

PR News

Building the bridge between PR and the bottom line.

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How Skype Transformed its Image With Branded Content

From advertising to audience engagement

PR has changed radically in the last few years, and the tools in our arsenal seem to expand on an almost daily basis. Perhaps none has been getting as much attention as the advent of branded content. Suddenly, it's everywhere—from blogs to **Vine** videos, from long-form stories to listicles. Clearly, branded content is here to stay, but making it effective remains a matter of debate.

At its best, branded content can spark engagement. It can amuse, educate and ultimately, enhance brand reputation. When **Skype** began to engage consumers on social channels, the company quickly realized that it needed to humanize its brand story in order to create engaging and shareable content that would result in product awareness and downloads.

Skype made a strategic decision to change the conversation from tech talk to user stories that highlighted the

deep emotional connections with friends and loved ones that Skype enables.

The brand partnered with **Kaplow Communications** in order to leverage branded content to amplify that message. By sharing users' moving stories, consumers learned about the many every day uses of Skype. As a result, Skype's key business metrics skyrocketed.

To get in front of consumers and win their trust, brands have to be highly creative in how they talk about their key

messages. Overt selling is not always the answer.

Branded content provides an authentic way to reach consumers, whom Skype says are 52% more likely to look at native ads than banner.

But branded content takes many forms. At its heart it is the fusion of advertising and entertainment—or storytelling—funded by a brand. There are some great examples, especially in video.

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DID YOU KNOW

1. Branded content takes on many forms, particularly online video and blogs. (p. 1)
2. Millennials tend to provide social media training to senior managers. (p. 1)
3. Make sure your PSA message has the broadest appeal possible. (p. 4)
4. Most PR pros got a raise last year, but the percentage increases were low. (p. 5)
5. "Branded" publications cannot have a singular focus on, well, branding. (p. 6)
6. Social media teams should be relatively flat, not hierarchal. (p. 9)
7. In order to innovate, PR pros need to be able to appreciate failure. (p.10)

► The Millennials

By Glynn Murph

Letting Social Natives Take the Lead



Younger workers have unduplicated skills

Social media never ceases to breed scandals. One wayward tweet or **Facebook** post can cost you dearly. The scandal that engulfed (now former) **InterActiveCorp**. PR executive Justine Sacco showed how easy it is to alter your entire life so quickly in less than 140 characters. It is a testament to the growing power of digital interactions, and how many people are still ignorant as to how it can be used and, unfortunately, abused.

What happened was both simple and complex: a PR executive at a large technology company tweeted some-

thing incredibly racist before boarding a long flight. Her comment went ignored until it was posted on **Valleywag**. From there, it was picked up by all the major tech blogs and, within a few hours, there were detailed pieces on major news networks' websites exploring her behavior and her employer's shocked response.

However, it didn't end there; Sacco was in the air and unable to respond the entire time, as the story drew hordes of people who marveled at the circumstances and absurdity of her situation.

When she finally did land and turn on her phone, she was informed of her new reality: she was a public menace. She received tens of thousands of

angry tweets while being condemned by major media outlets. There was even a brand that tried to cash in on her downfall. And of course, she was fired from her job.

THE DISCONNECT

The irony of a PR executive falling victim to social media isn't lost on me; however, as a Millennial who lives and breathes all things social, it boggles my mind at how little some of us know about these platforms. Especially since it is becoming the sought after medium for brands to communicate their messages.

At **Edelman**, digital is king. In addition to having a practice

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PR News Announces CSR Awards Finalists

No longer a “nice to have,” CSR programs have become de rigeur among brands and organizations of all stripes. PR News’ CSR Awards run the gamut, from Cause Branding to Environmental Stewardship to Social Good. This year’s awards luncheon will take place at the National Press Club, in Washington, D.C., on April 7 (to register, visit www.prnewsonline.com). For sponsorship opportunities, please contact Diane Schwartz at dschwartz@accessintel.com.

