their stories are sad and poignant.

Angie Payden, who worked for the bank in Hudson, Wis., from 2011 to 2014, told *The New York Times* that she was forced to commit a number of unethical actions, including opening travel checking accounts for customers by convincing them that it was unsafe to travel without a separate checking account and debit card, and coercing customers to open credit card accounts to use as overdraft protection for their checking accounts when they were already struggling to keep their checking accounts balanced.

Other employees told similar stories of high anxiety created by constant pressure from management to sign up customers by any means necessary or lose their jobs. Ex-workers also claimed that the bank targeted immigrants who spoke little English and older adults with memory problems.

The pressure was relentless. As one employee told the *Times*: "They

would grill us every day; it was non-stop badgering and berating. It was verbal and mental abuse.” Another said, “We would have conference calls with regional presidents and managers coaching us on how to word our selling points so the customer can’t say ‘no.’ I felt like a cheat.”

A lack of preparation

It was clear when Stumpf was called to testify before congressional committees in September that the going would be rough. The task was daunting. He would need to stay cool under heavy fire from outraged senators. He would have to show contrition, apologizing for Wells Fargo’s wrongdoing and outlining positive steps he had taken to make restitution to victims and fix the problems. While this was a tough assignment, it was also a chance to restore some public and government confidence in the 164-year-old institution and begin the healing.

The problem at his company was clearly severe and systemic, but the embattled CEO tried to minimize its scope, saying the wrongdoing involved only about 1 percent of the bank’s employees. He gave evasive answers and repeatedly dodged questions, frustrating and angering his interrogators.

He received a blistering interrogation from Sen. Elizabeth Warren

(D-Massachusetts), who reportedly told Stumpf: “It’s gutless leadership; you should be criminally investigated.” Other senators were equally outraged by the CEO’s lack of contrition and cooperation.

If Stumpf was prepared for the hearings at all, then he was badly prepared. His testimony, and the comments of angered legislators, only worsened the bank’s predicament.

Encrusted, complacent leadership is often a hindrance to detecting problems and avoiding crises. And Wells Fargo had, and has, such leadership in spades:

- ◆ Stumpf, who has since resigned, was at Wells Fargo for nearly 35 years, including nine years as CEO.

- ◆ Carrie Tolsted, who headed the retail unit that was responsible for the bad behavior, had been with the bank for 27 years before being sent off with a golden parachute when the scandal broke.

- ◆ The company’s current top management began working at Wells Fargo as far back as 1979. Their average tenure is calculated at 25.7 years.

- ◆ Three people have been on the board of directors since the 1990s. The average tenure of board members is almost 10 years, which is well above the industry average.

Here’s the worst part: At this writing, there aren’t any new faces in either Wells Fargo’s senior management or its board; thus, there isn’t any new thinking or any likely call for strong action. A 27-year Wells insider, Tim Sloan, succeeded Stumpf. A much better move would have been picking an outsider without

any financial stake in the bank.

The role of the organization’s communications team is critical here.

Surely, they became aware of these improper practices at some point. Did they warn top management of how the situation could play out? If so, were the warnings ignored? If not, were they afraid of losing their jobs if they spoke up?

These questions are important to many, but answerable only by a few. We may never know.

“Encrusted, complacent leadership is often a hindrance to detecting problems and avoiding crises.”

Watch an exclusive video with Virgil Scudder:



A long recovery ahead

Wells Fargo’s recovery problems are compounded by weak statements on its website and in advertising such as:

- ◆ “We’re making changes to make things right.” (*How about a full-fledged CEO apology for making things wrong?*)

- ◆ “We reached settlement over allegations that some of our customers received products they did not request.” (*Ah, free products. Harmless enough. Except that they weren’t always free, or harmless.*)

- ◆ “Our goal is to do what’s right for you, our customer, every single day. We recognize that we have fallen short of that goal.” (*Fallen short? Talk about minimizing!*)

Here are some things that Wells Fargo should do to regain public trust:

- ◆ Clean house: Some executives and board members need to go.
- ◆ Bring in an outside administrator or monitor, along with a new CEO.
- ◆ Listen to outside legal and PR counsel.
- ◆ Don’t mince words; start telling it like it is.

