5 Reasons Print Is Still Relevant

As media continues to go digital, is the traditional Public Relations (PR) approach of pitching your story to print publications losing its sense of relevance?

At the risk of angering those who have completely shifted to online media relations, while simultaneously providing too much optimism for those too focused on print - the answer is 'no.'

Both the print and online channel have evolved to secure their own footholds in today's media landscape as robust, powerful - and above all else - complimentary, partners.

Below, find five reasons for integrating print and digital public relations:
1. Readers LIKE print publications

Call this the 'Coca-Cola Classic' consideration. Years ago, when a sweeter 'new' Coke was introduced to test audiences, it scored overwhelmingly - through the roof. So much so, that it replaced 'old' Coke completely. But a funny thing happened. When 'old' Coke was taken away, the anger felt by those that had grown up with a classic product superceded any want for the latest, sweetest thing.

In much the same way, most of us truly like to read print - and we dislike the thought of anyone forcibly taking something away from us. All the technical advancements in news dissemination will not unseat this one fundamental truth.
2. Readership Numbers Point To An Insatiable News Appetite

Now that we have moved past the qualitative, let's move on to the quantitative hard numbers as they relate to both the print and digital channel.

According to Pew Research Center:

"Americans are spending more time with the news than was the case a decade ago. As was the case in 2000, people now say they spend 57 minutes on average getting the news from TV, radio or newspapers on a given day. But they also spend an additional 13 minutes getting news online, increasing the total time spent with the news to 70 minutes. This is one of the highest totals on this measure since the mid-1990s."

Findings from Pew Research Center state, in short, that the average American's need for news is leading to integration of new technologies, rather than a complete migration away from traditional platforms.

It's reported that only 9% of Americans, in fact, get news through the internet and mobile technology without also using traditional sources.
3. Purely Digital Can Be Awfully Narrowing

Earlier this year, PR consultant Adam Vincenzi began an experiment to see if he could go one year without reading a print publication. In a comment to a post written about his experiment by e!blog, just one month in, Vincenzi stated:

"The big thing for me so far is that I can feel myself becoming more ‘narrow’ because I’m not being forced to consume ‘all’ news – Haiti is a great example, I guarantee my knowledge of that event is significantly lower than someone who has kept pace via printed media on a daily basis."

When we expose ourselves to only digital channels, we only experience what we want to experience. And circling back to the philosophical consideration shared earlier, most of us know that we have to go outside our channels a bit to see a broader view of the world. Combine this with our 'like' of print, and this medium is certainly not in danger of extinction.
4. Stories With Print Authority Grow Legs Online

"There’s just something about getting print coverage that really adds authority and credibility to your name," writes Mickie Kennedy, founder of eReleases.

For better or worse, it's the print coverage that will hang from an executive's wall like a moose or big game head. But just because print coverage hangs from the wall, does not mean it has completely stopped roaming the forest.

In fact, the authority gained from print coverage can grow legs online, as source articles are archived and found via search. The best articles are even cited, linked to and curated by online media outlets, transforming one piece of print coverage into potentially dozens of pickups online. And of course, each new media outlet is another potential contact to add to your online pitch list.
5. Not All Markets or Audiences Are Equal

"For a small business, getting coverage in local newspapers can help you build exposure, establish expertise and allow you to grow your business." Is this a quote from a hopelessly out of touch PR consultant, grasping to a time when they were the king or queen of local PR? Not even close. The quote above comes from online marketing pioneer Lisa Barone in a 2010 piece she contributed to Small Business Trends.

Essentially, not every market or audience is equal in terms of online saviness, and not every market or audience is equal in terms of the amount of time spent reading print.

By focusing only online - or only on print - you risk losing out on a portion of your audience that is still willing to be engaged. All they ask is that you spend just a bit of time in the medium in which they feel most comfortable. And ultimately, if we let this notion drive our efforts, it is this notion that will drive our success.

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