Agency CSR A-List Winners

- APCO Worldwide • Cone Communications
- Edelman • FleishmanHillard • Havas PR
- MSLGROUP • RFBinder • Weber Shandwick

Hall of Fame Inductees

- Hyundai Hope on Wheels • Johnson & Johnson
- Microsoft • TOMS – One For One Movement
- The Walt Disney Company

CSR Professional of Year

- Linda Arnold – Monsanto • Amy Hargroves – Sprint
- Paul Massey - Weber Shandwick
- Jim Murren – MGM Resorts International
- Dennis Pittman – Smithfield
- Dato’ Rohana Rozhan – Astro Malaysia Holdings Berhad

Corporation with more than 25,000 employees

- Caesars Entertainment • Craftsman
- Oracle • Sprint • Thermo Fisher Scientific

Corporation with less than 25,000 employees

- Constant Contact • FMC Corp.
- Gage Products Company
- Takeda Pharmaceuticals International Co.
- TD Ameritrade

Annual Report

- APCO Worldwide • AHA! • Dell Inc.
- Massachusetts Convention Center Authority
- Lifetime Healthcare Companies
- Pirelli • ViaCommunity

Blog

- Cone Communications • General Motors
- Kimco Realty • Network for Good
- RFBinder Partners



AMD’s Green Army, a finalist in the Event: CSR/Green Focus category.

Cause Branding Campaign

- AT&T and FleishmanHillard • JetBlue Airways
- Largemouth Communications
- Mary Kay Inc.

- MasterCard • RFBinder Partners
- Weber Shandwick and ExxonMobil

Community Affairs

- Covanta Energy • Fannie Mae
- Havas Worldwide • Office Depot Foundation
- Ogilvy Public Relations and Bristol-Myers Squibb
- The Quaker Oats Company

Corporate-Community Partnership

- Blick&Staff Communications • Clear Channel
- FleishmanHillard • Health Care Service Corporation
- Toys “R” Us Inc. and Shaquille O’Neal
- Wells Fargo & Company

CSR on a Shoestring

- Covance-CARE Nepal SMILE • Post No Bills
- RFBinder Partners
- Rogers & Cowan and Cause Swarm • TerraCycle

Diversity Communications

- ChangeMakers • General Motors • Kaiser Permanente
- Novo Nordisk Inc. and Biosector 2
- Time Warner Cable Media



Ulled Asociados' We Art Water Film Festival, a finalist for Green PR.

Employee Relations

- Advent Integrated • Assurance Wireless
- Fahlgren Mortine • MGM Resorts International
- RBC Blue Water Community Makeover
- Viacom's Viacomcommunity • Weber Shandwick

Employee Volunteer Program

- Bacardi Limited • Nestlé Waters North America
- Quaker Oats • RFI Binder Partners - Capital One's One Week: "Investing for Good" One Community at a Time • RFI Binder Partners - CVS Caremark: Building Healthier Communities "One Shoreline at a Time"

Environmental Stewardship

- American Airlines and Weber Shandwick
- Baylor Health Care System • Ford and OgilvyEarth
- Golden State Foods • ICU Eyewear • Saatchi & Saatchi S

Event: CSR/Green Focus

- AMD's Green Army • Bacardi Limited • Entergy Corporation • Glad Trash
- MGM Resorts International • NBCUniversal • RFI Binder Partners

Facebook Communications Campaign

- EMD Sero Inc.
- Hyundai Hope on Wheels and Finn Partners
- Hyatt Corporation • The Marcus Group Inc.
- MasterCard & Weber Shandwick
- Toys "R" Us, Inc. and Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation
- Welch Allyn

Green PR

- Cone Communications • Entergy • Ford & Ogilvy Earth
- Lippe Taylor • Ulled Asociados

Human Rights Communications

- Buchanan Public Relations • Green Mountain Coffee Roasters • MWW

Media Relations

- Food Network • Havas PR • MWW • Scholastic Summer Challenge
- SKDKnickerbocker • Weber Shandwick and ExxonMobil

