

# The low-down on 2018 PR and marketing trends

By [Janine Lloyd](#)

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This year is going to continue to be a tough journey for all businesses as they grapple for market share and growth during a difficult economy.



Janine Lloyd, CEO of PR Expert.

But it is not all doom and gloom; I have personally witnessed three recessions in my lifetime including being impacted by the dot-com bubble burst and know that the answer lies in being hyper-strategic. 2018 can be a good one if you review your business strategies and priorities with more focus than you ever have before. This is not a time for business as usual.

Having been in the PR, marketing and branding industry for three decades, I know that if you don't shift or change your approach at the right time, you will significantly lag behind. And that lag will widen every time the market shifts again... before you know it your competitors are growing and you are not.

## Trend #1: PR must contribute to growth

Companies will continue to demand that public relations efforts must contribute to the bottom line. PR firms and departments will need to find innovative ways of proving the value of its efforts to business growth. While the reputational impact is still important, a closer alignment between PR, marketing and sales will be especially critical during the continuing economic downturn expected in 2018.

## Trend #2: Data-driven insights are key

The ability to analyse data, whether it is from client's websites, digital marketing or PR will become key in 2018 and beyond. Having a better understanding of your client's customer's behaviour will enable PR to play a more strategic role and drive better results. And it is not only about understanding but also about providing insights which can inform changes to the business which in turn could impact results significantly. Data analytics is especially critical to marketing teams enabling them to inform campaigns and sales; the slightest tweak informed by data can make a significant contribution to the bottom line, if acted on quickly.

## Trend #3: Quicker time to value

Agencies and departments need to supplement long-term plans with quick wins that provide value to the business. The days of waiting months for results have gone as business leaders demand faster proof of value. As such communications professionals need to strategically speed up delivery from internal and external resources while focusing on the tactics that will deliver faster and better returns.

## **Trend #4: Convergence with marketing**

Competition from digital and advertising agencies will continue to affect our industry as the lines between PR and marketing blur. While larger agencies with integrated teams are well placed, small to medium PR companies need to skill up to provide more measurable tactics which digital can provide. They will need to hire-in or partner with those who have more technical skills in the web universe if they are to remain competitive.

## **Trend #5: Social listening**

The days of not having social listening tools are over. We live in a social world and PR companies need to analyse what is being said about clients as well as trends to inform their customers. The biggest problem is that tools on the market are prohibitively expensive to smaller companies who are operating on a limited budget. However, if you are to add value to your clients you will need to make the case for social listening tools and rather sooner than later.

## **Trend #6: PR companies must use tools to operate more efficiently**

Many companies still operate using traditional time-consuming methods, both in operations as well as sales and marketing. Many tasks such as emailing to media, collating event RSVPs, reporting, project management, media monitoring, marketing and so on, are still manually performed. With a plethora of tech tools on the market including artificial intelligence to create content, communications teams must investigate and test the tools that will make them more efficient and able to respond quicker in the market. By automating time-consuming tasks qualified resources can focus on providing value versus spending time on administration.

## **Trend #7: Skills required in 2018**

The following skills should be on the top of your list for any PR agency or department: social media; written communications; multimedia; analytics and an understanding of behavioural science; media relations; SEO and business literacy. In addition, the top skills in high demand in marketing include digital marketing; website development; data analytics; communications; product marketing; project management; content management; SEO and market research. If you do not have the skills available, send your teams on training courses to enable your business to stay ahead of its game.

## **ABOUT JANINE LLOYD**

Janine Lloyd is the CEO of PR Expert, an entrepreneur and motivational speaker. With 27 years in leadership and entrepreneurship in the communications, marketing and branding fields, Janine is known for being an inspiring leader, razor-sharp strategist and successful entrepreneur. She has led her business to achieve the highest accolades in the industry winning multiple awards and recently PR Expert won the PRISM Campaign of the Year for 2016.

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