Otherwise, the recovery could be quite an extended process. ■



Virgil Scudder is the author of “World Class Communication: How Great CEOs Win With the Public, Shareholders, Employees and the Media,” which received an Award of Distinction as one of the best business books of 2012. Email: virgil@virgilscudder.com.



MR. JOHN G. STUMPF

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In Closing

What Really Matters to Chief Communications Officers

Digital communications and employee engagement will be top priorities for chief communications officers over the next 18 months, says a new survey by Weber Shandwick and Spencer Stuart, an executive search firm. More than 70 percent of corporate communications executives surveyed ranked digital communications as their top priority for the coming months, while 90 percent of North American CCOs and 70 percent of those based in Europe, the Middle East and Africa called employee communications a top responsibility.

According to the survey, primary responsibilities for the CCO position, in descending order of importance, include media relations; crisis or reputation management; employee communications; social media or digital communications; corporate social responsibility; foundation or charitable giving; marketing, branding or advertising; government relations or public affairs;

marketing research and measurement; data analytics to evaluate company reputation and refine marketing messages — functions that are expected to grow in the next few years, even as CCOs still say they rely more on intuition than analytics; investor relations; and customer experience. Asked to identify the one area they'd most like to focus on, the majority of CCOs surveyed cited reputation management.

As *PRWeek* reported, the reason employee engagement is so important to CCOs might be that “employees have a louder voice now more than ever,” according to George Jamison, who heads Spencer Stuart’s corporate communications business. Said Leslie Gaines-Ross, chief reputation strategist at Weber Shandwick, “The war for talent is the biggest, most worrisome concern of leaders.” ■ — *Greg Beaubien*

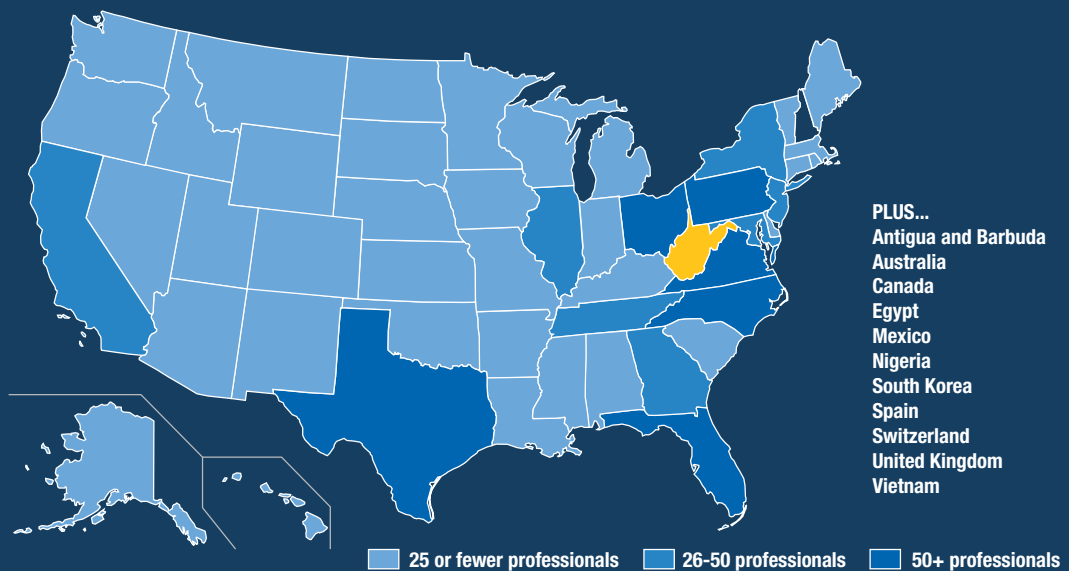
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