Nonprofit Partnership

- ArcelorMittal USA • CA Technologies • FedEx • JetBlue Airways
- Raytheon and MATHCOUNTS • Time Warner Cable and 826 National

Pro Bono

- CGI • Smithfield Helping Hungry Homes 2013 Memorial Day Donation Tour
- Weber Shandwick

Product Design/Redesign

- Blick&Staff Communications • Cone Communications
- International Flavors & Fragrances

Recycling Program

- Golden State Foods • JetBlue Airways • Sprint Buyback • TerraCycle

Social Good

- The California Endowment • Clear Channel • DeVry University
- Ford and OgilvyEarth • Mashable • Novartis International AG • Raytheon
- SIA Lattelecom

Social Media Campaign

- Cause Swarm/Flash Flood For Good at Clinton Global Initiative 2013 Annual Meeting • Cone Communications - Nestlé Waters North America
- Cone Communications - Unstoppable Happiness • Hyundai Hope on Wheels and Finn Partners • NBCUniversal • RFI Binder Partners • Welch Allyn

Stakeholder Engagement

- Bombardier Aerospace • Goldcorp • Micato Safaris
- OMV Petrom, Graffiti PR, BBDO, Webstyler, GMP PR
- OPET Revolutionizes Volunteerism • Strategic Public Relations Group
- Time Warner Cable Media

Sustainability/CSR Report

- Adobe's Create Change 5-Year Data Visualization • Advent Integrated
- AECOM Technology Corporation • AGCO • Brown-Forman Corporation
- Hormel Foods with Burson-Marsteller and Proof Integrated Communications
- Coca-Cola Enterprises' 2012/2013 Sustainability Report
- IHS Inaugural Corporate Sustainability Report • International Paper
- Monsanto Company

Video Initiatives

- AT&T • Cisneros Media • International Flavors & Fragrances • Toyota & 360i
- Toyota and Discovery Education
- Viacom's Support for the AT&T It Can Wait Campaign • Viridian

Volunteer Program

- Hilton Worldwide • Jackson in Action Volunteer Program • JetBlue Airways and New York Restoration Project • Oracle Volunteers • RFI Binder Partners
- Thermo Fisher Scientific Community Action Council

Workplace Innovation

- Benevity • Entergy's Power To Care Campaign



Leverage the Tremendous Power of PSAs

Public service announcements (PSAs) are an effective tool for creating awareness about a cause or issue, while generating visibility for non-profit organizations. Although media outlets are no longer required to air PSAs, TV and radio stations use these announcements regularly to fill unsold airtime and as a community service.

Connect360 MultiMedia recently published an analysis of its 2013 PSA airings, revealing that the majority of PSAs aired during waking hours in the top media markets. The study not only demonstrated that PSA usage is thriving, but also it points to the opportunity for successfully using PSAs as part of a PR and/or communications plan.

Below are the fundamentals for achieving success with PSAs:

- **Make sure your PSA message has the broadest appeal possible.** When reviewing a PSA, stations will often consider the relevance to their audience(s). If your PSA is about a lesser-known topic, you can emphasize its relevance by including information about how it impacts different audiences.

- **Include a PSA call-to-action, a “kill date” and multiple lengths.** Every PSA should include a call-to-action for more information (typically a website or 800 number).

Stations also prefer PSAs that have no end date for use, as this makes it easier to air them for as long as possible. Additionally, providing multiple PSA lengths (60, 30 and/or 15 seconds) gives stations the greatest flexibility for usage.

- **Watch out for branding.** Certain networks and local stations will often turn down PSAs with corporate logos via clothing or signage, so be mindful of branding during the production-and-editing process.

- **Leverage your TV PSA for radio.** Many times, the audio of a TV PSA can easily be used for radio distribution. When scripting a TV PSA, it's a good idea to keep radio in mind to help expand placement opportunities and increase the return on investment.

