CISION®

SMART ENGAGEMENT:
AN EARNED MEDIA MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

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The Proper Mix of Reach and Relevance

Smart Engagement aims to solve the problem that many modern communicators face today: **how to best enlist the media to help tell their brand's stories.**

Introduction

Modern communicators want to build better media relationships, craft more creative, data-driven stories and better demonstrate the value of their efforts. The good news is that emerging smart engagement technologies are enabling PR and communications professionals to invest more time creating individualized, multimedia-rich content and deliver that experience to targeted audiences.

Earned Media Management is a new way to think about PR and communications. There are four tenets to this concept: establishing a complete mapping of influencers, content and audience with Influencer Graph, improving storytelling and promotion with Smart Engagement, better understanding earned media outcomes with True Measurement, and finally unifying business functions, teams and integrating processes as part of Comms Transformation.

The second step, **Smart Engagement**, aims to solve the problem that many modern communicators face today: how to best enlist the media to help tell their brand's stories.

One-Size-Fits-All Engagement Fails to Resonate with Influencers and End-Customers

PR pros have historically partnered with journalists and influencers to reach the public. Outreach was simple when there were only a few media outlets from which people received news. PR and communications professionals could easily create a single, text-based message for the press and distribute it widely to ensure the public saw their content. But times have changed.

Fast-forward to today, when digital and social media has exponentially increased the complexity of this process, creating a multitude of new outlets and emerging influencers and micro-influencers, each with their own unique audiences. Traditional journalists and newsrooms have shrunk to the point that there is only one journalist for every six PR professionals. Communicators are now tasked with engaging with journalists and influencers that impact their end consumers, across different outlets and mediums to ensure that brands can reach their target end-audiences.

The fluid nature of today's media landscapes makes it difficult for PR professionals to enage with media influencers in a personalized and thoughtful manner. PR pros continue to rely on their relationships and gut-driven,

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> —Nick Bell
> *VP of Content and Communications, Cision*

one-size-fits-all approach to public relations messaging, pitching and press release distribution. While this approach might have been effective when press releases were sent to just a few major outlets, the reality is it no

52%
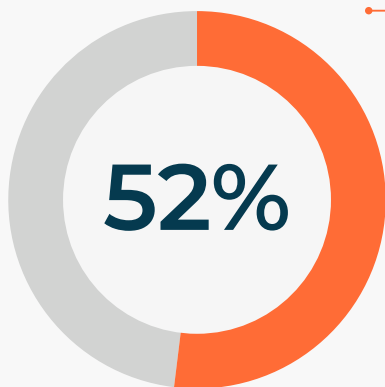
Media engagement today is confusing. PR pros are unclear about the role they should play. **More than half (52%) of communications teams actually think that it's the job of influencers and journalists to reach out to them, rather than the other way around.**

While this is true for a select few notable names like Netflix, Amazon, Apple or Google, the reality is that most brands don't have journalists knocking at their door every day asking for new stories.

(Source: Forrester Opportunity Snapshot, Oct. 2018)

longer works. Journalists and media influencers rely on PR pros to supply them with stories but do not respond well to generic, one-size-fits-all messages. PR professionals flood media influencer's inboxes with hundreds of stories every day. Without some relevant context, there is no way to cut through the noise. Year after year, media influencer's number one request for PR professionals is that they take the time to understand who they are and what topics they cover before pitching them.

An Individuals desire for personalization is not a new concept. In fact, marketers have proven personalization's effectiveness as the majority of consumers would rather buy from a business that offers a personalized experience. According to recent research, personalized email messages improve click-through rates by an average of 14 percent and conversions by 10 percent.

PR pros have been slow to adopt personalization techniques, both when it comes to the way they approach pitching journalists and influencers, as well as the way they conduct their consumer outreach strategy because they previously did not have access to data that can help guide their efforts.

Smart Engagement: Personalizing Content and Distribution

Data is now driving the evolution of press release content and distribution, making more personalized, efficient and impactful public relations possible – at scale. Data's unprecedented level of sophistication has fostered the development of techniques that provide the right mix of reach and relevance for successful press release content and distribution strategies. For example, by establishing an Influencer Graph, PR pros can utilize influencer mapping to personalize pitches and build relationships with journalists and influencers that reach their end consumers. With this information, communicators will be able to spend more time creating stronger, more relevant stories for the influencers that impact their targeted end-user audiences.

Modern communicators need to evolve their messaging and content distribution strategy to be more tailored, more personal and more human. PR pros can easily do this by implementing the second step in the earned media management workflow, Smart Engagement.

Smart Engagement

It starts with **creating content that is individualized to precise audiences** but also depends on creating more immersive and entertaining experiences with the use of multimedia.

smart engagement

[smärt en'·gājmənt]

adjective

1. Smart Engagement is an approach to content and communications distribution that values a proper mix of both reach and relevance for each individual audience member.
    Example: UMass Memorial used smart engagement to target their news to the right regional audience, which resulted in targeted coverage of what the hospital calls "good news stories."

Communicators need to start treating both the influencers and the end-customers that consume content like individuals. It starts with creating content that is individualized to precise audiences, but also depends on creating more immersive and entertaining experiences with the use of multimedia. An essential element of Smart Engagement is including rich, dynamic assets like images, audio, infographics, interactive and video content as part of a pitch or release. Journalists said they "always" or "often" use multimedia elements 70.5 percent of the time and depend on PR professionals to help supply these assets for their stories.

