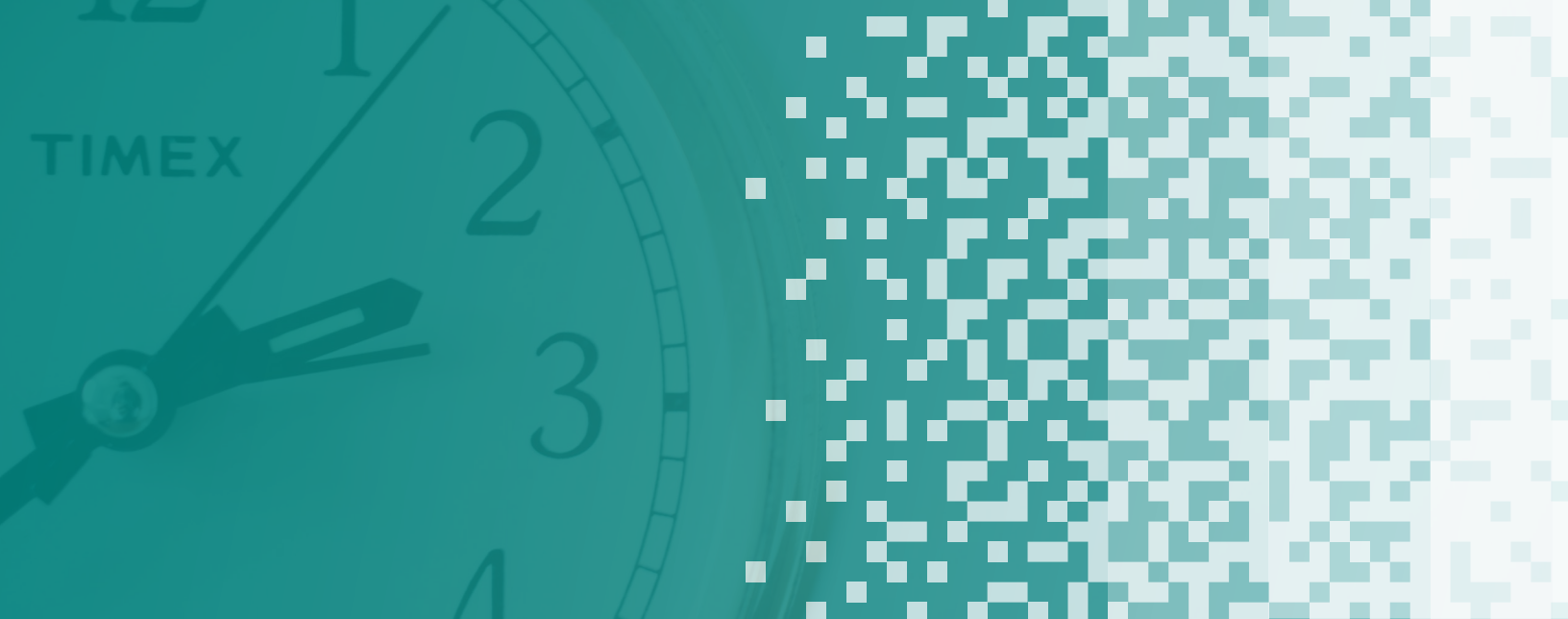


CISION®



WHAT'S NEXT FOR COMMS?

2020 PR TRENDS



WHAT DOES THE NEW YEAR - AND THE NEW DECADE - HOLD FOR PR?

As we sat down to think about what the new year holds for comms, we considered the theme of “everything fatigue” – in 2019, we read about influencer fatigue, politics fatigue, social media fatigue, content fatigue, and probably a dozen more kinds of fatigue. Plus, we’re drowning in data, the press release may or may not be dead, and trust in the media is still low.

But that feels like an unnecessarily negative way to frame what’s going on in communications right now. We’re in the midst of a communications transformation! And yes, transformation is hard – it requires perseverance, dedication, resilience, adaptation. But the effort is worth it, as earned media is becoming more strategic, more measurable, and more essential than ever before. For those of us who work in comms, PR and marketing, we’re in the middle of something truly special.

So what’s driving this comms transformation? Here are a few trends we see becoming more important as we move into 2020. Our predictions for PR in 2020 are:

- **The lines between PR and marketing will dissolve.**
- **The corporate marketing landscape will experience significant change.**
- **Organisations will demand better, more actionable earned media analytics.**
- **The media and influencer environment will evolve.**
- **Successful communicators will grow their skillset.**

We are optimistic and excited – not fatigued – as we prepare to enter a new decade. The 2020s will be the decade of the communicator.

