

An Updated Examination of Social and Emerging Media Use in Public Relations Practice: A Longitudinal Analysis Between 2006 and 2013

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ABSTRACT

Results of our eighth annual survey measuring how social and other emerging media are being used in public relations practice found the use of these new media has continued to increase each year providing unique opportunities not only for those who practice public relations but also for a wide variety of strategic publics who have been given dynamic new communication vehicles many are using effectively with a variety of internal and external strategic audiences. Respondents to our annual surveys firmly believe these new media have enhanced public relations practice, especially as it pertains to external audiences¹.

Results also suggest those who practice public relations believe social and other emerging media continue to improve in terms of accuracy, credibility, honesty, trust and truth telling. They also think these new media effectively serve as a watchdog for traditional news media, impacting corporate and organizational transparency and advocating a transparent and ethical culture. The time public relations people spend with blogs and other social media during an average workday continues to increase with 35 percent of our 2013 respondents spending at least 25 percent of their average workday with these new media while 15 percent devote more than half of their working time to activities involving these new media.

As was the case in previous years, respondents continue to consider social networks – especially Facebook and LinkedIn – the most important social media in the overall communication and public relations efforts of their organizations (or their client's organizations) followed (in this order) by micro-blogging sites such as Twitter, search engine marketing, video sharing sites such as YouTube, blogs, electronic forums and podcasts. When asked how frequently this year's subjects accessed social networking, micro-blogging and video sharing sites on-the-job while working in public relations, Facebook topped the list followed by Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn.

¹ An earlier version of this article was presented as a paper at the 16th Annual International Public Relations Research Conference (IPRRC), Coral Gables, Florida, March 8, 2013.

INTRODUCTION

This article reports on results of an eight-year longitudinal analysis studying how social and other emerging technologies are impacting public relations practice.

Beginning in 2005 and continuing every year since, this research has included annually conducted surveys measuring the impact social and other emerging technologies are having on public relations (Wright & Hinson, 2006a, 2006b, 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d, 2008e, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2010e, 2011a, 2011b, 2012).

As reported in previous reports, these studies show that various new, emerging and social communication media have brought dramatic changes to many aspects of public relations practice. Results also suggest that the development of various new technologies has significantly empowered a wide variety of strategic publics by giving them dynamic new media many are using to communicate effectively with a variety of internal and external audiences. The first weblogs, or blogs, appeared more than 15 years ago. Since then these new communication media have developed into a number of different forms including text, images, audio and video through the development of forums, message boards, photo sharing, podcasts RSS, (really simple syndication), search engine marketing, video sharing, Wikis, social networks, professional networks and micro-blogging sites.

The research reported on in this article follows several of our earlier studies that examined corporate communication policy and the internet (Wright, 1998) as well as the overall impact the internet was having on public relations, journalism and the public (Wright, 2001).

Although social and other new communication media are changing the way people and organizations communicate, few define social media the same way. Mark Dykeman (2008) says, “Social media are the means for any person to: publish digital creative content; provide and obtain real-time feedback via online discussions, commentary and evaluations; and incorporate changes or corrections to the original content” (p. 1). For example, Joe Marchese (2007) suggests the difference between traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television and social media “is not the media itself, but the system of discovery, distribution, consumption and conversation surrounding the media.” Even though both social and traditional media have the ability to reach small or large audiences, production costs usually are large for what has become a small number of traditional media outlets while social media technologies basically give anyone with access to a computer the ability to reach a potentially global audience at little or no cost.

IMPACT OF NEW COMMUNICATION MEDIA ON PUBLIC RELATIONS

Each year the Pew Research Center (2005, 2008 & 2012) conducts a variety of studies tracking the sources Americans use for news. For the first time in 2008 this research found more people were getting their news online than from traditional mass media. However, most blend online and traditional sources in their quest for news and information. It’s not uncommon, for example, to find Americans subscribing to printed editions of daily newspapers some days (especially Sundays) and reading online versions most of the other days of the week. This phenomenon has become even more pronounced during the past two years as many of America’s mid-sized cities no longer have daily newspapers that are published seven days a week.

This Pew Center research found only 10 percent of American adults were using the internet in 1995 compared with nearly 80 percent today (and each year since 2009). The Center for the Digital Future at the University of Southern California’s Annenberg

School for Communication and Journalism (2011) also tracks internet use by U.S. adults each year and claims those use figures are slightly higher (82 percent in 2010). The Pew data also indicate 88 percent of American adults now have a cell phone and 57 percent have a laptop computer. Although internet use generally correlates with age, education and household income, huge increases in internet use have been reported in recent years in virtually all of these demographic categories. For example, nearly half of all Americans over the age of 65 currently use the internet and many of these users are extremely active including 86 percent of them with e-mail and 34 percent with social networks. The Pew studies continue to find younger Americans use the new technologies more than their older audiences and younger users also are considerably more likely to use the internet for things such as downloading music and movies, etc.

As previous annual reports about this research have reported, our studies about how new technologies and emerging media are impacting public relations practice come at a significant time for traditional news media, especially newspapers. Paid circulation figures for daily newspapers in many large American cities continue to decline resulting in the death in recent years of major city dailies such as Denver's *Rocky Mountain News*, the *Baltimore Examiner*, the *Cincinnati Post*, the *Albuquerque Tribune*, the *Oakland Tribune*, the *San Juan Star* and the *Honolulu Advertiser*. Perhaps the best information source for tracking the changing landscape of the American newspaper industry is the Newspaper Death Watch (2012 & 2013) website (www.newspaperdeathwatch.com) that recently reported another emerging trend with U.S. daily newspapers continuing to publish print editions but only two or three days each week. In most cases the newspapers publish online versions on the other days.

