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INTRODUCTION: How the PR Industry Is Changing

The PR landscape is evolving and expanding quickly. "PR" doesn't just have one definition now; instead, it encompasses communications, marketing, media, and more. And every day, some new self-described "guru" claims to have the answer for all of those changes. It can be hard to filter the useful, actionable information from the noise.

Let's begin that filtering process with an evaluation of how the PR world has changed, and continues to change.

First, the PR industry is growing. According to the 2015 World PR Report (Holmes Report), produced by the Holmes Report and the International Communications Consultancy Organization, the global PR industry grew by 7% in 2014. This also marked the first year that the industry cracked \$10 billion in fee income. The report estimates the industry's size at around \$13.5 billion. More people are currently employed in the PR industry than ever before, too – up to 85,000 in 2014, compared to 80,000 in 2013.

Second, and just as important, the way PR pros do their jobs is changing – and the pace of that change just keeps accelerating. Marketing and PR have stepped closer and closer together; now, many companies don't even have a separate PR department. Content strategy has become crucial to business in general – branding, marketing, or PR, you've got to keep producing great content.

According to an interview with PR professional Ted Birkhahn on PR Newser (Coffee, 2015), the PESO (Paid, Earned, Shared, Owned) content model is not just important for today's PR industry – it's essential. Today's PR campaign can't rely on one or two main channels; consumers and influencers are becoming more and more used to having a variety of choices when it comes to consuming content, and you have to be able to present them with those choices.

Targeting is another key skill for today's PR pro. The days of massmailing or mass-emailing reporters and hoping a few would pick up your story are over. That practice today can quickly get you on the bad side of the very people whose good graces you need to be successful.

Even media contacts who used to be receptive to every pitch you sent them may be unresponsive now, because they're buried under the mountain of pitches they receive every day. Relationship building and research to target your pitch to the perfect outlet are more important than ever. You'll also need to expand your definition of "influencer" to include popular bloggers and social media personalities in your niche.

On a related note, audience building is an essential part of the modern PR pro's repertoire. Focusing on channel strategies without a deep understanding of your audience and their needs reduces the effectiveness of your whole approach. Take the time to get to know your audience: their preferences, the channels they spend the most time on, and how they prefer to interact with your brand. Then you'll know how to deliver the perfect message to them, in the perfect place.

Data and analytics are the final piece of the puzzle. Without good numbers (and knowing which numbers to look at), your efforts will be a lot like tossing glitter into the wind. Sure, all those little pieces may spread out and touch a lot of people, but you never really have a grasp on how many people or how well your message is being received.

There's good news and bad news here. The good news is, most companies are collecting more data than ever before; there's no shortage of information. The bad news is, a lot of them have no idea which data is actually useful or how to calculate ROI with it. Being able to guide them and help them create an intelligent data management and analytics plan can put you a step ahead of less data-driven competitors.

All of this is to say that PR isn't really *just* "public relations" anymore. The successful PR pros of today and tomorrow have to wear many hats: Marketing, communication, branding...and, yes, publicity.

In this booklet, I hope to give you some of the tools you'll need to thrive in this brave new world of PR. In the next few dozen pages, we'll discuss your new role in this environment, along with the skills that will help you keep up with (or jump ahead of) your competition. I'll also help you come up with a business plan to better define your new and improved services, talk a little about why networking is more important than ever, and take a look at the future of the industry.

For now, let's move on to Chapter One and talk about what the new face of PR means for you.

CHAPTER 1: OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Richard Edelman, president and CEO of Edelman, describes his firm this way to PR Week (Barrett, 2015):

"It's a Venn diagram where the overlaps of the four [media, PR, social media, advertising] are becoming more present. It used to be distinct valleys and now the roads are crossing. We're going to try to have stronger creative, stronger planning, and look at problems differently."

That's a great way of looking at the new PR industry as a whole. As I mentioned briefly in the introduction, it's not just about publicity anymore. As those four elements continue to converge, PR professionals will have to be nimble and quick-thinking to keep up.

And for those who have the cross-discipline skills increasingly in demand? The sky's the limit. Many companies and PR agencies are scrambling to hire (and retain) workers who fill various skill gaps. The PESO model is, in many industry leaders' eyes, *the* road to success. That means gathering talent that can creatively navigate the paid,

earned, shared, and owned channels.

It also might mean bringing in advertising, design, Web production, and other talent to deliver a comprehensive solution to clients. This drive to add more skills to the mix can provide a huge opportunity for PR pros who already have some of these other skills, or agencies with



well-rounded teams.

The bottom line is, it's not enough anymore to just provide traditional PR services. As more clients become savvy to the benefits of a comprehensive approach, they'll demand more from their PR teams and agency providers. You'll still need to provide media relations, but you may also need to offer app building, Web design, point of sale, and other solutions.

See why Edelman says the roads are crossing?

Bridging the Talent Gap

According to the "Talent & Challenges" section of the PR World Report (The Holmes Report, 2014), finding skilled and well-educated talent was the biggest concern for 44% of PR firms. Thanks to the growing list of necessary skills for the modern PR professional, coupled with a shrinking talent pool, more firms have resorted to hiring from their rivals.

Holmes Group CEO and founder Paul Holmes notes that the PR industry isn't growing as quickly as it could, given the expanding landscape presented by the addition of many more digital channels. The shortage of talent with experience in those channels is the main reason he cites for that slow growth.

One more interesting stat from the report is that 24% of firms say they're struggling to master digital and other new technologies; that's an increase from 22.5% last year. Again, the limited talent pool with skills in those areas accounts for a major part of that struggle.

This challenge for the industry as a whole can be a big opportunity for you, particularly if you already have some of the skills clients and PR firms are trying to find. Marketing, marketing automation and lead generation, Web design, social media, dat management, mobile – any of these skills can give your PR career a serious boost.

Good at Math? Even More Opportunity Awaits!

I get it: You probably didn't enter the communications industry because you loved math. But as more communication channels open up daily, data and analytics become more and more crucial to success – and to proving that success.

Math expertise can be a major factor in landing you a job or promotion in the industry. According to the Holmes report, 23% of firms are looking for talent in research and analytics fields.

With strong math skills, you can better conduct market research and provide insights and analytics that help your clients measure ROI. And with budgets always getting tighter, that ROI measurement is more important than ever.

Web analytics, social media measurement, SEO...all are much easier if you've got a good grasp of math. And you become much more valuable to your client if you can advise them, with numbers to back you up, on the best and worst methods for their campaigns. Just one example is the client who still thinks they should push a daily press release. You can tell them how Google has devalued those daily pushes, and show them the numbers to convince them the effort's not worth it.

So you're convinced that the industry is changing, and you've seen the opportunity that awaits. Now...what do you call yourself? Which of the many skills we've discussed should you add to your toolbox to ensure your success?

We'll cover these questions in Chapters 2 and 3.