- **Use celebrities wisely.** A PSA does not need to feature a celebrity but, when it does, there should be a connection to the cause. Whenever possible, avoid celebrities featured on a particular TV or radio network because that may hinder pick-up on other stations.

- **PSA distribution/marketing is key.** Working with experts who can effectively distribute and market

60 seconds

Maximum length of time for a PSA.

your campaign to stations is essential. You can ensure your message is aired with professionals who know the appropriate distribution strategies and understand how to properly publicize PSAs.

Once you know the essentials of PSAs, there are many ways to incorporate these into an integrated communications plan. For example:

- **Understand how PSAs can best fit into your plan.** PSAs are meant to inform and educate in a non-commercial way. However, that doesn't mean it cannot help support a branded message.

What is more, an unbranded PSA can be sponsored, say, by a pharmaceutical company and distributed in partnership with a nonprofit to raise awareness about a particular health condition.

- **Expand beyond traditional.** Placing PSAs online can be a great way to reach specific target audiences driving traffic to websites.

- **Consider adding Hispanic or other multicultural PSAs to the mix.** Hispanic media and other ethnic outlets tend to be underserved when it comes to PSAs, which creates great opportunities for reaching multicultural audiences. When developing ethnic

PSAs, these should not just be translations. They need to be culturally oriented.

Also, if the PSA's call to action is a website or 800 number, be sure these are available in the appropriate language for your target audience.

Broadcast stations often turn down PSAs if they are branded or ask for donations, but these restrictions do not apply with online media.

An online PSA campaign will not only help augment visibility but also is particularly instrumental if a PSA needs to mention a corporate sponsor or if donations are a primary objective.

In terms of metrics, national broadcast PSA distributions will typically generate thousands of airings translating into millions of audience impressions and donated media values.

PSA media values can also be used by nonprofits as an in-kind donation because the station airtime is provided free of charge.

Nonprofits often list the donated media values from a PSA campaign on their financial statements, helping to reduce the percentage of donations used for overhead expenses and increasing the percentage of donations spent on the organization's cause.

When executed properly, PSAs can be a powerful component within a public relations or communications plan and make a real difference in helping to reach your target audience. **PRN**

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Ivette Achong is the head of Connect360 MultiMedia's public service. She can be reached at iachong@c360m.com.

“Certain networks and local stations will often turn down PSAs with corporate logos via clothing or signage, so be mindful of branding during the production process.”

Changes in PR Salaries

PR News' 2014 Salary Survey shows that most PR pros and communicators obtained salary increases last year. But, for the majority, the percentage increases were relatively anemic.