At first this latest trend only became operational with newspapers in mid-sized communities such as Ann Arbor and Flint, Michigan; Madison, Wisconsin; Birmingham, Alabama; Syracuse, New York, etc., but the trend is now prevalent in major cities. The

major city dailies that have moved in this direction include the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, *Detroit News/Free Press*, *Portland Oregonian*, *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*. In spite of a century-long tradition of excellence, the *Christian Science Monitor* stopped publishing as a daily in March 2009 in order to concentrate on publishing a weekly print edition and refining its online offerings. According to *Boston Magazine* (2009) the *Monitor's* circulation had slipped 75 percent between 1969 and 2009.

Experts who monitor these changes, including those at the USC Center for the Digital Future (2011), predict these trends will continue. Some of these predictions suggest there might be fewer than a dozen daily print version newspapers in the U.S. by the end of the current decade.

These changes also are taking place with some of the trade magazines that serve the public relations industry. In 2009, *PR Week*, considered by many to be the nation's most dominant public relations trade publication, changed its weekly print edition into an online format, although it does produce a printed magazine each month. Some other public relations trade publications appear to have been impacted recently, including *PR News* which now offers nearly as many public relations short courses and seminars as it does publications and *Bulldog Reporter* that has created a series of training courses it offers under the name of "PR University."

New media have "changed the rules of the game in every part" of strategic communication according to Argenti and Barnes (2009). They also claim that over the past decade these new communication vehicles have not only turned upside down everything people knew about communication but also have dramatically changed the business of managing relationships. Findings of the noted *Authentic Enterprise Report* of the Arthur W. Page Society (2007) give the new communication media credit for dramatically changing the ways in which stakeholders are empowered. The Page

Society's most recent report – *Building Belief: A New Model for Activating Corporate Character and Authentic Advocacy* (2012) – examines how the roles and functions of chief communications officers of major companies are changing given advances in new technologies among other things.

Social media are being utilized on an ever-increasing basis by corporations and other organizations according to McCorkindale (2010) who reports more than two-thirds (69%) of the current Fortune 2000 companies are using social networking sites. Laskin (2010 & 2012) has addressed the effective use of social media in investor relations. Bortree and Seltzer (2009) have reported on how advocacy groups are advancing their public relations agendas via Facebook. Bowen (2010) has studied the importance of ethics and stakeholder management in connection with top corporate websites. DiStaso (2012) has researched the importance for organizations to make certain Wikipedia correctly portrays information about them.

Other recent studies include Liu's (2010) research about differences between how elite newspapers and A-list blogs cover crises; Coombs' (2012) work detailing the phenomenal potential new and emerging media provide for crisis communication practitioners; Gainey's (2012) research about new media use during crises in the public sector; and a study by Ruh and Magallon (2009) about the U.S. military using social media for some of its internal communication campaigns. Paine (2009a, 2009b, 2009c) was one of the first to point out many organizations now are trying to measure the effectiveness of their social media communication efforts.

As we have pointed out previously, another measure of the growth and development of social media in public relations is the level of social media activity currently displayed by various professional societies active in the field. In addition to web pages and e-mail communication, social media sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn and others all have pages organized by organizations such as the Institute for Public

Relations (IPR), the International Public Relations Association (IPRA), the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the Council of Public Relations Firms, the Arthur W. Page Society and the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC).

According to Kelly (2009) and Eberwein (2010), the micro-blogging site Twitter frequently is the first source to provide news seekers with information about major news events including the 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India; the massive 2010 earthquake in Haiti; and the US Airways flight landing in the Hudson River on January 15, 2009. This trend has continued during the past two years with disaster events such as the assassination attempt of U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords on January 8, 2011; the massive earthquake that devastated Japan on March 11, 2011; the series of tornadoes that swept through six states in the American south in April 2011; the January 2012 capsizing of the Italian cruise ship Costa Concordia off the Tuscan coast on January 13, 2012; and the plane crash in a crowded neighborhood of Lagos, Nigeria, that killed more than 150 people on June 3, 2012. While he was Editor of *PR Week*, Keith O'Brien (2009), pointed out "there has been great progress in the use of social media to reach various constituencies."

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

While there are a number of published articles that have examined the huge impact new communication media are having on the practice of public relations, there are far fewer studies looking at how public relations practitioners actually are using these new media. The seven-year tracking of new media use in public relations practice reported about in this article provides one of the most extensive examinations of how social media are being implemented in public relations practice. In addition to measuring how social media are being employed in the practice of public relations, this study also explores actual new communication media use by individual public relations practitioners.

This study's longitudinal analysis of a larger-than-usual number of research subjects also has the potential of enhancing the credibility of scholarly research in public relations. As Dougall (2006) explains, the lack of a significant number of panel and trend studies in the public relations literature does not reflect positively on our field when the public relations body of knowledge is compared with research productivity in the traditional social sciences and other professions.

Also, since more than half of the survey research projects in the public relations literature contain reports about studies involving less than 350 respondents, and more than two-thirds of these studies have usable responses from fewer than 250 subjects, the larger-than-usual number of participants in the study at hand – 2,616 respondents during the past five years – is a plus for public relations research.

METHOD

The method employed in this study was a trend analysis with a fairly extensive web-based questionnaire. In light of many changes in the new or emerging technologies since we started this research in 2005, a good number of our questions have changed over the years. However, we have been asking many of the same questions annually since 2009, some every year since 2008 and a few each year since 2005. A few minor modifications were made in the 2013 questionnaire that included 65 questions. Most (58) of these were closed-ended questions of substance. There were three open-ended questions and four demographic measures.

