

Changing newsrooms, changing strategy

By [Teresa Jenkins](#), issued by [Litha Communications](#)

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Current PR training still incorporates media liaison as a topic, but how is that carried out in the existing media climate, where publications are fluidly crossing from print to digital, newsrooms have enthusiastic youngsters who cannot spell (it's so old school) and clients want 'that social media stuff'.

Print media, once beloved by PR professionals, is under attack from all sides. Diminishing returns on advertising have led to cutbacks in editorial staff and this in turn has led to shrinking readership. Industry-specific magazines have closed down over the past decade or reduced output from monthly to quarterly publications. Online news offers an immediacy that print cannot match and the ubiquity of digital devices allows readers to tap in anywhere, anytime to get the latest news.

The answer is a strategy that defines the assets of the chosen media and tailors each communication to meet that strength and evade the weakness.



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Dealing with online publications? They are swamped 24/7 with information - all demanding attention, all using words such as 'innovative, groundbreaking, world first' in a subject line of 25 words. They also have shifting staff, editors that change portfolios or zip off to another universe and well-defined target markets.

We find using a media search engine, such as Ibis Media, gives us the first glimpse of the industry possibilities. Once we have established that the target market and the client mesh, we go for the old-fashioned approach of phoning editors. Good time of day is often just before lunch, just to run the idea past them and then submit the story. Short snappy headline, all the information they need in paragraph one and then a short fleshing out of the ideas, in the hope that all will be published. Online is not interested in a 1500 word feature - it wants 400-600 words. Online is also not so hidebound as newspapers, so you can often get away with the client's name in the headline, which boosts search engine returns.

Print carries weight in many quarters and is still the prize for many stories. Here, because time is no longer a factor, more attention can be paid to opinion pieces, research and future opportunities. We emphasise to clients that immediacy is not the prize here but long-term exposure through consistency. Again, a chat with an editor and a schedule of features can provide a planned year of editorial suggestions. Knowing of the shortage of proof readers, we use a freelance editor to check our client's copy and style before submitting. It may seem like a small thing but with the pressures of newsrooms and the shortage of trained subeditors, writing % for percent can be the difference between being deleted or used.

Rise of video

Social media has enormous pull and is seen as the pinnacle of current marketing strategies. It has a valuable place, particularly with the rise in video as a storytelling medium.

FIPP, the worldwide magazine media association, held its congress in mid-October and noted, "There seemed to be a clear consensus that premium media brands need to focus on the things that differentiate themselves from bloggers and content farms and one of these is by investing in video." Koda Wang, COO *Huffington Post* stressed the importance of video to his company, explaining that as much as 50% of its content will soon be video based. Melinda Lee, VP, digital content and audience development at Hearst Magazines International, added, "Video is quickly becoming the most powerful superhero of all the content types. Year after year, video has a growth rate of over 100% and offers content which engages an audience through audio, visuals and motion."

Therefore, the modern PR communications firm will need not only good writers but also good scriptwriters and videographers that can encapsulate a message succinctly. The average length of a video on YouTube is 3-4 minutes, reflecting the modern tendency to get and assimilate bite-sized information and then move on.

Finally, the use of events cannot be overlooked. In a digital age, they offer an intimate way to get in touch with a market and establish a human connection. Press get-togethers still have a place in this industry and may cement long-term relationships that transcend the immediate client/news connections.

ABOUT TERESA JENKINS

I am a passionate international marketer with particular bias for building sustainable brands, from inception to managing premier clients' marketing strategies and results-driven Public Relations. Outside work, I cherish spending time with family and friends, exploring wildlife and oceans through travel, indulging in reading, and embracing the adventure of lifelong learning facilitated by the internet of things.

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