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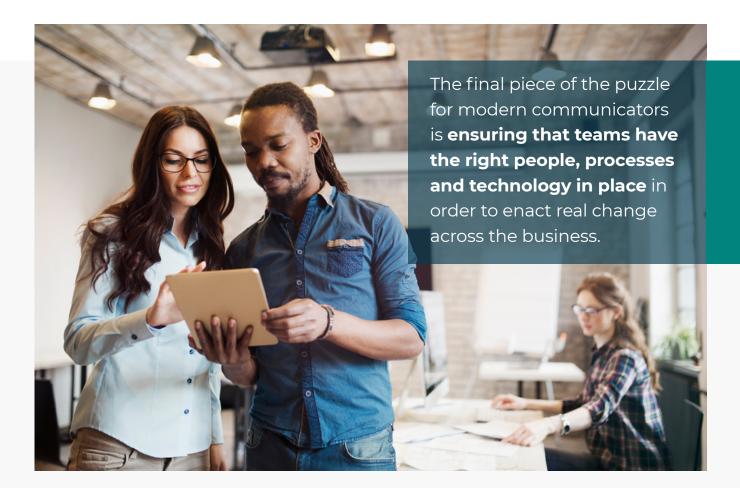
COMMS TRANSFORMATION:
AN EARNED MEDIA MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Introducing a unified approach
to modern communications.

> The final piece of the puzzle for modern communicators is **ensuring that teams have the right people, processes and technology in place** in order to enact real change across the business.

Introduction

Modern communicators need to implement a systematic, data-driven approach to PR and comms. They should take a customer-first method to finding the right influencers for their brand, employ smart engagement tactics to best reach their desired audience and adopt new measurement strategies and benchmarks to help them track leads, conversions, customer behaviors and brand impact metrics. PR and comms pros must leverage this data to optimize campaigns and regain both the budget and prestige they've lost in today's modern business environment.

This new concept is called Earned Media Management. Earned Media Management combines technology, data, processes, and analysis to modernize the comms function from an expense into a business driver.

The final piece of the puzzle for modern communicators is ensuring that teams have the right people, processes and systems in place in order to enact real change across the business. Right now, most PR pros have a scattered approach by default; typically, because they've acquired different tools and people with specialized skillsets over the years. But perhaps the most essential step in enacting an Earned Media Management strategy is to evaluate all of these resources holistically to ensure that a real comms transformation can take place.

The Problem

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> **Aligning PR, content and social resources to optimize earned media campaign strategy allows for a clear view of business impact. With every campaign you're able to fully track the impact of work, measure the outcome, and easily repeat best practices.**

While the PR industry at large is still coming to terms with the fact that change needs to happen, modern communicators are already working to build qualified teams and integrated technology stacks to enact real change. But they face the following challenges:

PEOPLE

Modern PR pros know they are bringing value to the business, but it can be challenging to show this if the rest of the comms team does not feel the need to go beyond coverage metrics like earned media clips, social shares, likes and followers. It might be time to take an honest look at the team and see if additional skillsets need to be added, whether through additional staff development and training programs or by adding new positions to the group. In some organizations, it might be necessary to evaluate if these are still the right people for the job, or if staffing changes are needed. Bottom line: modern communicators need a team that is both creative and technologically savvy.

PROCESSES

Traditionally, PR teams have operated in silos with no clearly defined or integrated workflows that reach outside of the core team. Some comms pros still have a batch process mentality for campaigns. They push communications infrequently in the form of a press release or email blast, based on when they have news to communicate rather than in a steady cadence. There's no direct conduit with other teams and larger marketing initiatives, and no direct correlation to an organized paid/earned/owned group effort.

Common problems that comms transformation can solve:

✔ **Lack unified measurement:** There is no sense of what "good" looks like for comms leaders and the executives to whom they report.

✔ **No accountability:** Without a common set of metrics and processes, comms teams and agencies constantly move the goalposts, reducing credibility with senior leadership.

✔ **Lack of agility:** Whenever a new opportunity arises, or a crisis must be managed, it can take too long to develop and execute a new strategy as comms teams wade through these different measurement systems.

✔ **Lack of repeatability and process:** Every campaign has too many one-off processes associated with it, making it difficult to scale.

✔ **Lack of alignment with paid and owned channels:** Without a unified set of technologies in the earned media silo, integrating with the broader marketing technology is nearly impossible.

Comms leaders realize the gravity of the problem. According to PR Week, more than 60 percent of CCOs and CMOs say that their "organizations struggle with managing siloed, disparate campaigns across channels." To drive greater simplicity and improve campaign quality, comms must take a more sophisticated approach to tech, integration and their team processes.