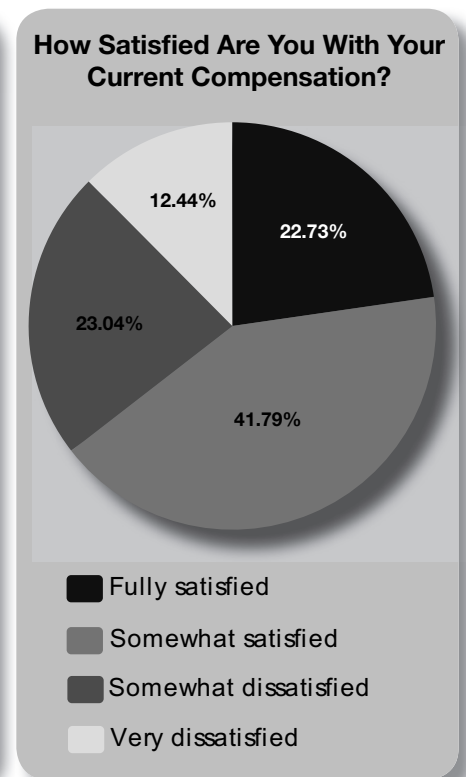
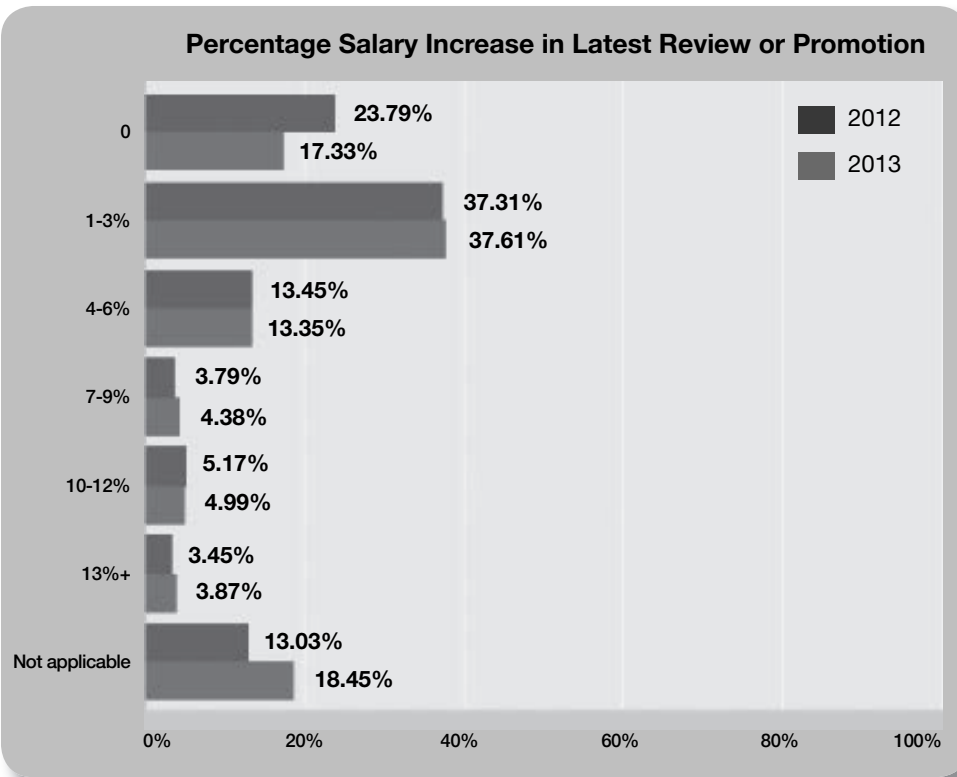
► **Hikes in PR Salaries Pretty Low:** While many PR pros and communicators landed salary increases last year, the percentage increases (for the most part) were nothing to write home about. That's according to PR News' 2014 Salary Survey, which was released earlier this month. Here are some of stats from the survey, which garnered 1,051 responses from the PR field.

- Most of the respondents got raises of 1% to 3%. About 13% of the respondents received raises of 4% to 6% (see below).
- In 2013, roughly 41% of the respondents said they were "some-

what satisfied" with their compensation while about 12% of the respondents said they were "very dissatisfied" (see below).

- Strategic decision-making (90.8%) and collaboration (86.5%) were the top two skills cited by PR pros in order to advance in an organization
- A quarter of PR execs working at the corporate and agency levels clocked in 50-60 work hours per week.

For a copy of PR News' 2014 Salary Survey, please go to www.prnewsonline.com/salary-survey-and-benefits-report-vol4.



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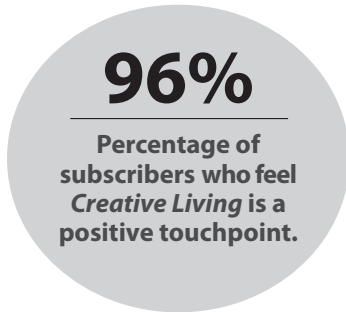
'Old School' Print Magazine Boosts Insurance Brand

In-house pubs. should not reek of 'branding'

Northwestern Mutual has been reaching its customers for more than 40 years through its quarterly print magazine, *Creative Living*. Long before “brand journalism” and “content marketing” became sexy buzzwords, custom publishing was connecting brands to their customers with targeted content.