1 THE LINES BETWEEN PR AND MARKETING WILL DISSOLVE

What's the difference between PR and marketing? Is it about where your audience is in the sales funnel? Or is it about your ultimate objective as a team? Who owns content in your organisation? Who owns reporting?

SHIFT Communications has a great definition of the difference between PR and marketing – “The goal of public relations is to create awareness and trust... The goal of marketing is to create demand for our products and services.”

PR agencies already provide a number of services historically provided by marketing – design, content, social, video, analytics. But who ultimately owns the brand? Truthfully, it's a combination of both PR and marketing, and the lines between those functions will continue to blur into 2020 and beyond.

USC Annenberg's 2019 Global Communications Report says 51% of communicators expect more integration with marketing over the next 5 years. The functions have so much to offer each other – analysis of what's working and what isn't, data to inform attribution models, technology both teams can utilise, and even moral support in the face of shrinking budgets.

Part of what this means is that PR professionals need to ensure they can speak the language of marketing so they're prepared in the years to come. It will be even more crucial to understand metrics, paid strategies, attribution, product positioning, technology, and most importantly – selling. The aforementioned Global Communications Report found a huge difference in the importance CEOs and in-house communicators place on selling products and services – 44% of CEOs report selling as the most important marketing issue for their orgs, but only 25% of communicators felt the same. To remain relevant in the eyes of the C-Suite, communicators need to think even more about how to actually sell their company's product.

Further, the boundaries between paid media, owned media, and earned media are increasingly permeable, and any particular type of media may have more than one owner. Ultimately, the lines between PR and marketing are blurry at best (and arbitrary at worst). They will continue to evolve in 2020, and even more so over the next decade.

2 THE CORPORATE MARKETING LANDSCAPE WILL EXPERIENCE SIGNIFICANT CHANGE

Comms isn't the only function undergoing significant change right now; marketing is experiencing an evolution as well.

Some companies are going as far as eliminating the CMO position in favour of the roles of the Customer or Chief Experience Officer and Chief Information Officer. Part of this is driven by yet another blurring line – the line between prospect and customer.

Traditionally, we think of comms as serving the top of a sales funnel – generating initial awareness, maintaining reputation, and monitoring for crises. And then as someone progresses into the funnel, marketing takes over – converting awareness into leads. But once a prospect actually becomes a customer, who owns that relationship? Many marketing departments have a customer marketing team, who focuses on sharing education content, nurturing clients, and finding opportunities to upsell. However, in other cases, these activities are owned by customer success or account management. This has led some companies to eliminate the CMO altogether.

For PR pros, this comes back to one of our first questions – if you're in public relations, who is your audience? How is this different from the marketer's audience? And what does the shift in how (some) companies think about marketing mean for the future of public relations?

3 ORGANISATIONS WILL DEMAND BETTER, MORE ACTIONABLE EARNED MEDIA ANALYTICS

In the PRWeek/Cision 2019 Global Comms Report, PR pros expressed increasing concern over understanding what content is most effective.

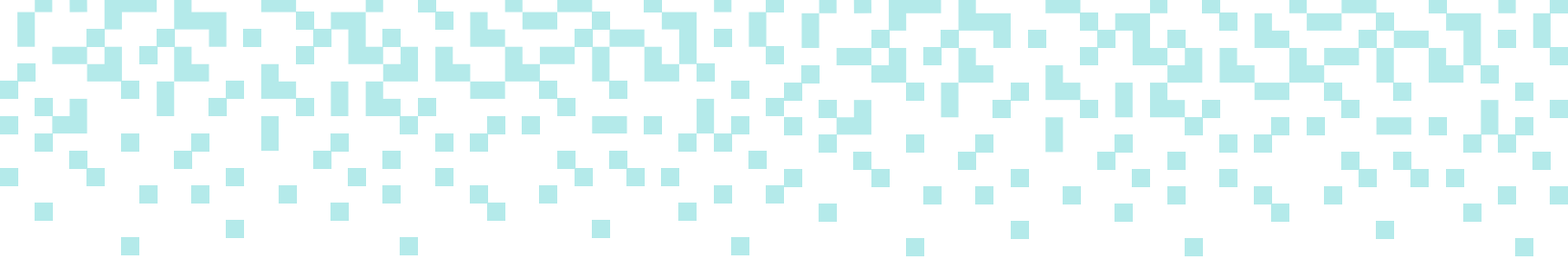
What do we even mean by “effective” anyway? What we really want to know is - are we expending time, energy and money in the right places?