The longitudinal analysis reported on in this article is based upon responses to the study's web-based questionnaire by five different large, purposive samples of public relations practitioners who took part in this survey research study in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013. Invitations to participate by completing the study's web-based questionnaire were extended in 2009 and 2010 via e-mail messages to purposive samples collected from membership rosters of the Public Relations Society of America

(PRSA), the Arthur W. Page Society and the International Public Relations Association (IPRA). Additional subjects were gathered from donor, task force and commission membership lists of the Institute for Public Relations (IPR). During the three years prior to 2009 we conducted annual surveys of public relations practitioners measuring their use of new technologies. However, since most of the questions we asked in 2006 required significant revision before being asked again in 2009 and beyond, the research team decided to limit the longitudinal data analysis to the last four years. In those cases where data exists, results covering more than four years are reported.

Subjects in 2011, 2012 and 2013 were selected via a random sample of PRSA members who received e-mailed invitations to participate. The first e-mail invitation in 2013 was distributed on January 20 and a reminder invitation was circulated on January 27. There were 378 usable responses in 2013 yielded from approximately 4,250 e-mailed invitations representing a return rate of about nine percent. The longitudinal analysis reported on in this article is based upon a grand total of 2,616 respondents (n=574 in 2009, n=563 in 2010, n=479 in 2011, n=622 in 2012 and n=378 in 2013) an average of 523 respondents each year.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Most (more than 90 percent) of this study's subjects are from North America, other respondents have come from many different parts of the world representing a good cross-section of the public relations industry.

Of the 574 respondents in the 2009 study, more (25%) worked with small agencies or consultancies than any other area but corporations (20%) and educational institutions (20%) also were well represented. Large agencies accounted for 10 percent of the respondents while seven percent worked in governmental public relations positions, five percent came from the not-for-profit area, five percent were research

providers, one percent worked in health care and seven percent responded “other” when asked what kind of organization they worked for.

Demographic breakdowns of the 563 respondents to the 2010 study had 24 percent working with small agencies or consultancies, 19 percent employed by corporations, 14 percent from educational institutions, 13 percent from the non-profit sector, eight percent from government, six percent from large agencies, five percent from health care and one percent from the research provider category. Nine percent of the 2010 respondents checked “other” in their response to this question.

The 2011 demographics for the 479 respondents included 25 percent working with small agencies or consultancies, 20 percent employed by corporations, 16 percent from educational institutions, 14 percent from the non-profit sector, 10 percent from government, six percent from health care, two percent from large agencies and one percent from the research provider category. Five percent of the 2011 respondents checked “other” in their response to this question.

The demographic picture of the 622 respondents to the 2012 study had 20 percent employed in corporate public relations, 17 percent in both the small agency and non-profit categories, 13 percent in non-teaching roles with educational institutions, 11 percent in government communication positions, six percent in health care public relations, four percent were university faculty, three percent worked with large agencies, one percent came from the research provider industry and eight percent answered “other” to the demographic question.

In 2013 there were 378 respondents and 24% worked in non-profit public relations with 19% holding corporate public relations positions with 17% coming from education, 12% from small agencies, nine percent from government, six percent from health care, three percent from large agencies and the remainder responding “other” to this question.

Responses were nicely distributed across various age categories in all of the years. In 2009, 15 percent of the respondents were younger than 30, 25 percent were between 30 and 39, 26 percent were aged 40 to 49, 27 percent were 50 to 59 and seven percent were 60 or older. In the 2010 study 26 percent were younger than 30, 26 percent were between 30 and 39, 24 percent were aged 40 to 49, 20 percent were 50 to 59 and four percent were 60 or older. For the 2011 respondents, 12 percent were younger than 30, 23 percent were between 30 and 39, 28 percent were aged 40 to 49, 26 percent were 50 to 59 and 12 percent were 60 or older. As for the 2012 respondents, 32 percent were younger than 30, 21 percent were between 30 and 39, another 21 percent were aged 40 to 49, 17 percent were 50 to 59 and eight percent were 60 or older. The median respondent age was 36 in 2012 with a nice age distribution ranging from under 30 to over 60. In 2013 the median respondent age was 35 with the age distribution ranging from under 30 to over 60.

The gender breakdown of respondents in 2009 was 52 percent female and 48 percent male, in 2010 it was 68 percent female and 32 percent male, in 2011 it was 66 percent female and 44 percent male, in 2012 it was 74 percent female and 26 percent male.

RESULTS

As displayed in Table 1, results of our 2013 study show public relations practitioners continue to agree strongly that social and other emerging media are changing the way public relations is practiced. Although mean scores on this item increased each year between 2008 and 2012, there was a slight dip this year when our subjects were asked if these changes have impacted the way their organizations communicate, how they have communicated to external audiences and how they have communicated to internal audiences. This impact continues to be much more pronounced for external than internal audiences.

Mean scores in 2013 also were considerably higher than previous years when subjects were asked if blogs, social and other emerging media have influenced traditional mainstream news media. Our 2013 results suggest audiences have lower expectations than they had in earlier years that either traditional mainstream news media or blogs, social and other emerging media will be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture.

Results show a noted increase between 2012 and 2013 in the percentage of time public relations practitioners spend with blogs, social and other emerging media during their workdays.

In spite of concerned efforts encouraging organizations and companies to incorporate modern outcome measures instead of archaic output measures in research, measurement and evaluation involving blogs, social and other emerging media, our 2013 results unfortunately show virtually no progress from what we found in previous years. In fact, only 43 percent of the organizations represented by our 2013 respondents are conducting any measurement involving blogs, social or other emerging media.