Last year, Northwestern realized it could be getting more from the product. After a ton of research (and instead of shuttering the print edition and putting all energy toward digital efforts, a trend that has been hurting print journalism for years now), Northwestern Mutual decided to redesign the print publication. The revamp has already yielded major dividends by reinforcing customer's long-term loyalty.

“Our survey research showed a reader preference for print over a digital product,” said Shawn Rolland, a PR consultant for



Northwestern Mutual. He added: “Despite the drumbeat in the communications world for more digital assets, our numbers showed that a print piece is still in-demand.”

MORE INFORMATION

Creative Living launched back in 1972 when the magazine industry was thriving.

The product had been an effective tool for decades but, in light of changing consumer habits, Northwestern Mutual needed to make some changes to the publication.

So it conducted a survey to gauge what readers were thinking. The survey let Northwestern know that people who read the magazine have a more favorable view of the company and its financial

representatives and, most important in the company's estimation, are more likely to work with Northwestern Mutual on their financial planning versus a competitor.

In addition to finding out that information, Northwestern also discovered that readers wanted more information about health care, financial guidance, travel, medicine, technology, business and philanthropy to be part of the edit mix.

“Our financial representatives seek to build life-long relationships with Northwestern Mutual clients—sometimes spanning 30, 40 or 50 years—helping clients manage their financial plans over the arc of a lifetime,” Rolland said. “When we're able to help

our financial representatives build client loyalty, we're positioning them to be that go-to resource when new financial needs arise for a client.”

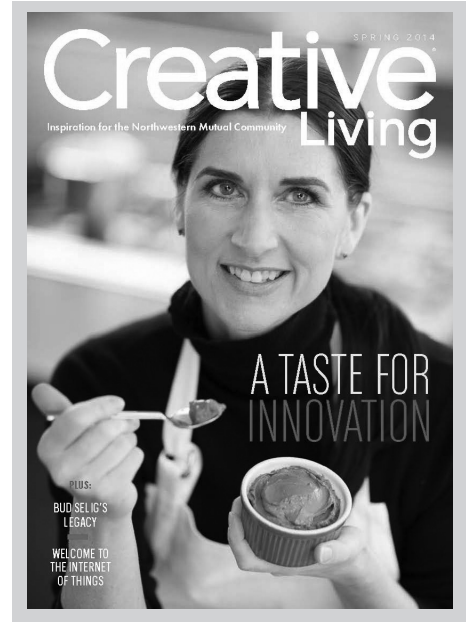


Photo courtesy: Creative Living

The Spring 2014 edition of *Creative Living* includes a feature on Northwestern Mutual client Terri Blair-Parkhurst and her innovative business, Mademoiselle Mousse, which serves high-protein, gluten-free, dairy-free, nut-free chocolate mousse in three different flavors.

Questions to Ask Before You Produce a Magazine

1. What are the strategic business goals that a publication can help meet?

Alignment to the overall business strategy is key. When building a business case for the magazine, you should have a solid grasp of the organization's existing marketing, communications, sales goals and overall strategies. If the magazine helps to achieve shared business goals, it's much easier to convert stakeholders to allies and believers in the product.

For *Creative Living*, the business goal is to help Northwestern Mutual's financial representatives build long-term relationships with clients and centers of influence so they continue to trust our company with their financial security plans in the future. To foster this, we created a distinct, high-

quality magazine—delivered consistently each quarter—that's proven to make clients more aware of our company and more willing to consider us when addressing other financial needs in the future. That's a strong value proposition.

2. Who is our audience? What's in it for them?

If you don't know your audience, it's almost impossible to make a decision about editorial, design or execution. It was crucial for us to learn more about our financial representatives (who send out the magazine) and our clients (who receive it as a gift) so we could make data-driven decisions. Especially in a digital age, we needed to know, “Is a magazine best-suited to help us meet our business goals? Is it what our clients and financial representatives want?

What else should we consider and test?”