SYSTEMS

The availability of data, analytical, and content distribution tech tools is cheaper, faster and easier than ever before. Unfortunately, sometimes a cheap upfront price comes at a greater cost down the road. When systems and technologies aren't integrated with one another, it becomes hard to connect the dots between the data.

Many comms pros have purchased disconnected technologies to solve a single problem, without considering how they will integrate with the larger marketing tech stack. Furthermore, PR pros aren't typically examining how their campaign data should be shared across systems. Sometimes it cannot, which makes it nearly impossible to see the holistic workflow and big picture performance of a multichannel campaign. This also makes it hard to share results across departments or even with paid and owned media channel owners.

When that incomplete data set is then used to create comms strategies, weaknesses in the plan tend to appear. There can be comms by product, by region, or by sub-brand. Resources can be further segmented between in-house teams and agencies. Each person, each team, often uses different tools to measure and execute their campaigns. For example, one tool might measure social media, while another looks at traditional news sources. If there isn't one stack or platform that does it all, not only does that increase inefficiencies, but it also makes it harder to pinpoint areas of high and low performance and identify optimization opportunities.

The Solution

Modern communicators require a new approach: **comms transformation.**

comms transformation

[kəms trans·fər·mā·shən]

noun

1. Comms transformation is the unification of earned media management under one team, workflow and platform, and includes the integration of earned media with marketing's broader media mix in paid and owned channels.
   Example: Through comms transformation, Planit, an integrated marketing communications agency, was able to combine influencer identification, smart engagement, analysis and the right technology to earn major media placements and boost sales.

PEOPLE

At minimum, a PR team should include a brand visionary and leader (someone who can take a strategic look and drive comms transformation), a strategist and or an analyst, and some data-driven storytellers. At a small business, there might be one person covering multiple roles. Conversely at enterprise companies, there could be multiple roles for each function. The key is to make sure that each individual has bought into the idea of comms transformation and can support change management with a baseline level of technological competence.

Consider Human Intelligence Options

If synthesizing and interpreting PR campaign data based on these new measurement guidelines feels overwhelming, modern communicators don't have to go it alone. When vetting an Earned Media Management vendor and platform, be sure to ask if there are professional services teams available. Professional services teams are often available for consulting above and in addition to technology offerings. Expert analysts are employed to provide a more hands-on approach to designing an overall measurement program. They can help set goals, measure results, interpret data and identify future opportunities if that's something the PR team wants to outsource rather than doing it themselves. Analysts can offer services like:

- **Media Analysis:** Custom reports collect key media metrics and reporting deemed most important.

- **Audience Analysis:** Custom reports analyze the specific influencers and end-customers consuming earned media.

- **Briefings & Alerts:** Many organizations need curated alerts about key media events as they happen. They also may want this translated in easy to consume formats for executives on an hourly, daily, or weekly basis.

PROCESS

Develop an Always-On Campaign Lifecycle

Whether teams decide to use technology or professional services, comms teams should still have a process that overlays bringing campaigns to market. Here is an example of a clear and continuous campaign process:

TECHNOLOGY

An earned media management platform must have a unified workflow that can span both in-house and external agency resources. It becomes central to the day-to-day business processes. It should include the following:

- **Influencer Database:** Enables teams to target their best influencers and journalists based on the data of their end-customers. This will generate targets based on both human-based queries and artificial intelligence.

- **Media Monitoring:** Enables teams to measure media coverage across all mediums, including online, social, print and broadcast.

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By aligning earned, paid and owned campaigns and applying data-driven campaign techniques to their earned efforts, communicators can see real transformation, and drive an amplifying effect on paid and owned channel performance.

ALWAYS-ON CAMPAIGN LIFECYCLE

01 02 03 04 05 06 07

01 Define Target Audience:
This is the customer or end-user a comms team wants to reach with their earned media coverage.

02 Discover Relevant Influencers:
Utilizing data about end-customers in step one, use a media database, augmented with artificial intelligence, to generate a set of influencers to target as part of an influencer graph.

03 Develop Individualized Content:
Create a content strategy that will individualize messages to the target audience and the influencers that reach them.

04 Distribute Content:
Use smart engagement techniques, including utilizing multimedia, to share messages with relevant influencers identified in step two.

05 Monitor Impact on End-Customer:
How did this impact the people identified in step one? How did they interact with earned media? And did it cause them to do a desired action?