Of the organizations that are involved in some aspects of measurement with blogs, social and other emerging media, 61 percent have conducted simple output measurement, 54 percent have performed some kinds of content analysis research, 22 percent have attempted to measure message impact and 22 percent have conducted research designed to measure behavior change.

Subjects were asked to rank the importance of a variety of emerging media in the public relations efforts of their organizations. They also were asked to tell us how important they thought these media should be. Results found no differences between these two lists in 2013. Subjects ranked social networks (particularly Facebook and LinkedIn) as the most important followed by video sharing sites (such as YouTube), micro-blogs (such as Twitter), search engine marketing and blogs.

As we did in 2010, 2011 and 2012, we asked this year's subjects to tell us how frequently they accessed a list of social networking, micro-blogging and video sharing sites while actually working in public relations jobs. As was the case in 2010, 2011 and 2012, Facebook topped this list again in 2013 but with less frequency of use than we recorded in previous years. The use of Twitter increased dramatically in 2013 with YouTube and LinkedIn remaining about the same.

In a continuing attempt to gauge the integrity of this year's respondents, we listed two non-existing media – "prSpace" and "PRnet" – as answer options to the new media usage question. Fortunately, nearly all respondents told us they've never used "prSpace" or "PRnet." However, we are a little bit concerned about the three percent who told us they "frequently" use PRnet and the one percent who claim to be using prSpace.

Demographic Differences: A variety of analyses were conducted on data sets from each of the past five years in an attempt to check for demographic differences based upon age, gender, geographical location and the kind of organization respondents worked for.

Analysis over each of these years found that the greatest number of statistically significant differences presented themselves when ANOVAs were performed comparing mean scores based upon age. Younger respondents were considerably more likely than older ones to not only advocate greater use of social media in public relations but also to use social media and other internet-based technologies in their daily searches for news and information. T-tests comparing responses from female and male subjects also revealed a good number of similar significant differences. However, since the study's women respondents tended to be younger than their male counterparts, it is difficult to tell if these differences are based more upon age or gender. Although some statistical significance materialized when ANOVA analyses were performed based upon geography or the kind of organization subjects worked for, the actual mean differences

in each of the four years measured were minimal and no apparent patterns were evident.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Our eighth annual survey measuring how social and other emerging media are being used in public relations practice found the use of these new media has continued to increase each year. This has provided unique opportunities not only for those who practice public relations but also for a wide variety of strategic publics who have been given dynamic new communication vehicles many are using effectively with a variety of internal and external strategic audiences. Respondents to our annual surveys firmly believe these new media have enhanced public relations practice, especially as it pertains to external audiences.

Results also indicate those who practice public relations believe social and other emerging media continue to improve in terms of accuracy, credibility, honesty, trust and truth telling. They also think these new media effectively serve as a watchdog for traditional news media, impacting corporate and organizational transparency and advocating a transparent and ethical culture. The time public relations people spend with blogs and other social media during an average workday continues to increase with 35 percent of our 2012 respondents spending at least 25 percent of their average workday with these new media while 15 percent devote more than half of their working time to activities involving these new media.

In terms of organizational governance, communication or public relations continues to be the most likely organizational function to be responsible for monitoring and managing an organization's blog and social media communication. Marketing was a distant second.

Only 43 percent of the 2013 respondents represent organizations where research is being conducted measuring what others have communicated about these

organizations via blogs or social media. As discouraging as that low number is, the negative impact becomes even greater with the realization most of this research focuses upon communication outcomes such as the amount of information being disseminated. Less than a third of this measurement focuses upon communication outcomes such as the impact these messages have on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behavior.

As was the case in previous years, respondents continue to consider social networks – especially Facebook and LinkedIn – the most important social media in the overall communication and public relations efforts of their organizations (or their client's organizations) followed (in this order) by micro-blogging sites such as Twitter, search engine marketing, video sharing sites such as YouTube, blogs, electronic forums and podcasts. When asked how frequently this year's subjects accessed social networking, micro-blogging and video sharing sites on-the-job while working in public relations, Facebook topped the list followed by Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn.

As was the case in previous years, the largest number of 2013 statistically significant demographic differences presented themselves when the independent variable was age.

TABLES & APPENDICES

MEAN COMPARISON TABLES

These tables compare mean scores of various questions asked each year.

Table 1

Mean analyses of responses to the question: “Please tell us whether you agree or disagree that the emergence of social and other emerging media has changed the way your organization (or your client organizations)”:

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Communicates?	3.27	3.38	3.44	3.81	4.02	4.10	4.24	4.14
Handles external communication?	3.23	3.35	3.40	3.69	3.97	4.06	4.18	4.17
Handles internal communication?	3.01	3.06	3.06	3.22	3.05	3.14	3.21	3.08

Note: Mean scores throughout this report are based on responses to five-point Likert-type scales where “1” = “Strongly Disagree,” “Very Unimportant,” “Very Infrequently,” etc., and “5” = “Strongly Agree,” “Very Important,” “Very Frequently,” etc.” Consequently, the higher the mean score the greater the agreement, importance, frequency, etc.

