

Forrester Opportunity Snapshot: A Custom Study Commissioned By Cision | October 2018

Influencing Through Earned Media

How Communications Teams Can Use Earned Media To Drive The Marketing Agenda And Raise Their Profile

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Communications And Earned Media In The Age Of The Customer

Brand perception is critically important for all businesses in the age of the customer, making earned media's role in brand positioning a vital component for both marketing and overall business strategy. While communications teams are integral partners in ensuring the steady flow of positive earned media, those teams are often excluded from high-level strategy conversations.

In September 2018, Cision commissioned Forrester Consulting to evaluate how marketers perceive the value of both earned media as well as their communications teams. We found that while marketers do acknowledge the power of earned media to build and sustain their brands, communications teams don't always get the credit they deserve.

Results from this study are derived from 151 surveys from US marketers, director-level or above, who are also knowledgeable about their organizations' communications teams and strategies.



Region

- › USA: 81%
- › Canada: 19%



Annual revenue in USD

- › \$500M to \$999M: 18%
- › \$1B to \$4.9B: 41%
- › \$5B to \$9.9B: 24%
- › \$10B or more: 17%



Department

- › › Marketing: 100%



Position

- › C-level: 11%
- › VP: 41%
- › Director: 48%

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Earned Media Is A Critical Component Of Marketing-Specific Priorities And Overarching Business Goals

Marketers consider earned media to be nearly as important as paid media in achieving marketing-specific goals and equally as important as paid media for sustaining overall business health.

“How important are the following media types in helping your organization achieve its overall marketing priorities?”

(Select 1 through 5 on a five-point scale, where 1 is “Not at all important” and 5 is “Critically important”)

■ Critically or very important

Paid media

99%

Earned media

95%

Owned media

82%

Base: 151 marketing directors or higher in North America who are knowledgeable about communications/public relations efforts
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Cision, September 2018

“How significant a role do the following media types play in helping your organization achieve its overall business priorities?”

(Select 1 through 5 on a five-point scale, where 1 is “Not at all important” and 5 is “Critically important”)

■ Critically or very important

Paid media

98%

Earned media

98%

Owned media

92%

Base: 151 marketing directors or higher in North America who are knowledgeable about communications/public relations efforts
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Cision, September 2018

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Earned Media Builds Brand Awareness And Sustains Brand Health

Seventy-seven percent of enterprises use earned media to promote and sustain brand awareness, but the value of earned media extends beyond branding. For example, positive earned media contributes greatly to customer loyalty efforts for 73% of marketers. And, most fundamentally, the brand awareness generated by earned media serves as a bullhorn — projecting an enterprise's unique value proposition to the marketplace and within the company by both creating competitive differentiation (73%) and promoting company values (70%).



“In which of the following ways does your organization use earned media?”

(Select all that apply)

To build and/or sustain brand awareness

77%

To create competitive advantages

73%

To build and/or sustain customer loyalty

73%

To promote company values

70%

Base: 151 marketing directors or higher in North America who are knowledgeable about communications/public relations efforts

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Cision, September 2018

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Marketing Needs Communications Teams To Unleash The True Power Of Earned Media

Communications teams are responsible for nurturing, projecting, and safeguarding an organization's desired public and market images, which are crucial to successful marketing strategies. That makes these teams key marketing players. While most enterprises still confine their communications teams to traditional responsibilities, such as messaging out to financial markets, just as many are also involving them in top-level marketing initiatives as well as ground-level campaigns.



“In which of the following ways is your organization’s communications/public relations team integrated within overall marketing strategies?”

(Select all that apply)

Comms/public relations is kept informed of major marketing initiatives

71%

Comms/public relations is factored into every marketing campaign

70%

Comms/public relations is focused on corporate communications and the financial markets

69%

Comms/public relations leaders directly influence and/or lead overall marketing initiatives

60%

Base: 151 marketing directors or higher in North America who are knowledgeable about communications/public relations efforts

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Cision, September 2018

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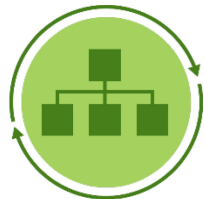
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Only 28% Of Marketers Feel Strongly That Communications Teams Have A High Profile In The Organization

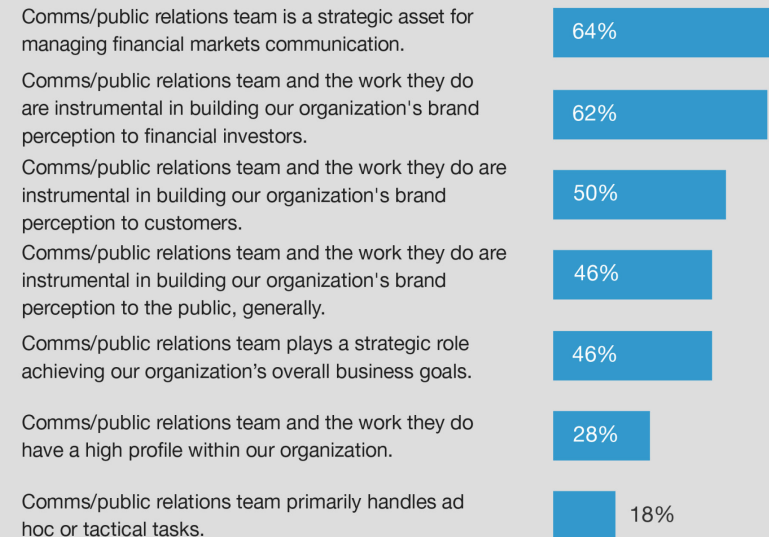
Despite the wide-ranging role that communications teams play in external marketing and internal communications, they are not widely recognized for their outsized, corporatewide role. Most marketers associate communications teams with messaging to financial markets (64%); far fewer connect them with their role in building the brand to customers (50%) and to the public at large (46%). And, while only 18% feel that communications is a function that simply puts out fires or handles other ad hoc tasks (18%), just 28% feel that communications teams get high-level acknowledgement for the services they provide to the overall business.