Modern communicators will also need to switch from a generic, episodic press release strategy to one where they are focused on a continuous, always-on campaign approach much like those their digital counterparts employ.

DID YOU KNOW? Rich multimedia content helps consumers better understand, engage and make purchases with brands. 95 percent of people have watched an explainer video to learn more about a product or service. **81 percent of people have been convinced to buy a product or service by watching a brand's video.**

So, what does Smart Engagement really look like?

Here's an example: an enterprise bank prepares to release survey findings as a thought-leadership piece. The bank's goal is to engage with audiences in the top five Canadian metropolitan cities. Rather than create one, general, text-based press release to be distributed widely, the bank could:

1. First, build an influencer graph to ensure they are partnering with the right journalists and influencers to reach the audiences in the top five Canadian metropolitan cities.
(Check out our Building an Influencer Graph: An Earned Media Management Strategy white paper on how to do this if this is a new concept).

2. Create individualized content for each target audience with rich, dynamic assets.
Provide unique multimedia assets including infographics to visualize the survey's findings.

3. Create a Smart Engagement plan to distribute five separate multimedia press releases lines one for each city, with separate and tailored storylines. Ⓐ
Geo-target traditional wire press release distribution to the top five Canadian metropolitan cities.

Ⓑ Pitch specific media influencers who impact audiences in the top five Canadian metropolitan cities.
Ⓒ Activate a social influencer engagement campaign, partnering with influencers the brand has already identified in the influencer graph to better connect with the desired consumer audience.

04. Once the message is live, work with paid and owned teams to amplify earned efforts.
Paid and owned media can strengthen earned media coverage by reposting earned media pickup on owned channels and sending out email campaigns to share earned pickup with individually segmented consumer and prospect lists.

05. Measure the holistic impact of the earned media campaign.

SMART ENGAGEMENT enables modern communicators to be more creative storytellers and build stronger media relationships. Modern communicators can now use data to create individualized, dynamic stories based on the preferences of influencers that impact their end-audiences. Mixing personalized outreach with targeted press release distributions and social engagements helps PR professionals balance reach with relevance. Smart Engagement empowers brands to pitch smarter, create continuous campaigns and work more closely with paid and owned media channel owners. The practice leverages insights across the PR and marketing team and optimizes all programs because of those insights.

Let's Get Technical:
How to Implement Smart Engagement

Smart Engagement requires creativity and data-driven insights to engage target audiences.

01. Know Your End Consumer & Establish an Influencer Graph

A. Every PR campaign needs to **start with the end audience** you want to impact.

B. **Create an Influencer Graph:** Data-driven insights from a quality media database can help you create a complete map between an influencer or outlet, their content and the actual audiences that consumes it. Working backwards, identify the journalists, influencers and/or outlets that your end consumer engages with to target for your campaign content.

02. Understand your Campaign's Target Audiences to Create Individualized and Dynamic Content

A. To create a tailored PR campaign, PR pros must **know the demographics of the actual people who consume their content** on a distribution network. Data to prioritize should include: gender, education, age, generation, income, number of children and size of their household.

B. Create content based on your campaign's target audiences. Instead of creating a single, one-size-fits-all message for all, **write content that will uniquely engage each campaign audience.** A media database can provide interesting insights like direct quotes from journalists, biographical information, even "what they're talking about" on social media channels to inspire your creative storytelling that will help your content resonate with the targeted influencers.

C. Another essential element of Smart Engagement is **including rich, dynamic assets** like images, audio, infographics, interactive and video content as part of a pitch or release. If possible, creating audience specific multimedia to increase engagement with each campaign audience.

03. Tailor your Content Distribution

A. Access to different distribution tools are necessary to create a tailored, multi-channel, PR campaign that will reach and be relevant for each of the campaign's unique audiences.

   i. A media database can provide important information to directly engage with your campaigns target audiences via email or social media. A good media database provides additional details to help modern communicators better personalize their pitches and stories for the particular outlet, blog or beat.

   ii. Access to a large, commercial distribution network allows communications teams to reach different segments within their influencer and consumer pools. The ability to distribute content and multimedia to precise audiences, such as within industry verticals, geographies and topics should also be a feature. International and multicultural capabilities should also be considered depending on a brand's sphere of influence.

04. Measure the performance of your campaign based on the audiences it impacts

A. Once communications professionals execute a Smart Engagement strategy that incorporates both personalized pitching, targeted press release distribution and social engagements to share their story with the influencers they discovered via the Influencer Graph, it's time to measure the impact of those efforts. Core to successful Earned Media Management is the **ability for communications teams to speak the true language of their businesses.** To achieve that goal, communicators must re-think the way they measure performance, focusing on real business metrics and audience information rather than relying on coverage metrics like potential reach, earned media clips and social shares, likes and followers.

Modern communicators already know how to tell a good story. Now is the time to take storytelling to new heights with immersive, multimedia-rich experiences paired with real smart audience engagement techniques. It is an exciting opportunity to embrace technology and data to enhance the power and effectiveness of their storytelling. Early adopters can gain a competitive advantage against their peers and competitors while helping to modernize the communications function from an expense into a business driver.

CONTACT CISION TODAY TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT HOW TO ROLL OUT EARNED MEDIA MANAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES.

COMMUNICATE LIKE NEVER BEFORE
WITH THE CISION COMMUNICATIONS CLOUD®

Transform your PR approach with Earned Media Management using the Cision Communications Cloud. Request a demo now and learn how to demonstrate real business impact and elevate the comms function once more.

REQUEST A DEMO

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