Table 2

Mean analysis of responses to these questions asking subjects if they agreed or disagreed with these statements.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Social media have enhanced the practice of public relations?	3.69	3.94	4.09	4.06	4.24	4.21
Social media (including blogs) influence the traditional mainstream media?	4.11	4.20	4.21	4.28	4.46	4.52
Traditional mainstream media influence social media (including blogs)?	3.79	3.92	3.91	3.96	3.81	3.74

Table 3

Mean analysis of responses to these questions	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Do you agree or disagree that people who receive information from mainstream media expect these news outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture?	3.84	3.91	4.06	4.11	4.21	4.10
Do you agree or disagree that people who receive information from blogs and other social media expect these outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture?	3.18	3.17	3.38	3.36	3.49	3.20

Table 4

Responses to these questions: “On the average, approximately what percentage of your time working in public relations and communications is spent with blogs and other social media?”

	None	1% to 10%	11% to 25%	26% to 50%	51% to 75%	More Than 75%
2009	7%	48%	30%	11%	4%	dna
2010	4%	38%	34%	17%	7%	dna
2011	3%	36%	34%	19%	7%	dna
2012	3%	29%	34%	21%	10%	4%
2013	1%	30%	34%	16%	14%	4%

dna = Did not ask

Table 5

Responses in 2012 to the question: “Which of the following functions IS RESPONSIBLE for monitoring and managing blog and social media communication in your organization?”

	Comm. or PR	Human Resources	Marketing	Legal	Technology or IT	Don't Know	Not Assigned	Other
2009	64%	4%	20%	3%	5%	2%	2%	4%
2010	81%	1%	21%	2%	6%	3%	8%	7%
2011	83%	1%	23%	1%	4%	2%	5%	9%
2012	85%	3%	26%	1%	5%	7%	4%	6%
2013	69%		10%		1%		2%	8%

Note: Totals in years 2009 through 2012 equal more than 100% because respondents were permitted multiple responses in those years. Respondents were restricted to only one answer for this question in 2013. Additionally, the option of “Digital/ Social Media” function was listed on the 2013 questionnaire and received a response of 10%.

Table 6

Responses in 2012 to the question: “In your opinion, which of the following functions SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE responsible for monitoring and managing blog and social media communication in your organization?”

	Comm. or PR	Human Resources	Marketing	Legal	Technology or IT	Don't Know	Not Assigned	Other
2009	85%	5%	22%	4%	6%	3%	2%	7%
2010	94%	14%	20%	4%	4%	1%	0%	3%
2011	93%	4%	19%	4%	4%	0%	1%	13%
2012	92%	4%	22%	4%	3%	0%	1%	6%
2013	93%	3%	27%	2%	4%	1%	0%	5%

Note: Percentages total more than 100% because subjects could select multiple responses

Table 7

Responses to the question: “To the best of your knowledge, has your organization ever conducted research measuring what members of other strategic publics have communicated about your organization via blogs or other social media?”

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Yes	39%	38%	42%	43%	43%
No	42%	46%	45%	39%	42%

Uncertain/ Don't Know	19%	16%	13%	17%	15%
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Table 8

Mean analysis of responses to these questions asking subjects if they agreed or disagreed that public relations practitioners should measure:

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
The amount of communication that is being disseminated about their organizations (or client organizations) through blogs and other social media.	4.20	4.26	4.20	4.28	4.27
And/or analyze content of what's being communicated about their organizations (or their clients) in blogs and other social media.	4.37	4.36	4.35	4.41	4.39
The impact information disseminated about their organizations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences.	4.27	4.28	4.27	4.32	4.32
The impact information disseminated about their organizations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behavior.	4.25	4.28	4.27	4.36	4.32

Table 9

Percentage of respondents answering “Yes” to the question asking, “To the best of your knowledge, has your organization (or a client organization) ever measured . . .”

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
The amount of communication that is being disseminated about their organizations (or client organizations) through blogs and other social media.	45%	51%	52%	54%	61%
And/or analyze content of what's being communicated about their organizations (or their clients) in blogs and other social media.	55%	54%	56%	55%	54%
The impact information disseminated about their organizations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences.	26%	29%	30%	30%	22%
The impact information disseminated about their organizations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behavior.	24%	28%	29%	26%	22%

Table 10

Mean Analysis Comparisons between 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 for responses to the question: “How important ARE each of the following in the overall communications and public relations efforts of your organization (or your client’s organizations)?”

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Blogs	3.35	3.31	3.22	3.31	3.21
Electronic Forums or Message Boards	3.06	2.94	2.64	2.67	2.49
Podcasts	2.82	2.54	2.43	2.32	2.30
Search Engine Marketing	3.62	3.61	3.61	3.68	3.59
Social Networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)	3.21	3.89	4.06	4.27	4.36
Micro-Blogging Sites (Twitter, etc.)	2.81	3.56	3.75	3.90	3.99
Video Sharing (YouTube, etc.)	3.19	3.57	3.72	3.77	4.04
Photo & content sharing Sites (Pinterest, Instagram, etc.)	dna	dna	dna	dns	3.10

Note: Mean scores are based on responses to five-point Likert-type scales where “1” = “Very Unimportant” and “5” = “Very Important.” Consequently, the higher the mean score the greater the perceived importance.

Table 11

Mean Analysis Comparisons between 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 for responses to the question: “How important SHOULD each of the following in the overall communications and public relations efforts of your organization (or your client’s organizations)?”