“How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements as they relate to your organization’s communications/public relations team?”

(Select 1 through 5 on a five-point scale, where 1 is “Strongly disagree” and 5 is “Strongly agree”)

■ Strongly agree



Base: 151 marketing directors or higher in North America who are knowledgeable about communications/public relations efforts
 Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Cision, September 2018

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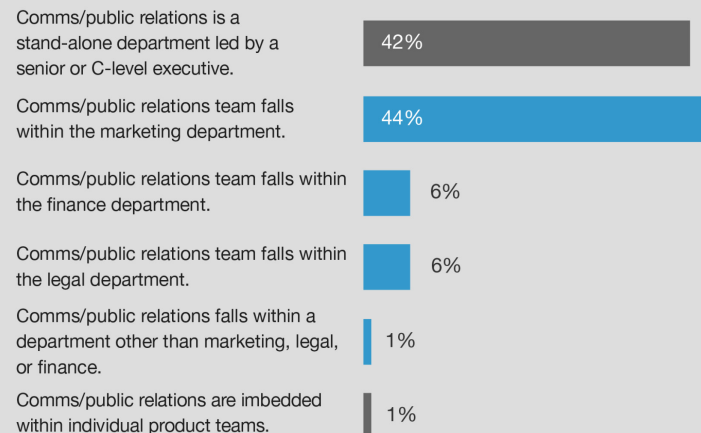
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Fewer Than Half Of Communications Departments Are Visible At The C-Suite Level

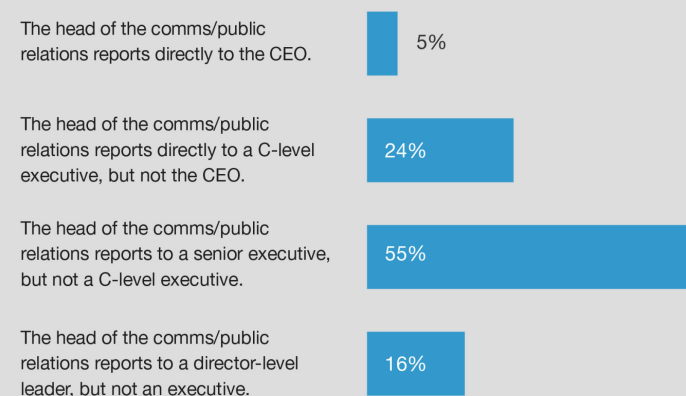
Part of the problem is visibility: Despite the wide-ranging role that communications teams play in marketing, and across the rest of the organization, only 42% are in a stand-alone department with their own C-level executive. The other 57% report into other departments — oftentimes (44%) to marketing, and frequently to lower-level executives.

“Which of the following best describes where the communications/public relations team or department sits within your organization?”



Base: 151 marketing directors or higher in North America who are knowledgeable about communications/public relations efforts
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Cision, September 2018

“You mentioned that the communications/public relations team lies within the marketing, legal, finance, or other department. Which of the following best describes the reporting structure?”*



*Base: 86 marketing directors or higher in North America with communications/public relations teams within the marketing, legal, finance, or another department
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Cision, September 2018

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Only Half Of Communications Teams Use Data-Fueled Insights To Reach Out To Influencers And Journalists

In a data-fueled environment, most communications teams still rely on outmoded methods to inform their outreach strategies: Seventy-percent of communications teams depend on their existing influencer and journalist relationships to perform outreach, compared with 52% that are using data from their end customers to inform how to strategically communicate to influencers and journalists.

Half of communications teams still feel it's the job of influencers and journalists to reach out to them.



“In which of the following ways is your organization’s communications/public relations team integrated within overall marketing strategies?”

(Select all that apply)

We rely on our comms staff’s existing relationships with influencers and journalists as an outreach strategy.

70%

We use media lists to identify and communicate with influencers and journalists.

58%

We expect influencers and/or journalists to reach out to us.

52%

We rely on our agency to coordinate communications with influencers and/or journalists.

52%

We use data about our end consumers to inform our communications strategy with influencers and journalists.

52%

Base: 151 marketing directors or higher in North America who are knowledgeable about communications/public relations efforts

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Cision, September 2018

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Conclusion

Enterprises need communications leaders to drive both their earned media strategies and their overall marketing efforts. Communications teams do invaluable work, but they need to continually prove their value in an increasingly data-driven world, especially if they don't have a C-suite executive to advocate for them. Communications teams must embrace data-driven approaches to outreach so they can quantify their value to the overall business.

Methodology

This Opportunity Snapshot was commissioned by Cision. To create this profile, Forrester Consulting conducted primary research with custom survey questions asked of marketing decision makers in the US. The custom survey began in August 2018 and was completed in September 2018. For more information on Forrester's data panel and Tech Industry Consulting services, visit forrester.com.

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