06 Tie to Business Results:
How did customer behaviors impact overall business outcomes, such as corporate reputation, conversion, lead gen, or advocacy?
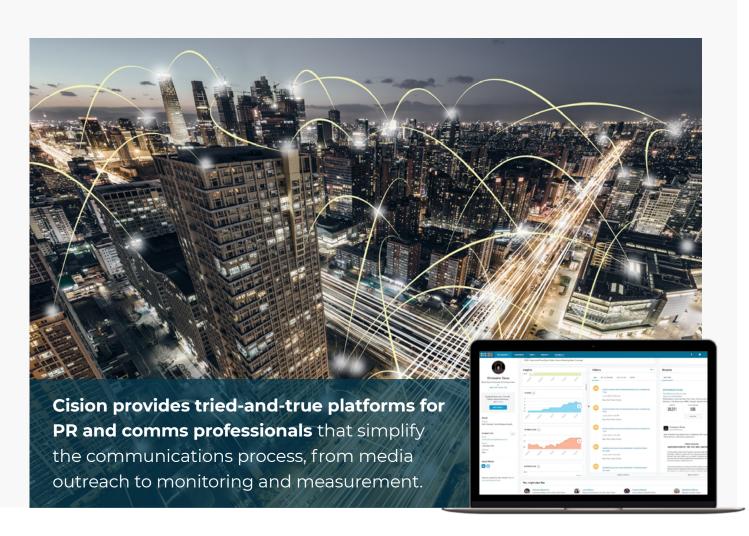
07 Predictive Analytics:
Use media monitoring and campaign results to inform the next campaign.

- **Multimedia Distribution:** Enables teams to distribute press releases, images and videos to specific audiences and influencers of their choosing.

- **Analytics:** Enables teams to visualize their coverage and view key metrics.

- **Impact reporting:** Enables teams to visualize the specific audiences that viewed their content, and also show how they impacted key business objectives and metrics.

Modern communicators cannot operate in a silo. An earned media management integration capability should come as part of your earned media management platform, and should include the following capabilities:

- **Pre-built Integrations to Paid and Owned Channels:** The solution should be able to integrate with marketing applications that have immediate usefulness for comms teams. An example would be web analytics for understanding how PR campaigns drive traffic to your sites. Another example is data management and demand side platforms, where audiences that consume earned media could be targeted for paid media campaigns. Another useful feature would be if the platform assists with automatic UTM code generation.

- **APIs:** Application programming interfaces allow people on your tech teams to build custom integrations between an earned media management platform and other applications.

Cision provides tried-and-true platforms for PR and comms professionals that simplify the communications process, from media outreach to monitoring and measurement.

Let's Get Technical:
Why Implement Comms Transformation and Embrace Earned Media Management?

The earned media and PR function can be the most strategic asset a company has for reaching consumers. Research indicates that consumers trust earned media more so than any other part of the media mix. But to make the most of it, PR leaders and their teams need a strategic approach that will enhance their own efforts while improving their collaboration with the larger marketing organization. Earned media management provides the technology, process and integration steps to get there. To summarize, a modern communicator must:

01. **Create an Influencer Graph**. An influencer graph is a complete mapping between an influencer, their content and the actual audience that consumes it.

- Start with ideal customer data to define your audience.
- Use a media database, enhanced with AI, to discover who influences that audience.
- Score and recommend the right influencers.
- Validate your graph with human intelligence.
- Review the list, and recommend influencers based on analysis.
- Track and analyze success.

02. **Employ Smart Engagement**. Smart engagement is an approach to content and comms distribution that values a proper mix of both reach and relevance for each individual audience member.

Smart engagement means distributing more content that is more focused on a specific audience. It also needs to be more visual. Communicators will 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.

03. **Implement True Measurement**. True measurement empowers brands to measure the efficacy of their marketing communications based on the actual reach of a message and the specific business outcomes driven by earned media coverage.

- Audience Data Management: before a campaign is executed, comms must identify the demographics of its ideal customer.
- Preferred Channels: An analysis of audience behaviour will show you where they spend the most time on media channels.
- Earned Media Engagement: Earned media engagement is the entire spectrum of content assets where end-consumers or customers could consume earned media.
- Earned Measurement & Business Outcomes: While you can leverage traditional comms metrics like share of voice or sentiment analysis, you need to start layering in other metrics that demonstrate specific actions a customer has taken.

04. **Comms Transformation of People, Processes and Systems.** Comms transformation is unification of earned media management under one platform, workflow and business process, and the integration of earned media with marketing's broader media mix in paid and owned channels. Comms transformation includes three key components:

- People — Earned media management human intelligence.
- Processes — Earned media management lifecycle.
- Technology — Earned media management platform with integration capabilities.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

It's time for PR comms professionals to regain their prestige and influence within the organization by providing actual insights and by demonstrating business impact. To do this, it requires Earned Media Management, the strategic combination of technology, data, processes and analysis to modernize the comms function from an expense into a business driver. By combining the four tenants of Earned Media Management, comms pros will finally have the ability to deliver the right message to the right audience at the right time while working collaboratively across the marketing department and proving business value to the C-suite.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO IT ALONE, IF YOU'RE READY TO ADOPT EARNED MEDIA MANAGEMENT AND BECOME A MODERN COMMUNICATOR, CONTACT CISION TO GET STARTED.

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.

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