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Blogs	4.01	4.01	4.00	3.95	4.00
Electronic Forums or Message Boards	3.77	3.60	3.41	3.26	3.28
Podcasts	3.64	3.41	3.25	3.09	3.17
Search Engine Marketing	4.10	4.20	4.17	4.16	4.23
Social Networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)	3.65	4.26	4.26	4.48	4.55
Micro-Blogging Sites (Twitter, etc.)	3.48	4.05	4.09	4.24	4.38
Video Sharing (YouTube, etc.)	3.67	4.10	4.25	4.26	4.46
Photo & content sharing					

Sites (Pinterest, Instagram, etc.).	dna	dna	dna	dna	3.90
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Table 12

Mean comparisons of responses to the question asking how important social media are and how important they should be “in your organization (or your client’s organizations).”:

2013

	How Important Are These Media in Your Orgs. PR Efforts	How Important Should They Be	Mean Difference
Blogs	3.21	4.00	-.79
Forums or Message Boards	2.49	3.28	-.79
Podcasts	2.30	3.18	-.77
Search Engine Marketing	3.59	4.23	-.64
Social Networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)	4.36	4.55	-.19
Micro-Blogging Sites (Twitter, etc.)	3.99	4.38	-.39
Video Sharing (YouTube, etc.)	4.04	4.46	-.42
Photo and content sharing sites (Pinterest, Instagram, etc.)	3.10	3.90	-.80

2012

	How Important Are These Media in Your Orgs. PR Efforts	How Important Should They Be	Mean Difference
Blogs	3.31	3.95	-.64
Forums or Message Boards	2.67	3.26	-.59
Podcasts	2.32	3.09	-.77
Search Engine Marketing	3.68	4.16	-.48
Social Networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)	4.27	4.48	-.21
Micro-Blogging Sites (Twitter, etc.)	3.90	4.24	-.34
Video Sharing (YouTube, etc.)	3.77	4.26	-.49

2011

	How Important Are These Media in Your Orgs. PR Efforts	How Important Should They Be	Mean Difference
Blogs	3.22	4.00	-.78
Forums or Message Boards	2.64	3.41	-.77
Podcasts	2.43	3.25	-.82
Search Engine Marketing	3.61	4.17	-.56
Social Networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)	4.06	4.26	-.20
Micro-Blogging Sites (Twitter, etc.)	3.75	4.09	-.34
Video Sharing (YouTube, etc.)	3.72	4.25	-.53

2010

	How Important Are These Media in Your Orgs. PR Efforts	How Important Should They Be	Mean Difference
Blogs	3.31	4.01	-.70
Forums or Message Boards	2.94	3.60	-.66
Podcasts	2.54	3.41	-.87
Search Engine Marketing	3.61	4.20	-.69
Social Networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)	3.89	4.26	-.37
Micro-Blogging Sites (Twitter, etc.)	3.56	4.05	-.49
Video Sharing (YouTube, etc.)	3.57	4.10	-.53

2009

	How Important Are These Media in Your Orgs. PR Efforts	How Important Should They Be	Mean Difference
Blogs	3.35	4.01	-.66
Forums or Message Boards	3.06	3.77	-.71
Podcasts	2.82	3.64	-.82
Search Engine Marketing	3.62	4.10	-.48
Social Networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)	3.21	3.65	-.44
Micro-Blogging Sites			

(Twitter, etc.)	2.81	3.48	-.67
Video Sharing (YouTube, etc.)	3.19	3.67	-.48

Table 13

Responses to the question: “Please tell us how frequently you access each of the following social networking, micro-blogging and video sharing sites as part of your work in public relations.”

2013						
	Very Infrequently	Infrequently	Neither Frequently nor Infrequently	Frequently	Very Frequently	Mean Score
Facebook	7%	6%	7%	32%	49%	4.09
LinkedIn	12%	17%	14%	40%	16%	3.31
My Space	94%	2%	3%	1%	0%	1.11
Twitter	8%	6%	8%	33%	46%	4.05
YouTube	6%	16%	23%	39%	16%	3.44
Google+	56%	19%	8%	11%	6%	1.92
Tumblr	66%	14%	13%	5%	2%	1.62
Pinterest	54%	12%	13%	16%	5%	2.06
Foursquare	66%	12%	8%	11%	4%	1.74
prSpace	90%	6%	4%	1%	0%	1.16
PRnet	80%	7%	6%	3%	1%	1.39

Note: 2012 was the first year Google+, Pinterest and Foursquare were included in this question. “prSpace” and “PRnet” do not exist and were asked only in an attempt to gauge the integrity of the answers. Although Flickr was not included in this list of questions, responses to the survey-open-ended questions confirm considerable use of Flickr in public relations practice.

2012						
	Never	Infrequently	Neither Frequently nor Infrequently	Frequently	Very Frequently	Mean Score
Facebook	5%	8%	7%	26%	54%	4.16
LinkedIn	10%	18%	18%	34%	19%	3.34
My Space	92%	6%	2%	1%	0%	1.12
Twitter	8%	8%	11%	28%	45%	3.92
YouTube	6%	17%	25%	36%	16%	3.39
Google+	42%	28%	11%	11%	8%	2.15
Tumblr	68%	17%	9%	4%	2%	1.57
Pinterest	54%	15%	11%	12%	8%	2.06
Foursquare	70%	11%	7%	7%	5%	1.65
prSpace	92%	3%	3%	1%	0%	1.15
PRnet	83%	7%	6%	3%	1%	1.31

Table 15 (Continued)

2011						
	Never	Infrequently	Neither Frequently nor Infrequently	Frequently	Very Frequently	Mean Score
Facebook	3%	8%	7%	21%	61%	4.30
LinkedIn	4%	12%	23%	39%	22%	3.63
My Space	84%	13%	2%	0%	0%	1.19
Twitter	12%	18%	13%	22%	36%	3.52
YouTube	3%	18%	29%	40%	10%	3.36