According to the Gartner Annual CMO Spend Survey 2019-2020, 76% of marketing leaders say they “use data and analytics to drive key decisions,” but many still struggle to get this right. You need the right data to make smarter decisions.

For example, Gartner found a “bias for volume metrics over value metrics.” Volume metrics, or what we sometimes call vanity metrics or counting metrics, help leaders understand high-level scope and performance. In traditional PR terms, that includes things like impressions and AVE (though we've been debating the death of AVE for more than a decade and it still lives on in many areas). That probably also includes counting hits or mentions. But without deeper context, those metrics aren't very actionable. While it might be great that a business got 20 media mentions in a month, did any of that media coverage actually help increase awareness, or better yet, lead to a purchase?

Value metrics, on the other hand, tell us more about what someone actually did, and what impact that action had on a business. For PR, this includes engagement and conversions, true reach, and ultimately, revenue impact. We'd probably rather have a single media mention





that drove actual traffic to our website than 10 that didn't. And we need to understand the true reach of a piece of coverage, not just how many potential impressions it might have generated. Did something grab someone's attention, was that a person we actually wanted to reach, and what happened after that?

Those are the insights we can actually use to make decisions on what to do next. As we're all working on our plans for the new year, we're probably looking at reports and figures about what we did in 2019. How much of that data is actually helping you understand what worked – or what didn't?

Now's the time to determine what data is actually helping you make decisions and focus in on that for the new year. Stop reporting on vanity metrics that don't tell you anything about actual impact or attribution.

THE MEDIA AND INFLUENCER ENVIRONMENT WILL EVOLVE

You already know about the crisis facing the news media industry; newsrooms jobs have declined, fake news and misinformation is on the rise, and media organisations have merged or disappeared. While we're not going to get into all of that here (there's tons more information on Pew Research's State of the News Media site), let's talk about what this means for the relationship between PR and media.

For a PR professional, it can be hard to keep up with media contacts, many of whom may move around frequently or write for multiple publications. Publications you used to get good coverage in, are acquired or shut down. Journalists are also under pressure to produce more content, and receive hundreds of pitches every week.

Couple that with the increasingly complex role of social media in news. According to Pew Research, 62% of US adults say "social media companies have too much control over the mix of news that people see." Concerns about fake news, misinformation, and the negative impacts of microtargeting further complicate the relationship between PR and media.

And how about influencers? Despite some public setbacks, influencer marketing continues to grow. Business Insider estimates that the influencer marketing industry will be worth as much as \$15 billion by 2022. Social influencers are still very important to any comms strategy. But there are millions of influencers – ranging from celebrities with 50 million followers to nano-influencers catering to a tiny but very niche audience. Influencer relations are made more complex because it's another function that straddles the PR and marketing teams. Who owns the influencer relationship in your organisation?

All of this points to an evolution in the relationships communicators have with traditional media and social influencers. Communicators will need to be more nimble in maintaining these relationships, think about how they connect with individuals, and be sure they're continually providing value to keep relationships strong despite the changes and challenges.



SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATORS WILL GROW THEIR SKILLSET

One thing is very clear; the PR and comms pros who adapt to these changes in our transforming industry are going to be the most successful.

Marketing skills, like a sophisticated understanding of SEO and what that means for PR, will be a necessity. You need to understand how to measure and interpret share of voice. You should be comfortable with marketing technology. Personally, I've never bought into the lazy accusation that PR pros are just marketers who don't like numbers or technology. To advance in comms, you'll have to be proficient in Google Analytics, CRM and CMS software, social media, HTML, and so on. Plus it helps if you speak fluent GIF and emoji.

You need to stay fresh. Don't be afraid to experiment and try something new. And don't dismiss trends just because they don't make sense with your worldview; give new ideas room to grow and see what happens. For example, some young people seem to prefer brick and mortar shopping experiences and paying with (gasp!) cash. What might that mean for how you reach this group of potential customers?

