

5 PR trends to incorporate into your 2022 planning

By [Jean Harkett](#)

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One of the biggest takeaways of 2021 is undoubtedly that agencies and public relations consultants have had to reinvent themselves as they face the new reality of shrinking newsrooms, the increase in fake news, and a rapidly evolving social media space.



Source: www.unsplash.com

With this firmly in mind, these are five trends I believe will be shaping the industry this year:

As newsrooms shrink, media outlets will accept more contributed articles

Stop flogging that dead presser. It's a great time to pivot and pitch your client as a valued thought leader by contributing an opinion piece. With a demand for more thought leadership articles, this is the year of the op-ed. Publicists would do well to convince executive teams to focus their efforts on solid thought leadership.

Social consciousness will continue to grow

Customers have started taking notice of social values and are embracing brands that go beyond paying lip service and have the social causes to back it up. Most consumers want to know that the companies they buy from are doing the hard work of actually living by the values they profess, especially when it's inconvenient to do so. This year, sustainability and CSI matters will be at the forefront of the PR narrative.

PR professionals will use an ever-increasing number of channels to identify media opportunities

Beyond crowdsourcing and the occasional social media release, social channels will become all-important for every publicist. You're doing yourself and your client a disservice if you're not using social media to identify opportunities, connect, pitch (in the proper context) and showcase your visual and written brand stories on social media channels.





Moreover, short-form video will see an even bigger surge in interest as the big social giants invest in short-form video. Marketers, publicists, and brand managers should get on the reel, TikTok and Youtube Shorts train - or they will be left behind.

Social Audio is the new black

We all hate the cringe-worthy *Sex and the City* reboot, *And Just Like That*, but there's a reason Carrie Bradshaw is now doing a podcast. Social Audio tools such as Clubhouse and Spotify Podcasts will be an innovative and affordable way to build an audience and create a catalogue of slick content that's always there for the listen. Don't want to create a podcast? Savvy publicists will pitch brands to podcast channels this year - every media strike list should have a podcast inclusion.

Influencer marketing is a serious business

Influence matters and influencers matter. It's always mattered, but we've all been winking at it before. In 2022, influencer marketing will boom, and smart partnerships will increase social proof for some brands. Let's give the channel the respect it deserves by delivering intelligent and wildly creative campaigns that go beyond mere product placement.

As social media channels introduce better analytics for posts, it will enable publicists to research, contract and monitor influencers far easier and more efficiently than before. Hopefully, we will also see more fun content online from brands as influencers get creative interpreting briefs.

All of these trends will be underpinned by the all-important buzzword of the year: Authenticity. Authenticity has taken on a new meaning since 2020 and the rise of 'fake news'. More than ever, fact-checking is paramount, and publicists cannot create insincere messaging or make casual claims. Be prepared to back up any statements you make about a brand or be relegated to a wasteland of consumer mistrust.



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Finally, do not forget about Whatsapp. It's a massive communications channel in the South African market and it's not covered by any social listening tool. In preparing for all eventualities, consider how a scam or a misleading viral message on Whatsapp can play havoc with your campaign and be ready for it when it happens.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jean Harkett is the managing director at Storybook Brand Communication Consultancy

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