2010						
	Never	Infrequently	Neither Frequently nor Infrequently	Frequently	Very Frequently	Mean Score
Facebook	4%	6%	7%	21%	62%	4.31
LinkedIn	8%	15%	22%	37%	18%	3.44
My Space	72%	21%	15%	1%	1%	1.38
Twitter	12%	15%	12%	23%	38%	3.58
YouTube	4%	18%	28%	38%	12%	3.35

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Responses to the question: “Please tell us whether you agree or disagree that the emergence of social media (including blogs) has changed the way your organization (or your client organizations)”:

2013						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Communicates?	2%	8%	3%	47%	39%	4.14
Handles external communications?	2%	7%	2%	50%	39%	4.17
Handles internal communications?	8%	30%	21%	32%	10%	3.08

Note: (a) Percentage scores might not always total 100% due to rounding. (b) Mean scores throughout this report are based on responses to five-point Likert-type scales where “1” = “Strongly Disagree” and “5” = “Strongly Agree.” Consequently, the higher the mean score the greater the agreement.

2012						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Communicates?	2%	4%	5%	47%	42%	4.23
Handles external communications?	2%	5%	6%	48%	39%	4.18
Handles internal communications?	6%	26 %	22%	32%	13%	3.21

2011						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Communicates?	2%	6%	6%	54%	33%	4.10
Handles external communications?	2%	6%	9%	53%	31%	4.06
Handles internal communications?	6%	26%	26%	30%	12%	3.14

2010						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Communicates?	1%	8%	6%	54%	29%	4.02
Handles external communications?	2%	8%	9%	53%	28%	3.97
Handles internal communications?	5%	30%	27%	31%	7%	3.05

2009						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Communicates?	3%	13%	10%	46%	27%	3.81
Handles external communications?	3%	15%	14%	47%	21%	3.69
Handles internal communications?	5%	24%	26%	33%	12%	3.22

2008						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Communicates?	6%	19%	13%	47%	14%	3.44
Handles external communications?	6%	17%	18%	48%	11%	3.40
Handles internal communications?	10%	24%	28%	27%	11%	3.06

Appendix 1 (Continued)

2007						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Communicates?	5%	21%	15%	46%	12%	3.38
Handles external communications?	6%	17%	24%	42%	11%	3.35
Handles internal communications?	6%	28%	28%	32%	6%	3.06

Appendix 2

Responses to these questions: “Do you agree or disagree that . . .”

2013						
Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Social media have enhanced the practice of public relations?		3%	11%	47%	39%	4.25
Social and emerging media influence the traditional mainstream media?			3%	43%	54%	4.52
Traditional mainstream media influence social and emerging media?		11%	22%	53%	16%	3.74

Note: A question asking “Since social media (including blogs) have made communications more instantaneous they have forced organizations to respond more quickly to criticism?” was not asked after 2009 because by then it was generally accepted that this was a reality. Also, a question asking if blogs and social media compliment traditional news media (newspapers, magazines, radio and television) was not asked after 2011 for the same reason.

2012						
Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Social media have enhanced the practice of public relations?	1%	2%	12%	45%	41%	4.25
Social and emerging media influence the traditional mainstream media?		1%	3%	44%	52%	4.46
Traditional mainstream media influence social and emerging media?		10%	18%	53%	19%	3.81

2011						
Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Social media have enhanced the practice of public relations?	1%	5%	15%	42%	36%	4.06
Blogs have enhanced the practice of public relations?	19%	48%	24%	48%	19%	3.76
Social media (including blogs) influence the traditional mainstream media?		2%	5%	57%	36%	4.28
Traditional mainstream media influence social media (including blogs)?		8%	12%	56%	24%	3.96

2010						
Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Social media have enhanced the practice of public relations?	1%	4%	14%	47%	34%	4.09
Blogs have enhanced the practice of public relations?	1%	7%	22%	50%	20%	3.80
Social media (including blogs) influence the traditional mainstream media?		3%	5%	60%	32%	4.21
Traditional mainstream media influence social media (including blogs)?		7%	14%	56%	21%	3.91

2009						
Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Social media have enhanced the practice of public relations?	1%	6%	20%	43%	30%	3.94
Blogs have enhanced the practice of public relations?	2%	8%	24%	43%	23%	3.77
Social media (including blogs) influence the traditional mainstream media?		2%	6%	63%	30%	4.20
Traditional mainstream media influence social media (including blogs)?	1%	4%	18%	54%	22%	3.92
Since social media (including blogs) have made communications more instantaneous they have forced organizations to respond more quickly to criticism?		2%	10%	44%	43%	4.29

2008						
Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Social media have enhanced the practice of public relations?	1%	15%	18%	46%	20%	3.69
Blogs have enhanced the practice of public relations?	2%	16%	23%	45%	15%	3.55
Social media (including blogs) influence the traditional mainstream media?		5%	6%	60%	28%	4.11
Traditional mainstream media influence social media (including blogs)?	1%	9%	17%	55%	18%	3.79
Since social media (including blogs) have made communications more instantaneous they have forced organizations to respond more quickly to criticism?		8%	7%	46%	38%	4.14

2011						
Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Are more accurate than traditional mainstream media?	13%	49%	31%	6%		2.32
Are more credible than traditional mainstream media?	9%	47%	36%	8%	1%	2.46
Are a more trusted information source than traditional mainstream media?	8%	34%	42%	15%	2%	2.68
Tell the truth?	5%	19%	58%	18%	1%	2.90
Advocate a transparent and ethical culture?	5%	20%	36%	34%	6%	3.17
Offer organizations a low-cost way to develop relationships with members of various strategic publics?	1%	2%	6%	57%	34%	4.21
Serve as a watch-dog for traditional mainstream media?	2%	13%	24%	49%	12%	3.55
Are impacting corporate and organizational transparency.		4%	13%	55%	27%	4.05

Appendix 3

Responses to these questions: “Do you agree or disagree that people who receive information from mainstream media expect these news outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture?”