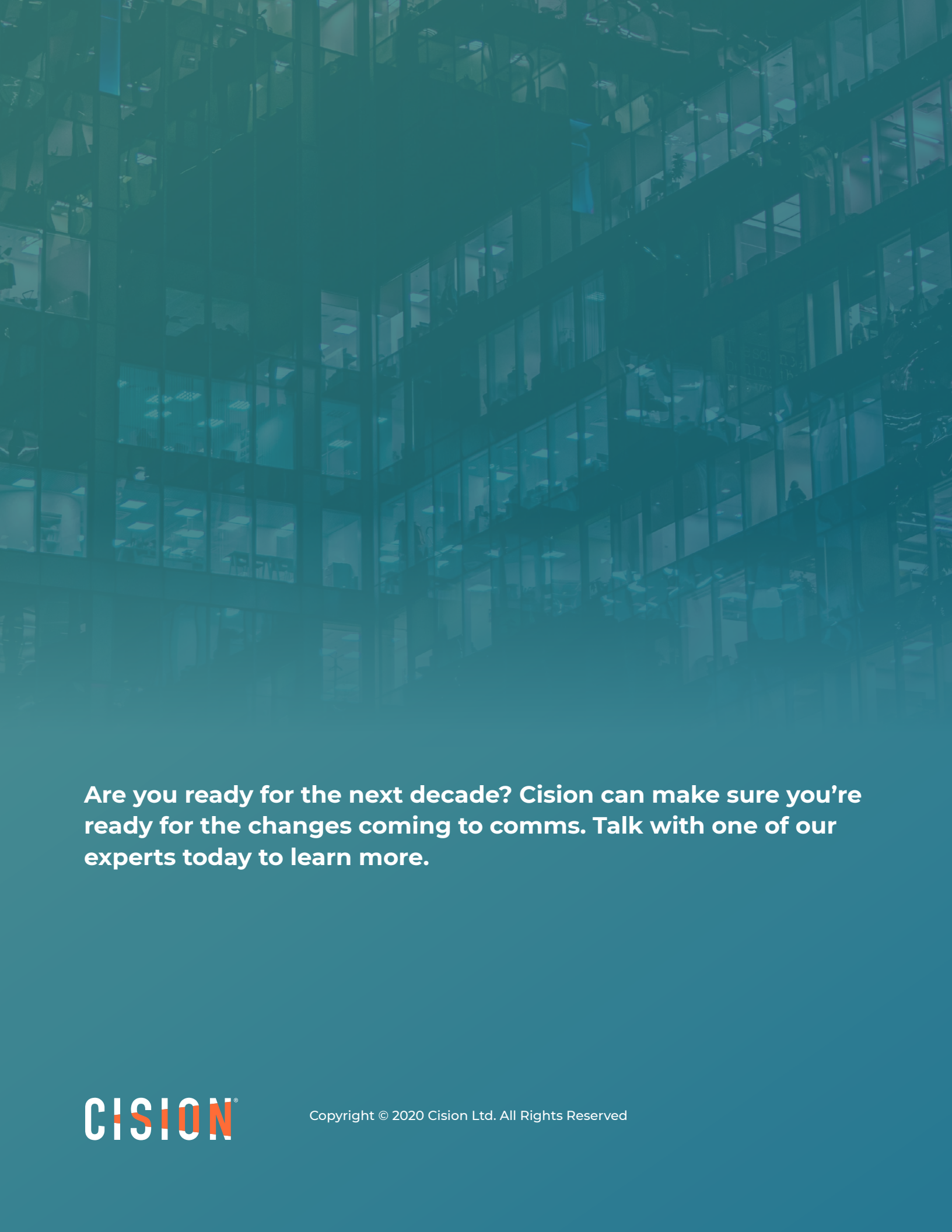
At the same time, never forget the fundamentals of great PR – storytelling, relationships and creativity. Be sure you excel in the traditional PR things - writing a strong press release, managing and growing relationships, preparing boardroom-ready reports that showcase impact, and finding compelling stories in even the most mundane corporate news. You need to blend old school tactics with a new school attitude.

Don't be a PR dinosaur – left behind because you failed to adapt to new techniques and new contexts.

A NEW YEAR, A NEW DECADE, A NEW COMMUNICATOR

At Cision, we believe in the power of data and technology to transform communications. We believe in the importance of better understanding your customers so you can better engage them. We believe in the demonstrable value of earned media, and that you can measure its true reach and business impact. And most of all, we believe in the strategic role of earned media for every organisation.

Those beliefs fuel the work we do, and have us feeling optimistic and excited – not fatigued – as we prepare to enter a new decade. The 2020s will be the decade of the communicator; we're ready for it and hope you are too.



Are you ready for the next decade? Cision can make sure you're ready for the changes coming to comms. Talk with one of our experts today to learn more.



Copyright © 2020 Cision Ltd. All Rights Reserved