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
2008	2%	12%	11%	50%	25%	3.84
2009	1%	8%	11%	60%	20%	3.91
2010	1%	6%	7%	58%	28%	4.06
2011		4%	8%	61%	27%	4.11
2012		4%	6%	54%	35%	4.21
2013		8%	5%	58%	30%	4.10

Appendix 4

Responses to these questions: “Do you agree or disagree that people who receive information from blogs and other social media expect these outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture?”

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
2008	3%	27%	26%	36%	8%	3.18
2009	3%	22%	35%	36%	5%	3.17
2010	1%	17%	31%	43%	7%	3.38
2011	1%	18%	32%	40%	8%	3.36
2012	1%	15%	29%	46%	9%	3.48
2013	3%	29%	24%	38%	8%	3.20

Appendix 5

Responses to the question: “Do you agree or disagree that public relations practitioners should measure:”

2013						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
“The amount of communication that is being disseminated about their organizations (or client organizations) through social and other emerging media.”		1%	5%	61%	33%	4.27
“And/or analyze content of what’s being communicated about their organizations (or their clients) in social and other emerging media.”			3%	55%	42%	4.39
“The impact information disseminated about their organizations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences.”	1%	1%	6%	51%	42%	4.32
“The impact information disseminated about their organizations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behavior.”	1%	1%	5%	54%	40%	4.32

2012						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
“The amount of communication that is being disseminated about their organizations (or client organizations) through social and other emerging media.”		2%	5%	55%	38%	4.28
“And/or analyze content of what’s being communicated about their organizations (or their clients) in social and other emerging media.”			3%	52%	45%	4.42
“The impact information disseminated about their organizations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences.”		1%	6%	52%	41%	4.32
“The impact information disseminated about their organizations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behavior.”		1%	5%	51%	43%	4.36

Appendix 5 (Continued)

2011						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
“The amount of communication that is being disseminated about their organizations (or client organizations) through blogs and other social media.”		3%	5%	58%	33%	4.20
“And/or analyze content of what’s being communicated about their organizations (or their clients) in blogs and other social media.”		1%	2%	56%	40%	4.35
“The impact information disseminated about their organizations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences.”			8%	56%	36%	4.27
“The impact information disseminated about their organizations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behavior.”		1%	8%	54%	37%	4.27

2010						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
“The amount of communication that is being disseminated about their organizations (or client organizations) through blogs and other social media.”		3%	3%	58%	36%	4.26
“And/or analyze content of what’s being communicated about their organizations (or their clients) in blogs and other social media.”		1%	2%	58%	39%	4.36
“The impact information disseminated about their organizations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences.”		1%	4%	60%	35%	4.28
“The impact information disseminated about their organizations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behavior.”		1%	4%	60%	35%	4.28

Appendix 5 (Continued)

2009						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
“The amount of communication that is being disseminated about their organizations (or client organizations) through blogs and other social media.”	1%	3%	7%	55%	35%	4.20
“And/or analyze content of what’s being communicated about their organizations (or their clients) in blogs and other social media.”			4%	55%	41%	4.37
“The impact information disseminated about their organizations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences.”		2%	4%	58%	36%	4.27
“The impact information disseminated about their organizations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behavior.”		1%	6%	58%	34%	4.25

Appendix 6

Responses to the question: “To the best of your knowledge, has your organization (or a client organization) ever measured . . .”

2013			
	No	Yes	Uncertain/ Don't Know
“The amount of communication that is being disseminated about it through social and other emerging media.”	30%	61%	10%
“Or analyzed the content of what’s being communicated about it in social and other emerging media.”	32%	54%	14%
“The impact information disseminated about it through social and other emerging media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences.”	62%	22%	16%
“The impact information disseminated about it through social and other emerging media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behavior.”	60%	22%	17%

2012			
	No	Yes	Uncertain/ Don't Know
"The amount of communication that is being disseminated about it through social and other emerging media."	31%	54%	15%
"Or analyzed the content of what's being communicated about it in social and other emerging media."	31%	55%	14%
"The impact information disseminated about it through social and other emerging media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences."	50%	30%	21%
"The impact information disseminated about it through social and other emerging media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behavior."	52%	26%	22%

2011			
	No	Yes	Uncertain/ Don't Know
"The amount of communication that is being disseminated about it through blogs and other social media."	36%	52%	12%
"Or analyzed the content of what's being communicated about it blogs and other social media."	33%	56%	11%
"The impact information disseminated about it through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences."	54%	30%	16%
"The impact information disseminated about it through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behavior."	56%	29%	15%

2010			
	No	Yes	Uncertain/ Don't Know
"The amount of communication that is being disseminated about it through blogs and other social media."	36%	51%	13%
"Or analyzed the content of what's being communicated about it blogs and other social media."	32%	54%	13%
"The impact information disseminated about it through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences."	51%	29%	20%
"The impact information disseminated about it through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behavior."	52%	28%	20%

2009			
	No	Yes	Uncertain/ Don't Know
"The amount of communication that is being disseminated about it through blogs and other social media."	38%	45%	17%
"Or analyzed the content of what's being communicated about it blogs and other social media."	29%	55%	16%
"The impact information disseminated about it through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences."	52%	26%	22%
"The impact information disseminated about it through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behavior."	53%	24%	23%

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