Through recent research, we know demographics, interests, media preferences and motivations of our key audiences. As a result, we're able to deliver a high-quality magazine that inspires and engages client readers and delivers strong value and return-on-investment for our financial representatives.

Other important questions to ask before you get going: How will we measure success? What are the costs? What revenue sources are possible?

This article was written by Shawn Rolland, who is PR consultant for Northwestern Mutual.



Shawn Rolland

80%

Percentage of prospects who receive *Creative Living* and know the name of the representative who sent it.

THE REVAMP

Along with a shift in content subjects, the research also led to another, larger decision on the editorial side that resulted in more Northwestern Mutual-related content appearing in the publication.

“Production of a client-facing lifestyle magazine is a careful balancing act,” Rolland said. “If you insert too much branding and company voice, you risk alienating readers who crave intelligent articles, not marketing brochures. We found ourselves on the other end of the spectrum, penning a magazine that, at times, went out of its way not to include company or client voices.”

So the redesign was all about infusing elements of Northwestern Mutual’s brand into the magazine without taking away from the relationship readers already have with the title.

It now goes out to more than 130,000 clients and prospective clients each quarter and tells the stories of thought leaders focusing on innovation, health, technology, busi-

ness, and money, among other topics, who also just happen to also be Northwestern Mutual clients as well.

“We learned that our clients wouldn’t be turned off by thought leadership on financial planning,” Rolland said. “Quite the contrary, they wanted it. Northwestern Mutual’s expertise in financial planning is part of the reason that clients chose to work with us. We shouldn’t avoid featuring our brand, we should embrace it.”

The magazine’s editorial team also sought out information from the company’s financial representatives to find great stories involving company clients. The Spring 2014 issue has a Q&A with **Major League Baseball** Commissioner Bud Selig, for instance, who’s retiring at season’s end and has been a Mutual client for years.

Client voices are worked into the editorial mix in other ways as well. A recent story on sleep science featured quotes from industry experts and anecdotes from the company’s clients.

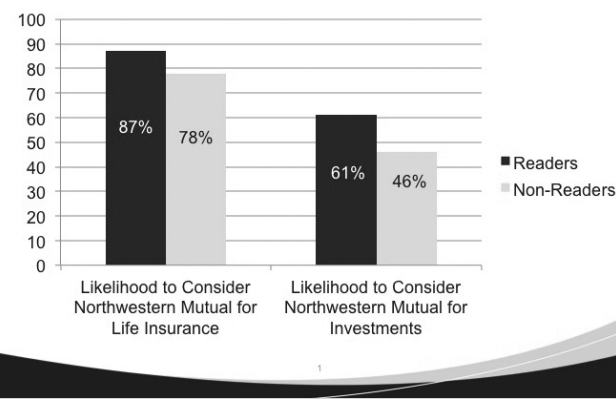
“When clients read about other clients, they feel that they’re part of a larger community with shared goals and values, and they begin to realize there’s a mindset that’s distinct to Northwestern Mutual policy owners,” Rolland said.

He added: “Our business goal is to create a loyalty-building tool for our financial representatives.”

To help make that happen, each issue of the 32-page publication features the financial representative’s photo and contact information in two prominent locations: on the inside front cover and back cover.

The magazine is then provided to current clients and prospects as a gift from their financial representative.

Creative Living’s Influence on Purchase Consideration



Consumers who get *Creative Living* are much more likely to purchase insurance products from Northwestern Mutual.

Since those reps are the key to establishing relationships with those high-end clients, *Creative Living* worked hard to build strong relationships with them over the past few years, particularly to get help on content and design decisions.

Through emails, phone calls, and face-to-face discussions at Northwestern Mutual’s annual meeting, *Creative Living* was able to get the reps’ feedback and enlist them in carrying out the concept.

Due to bringing them into the fold, many financial reps were quick adopters of the magazine. “They understood the value that they could deliver by helping clients get nationwide visibility through the magazine,” Rolland said.

THE RESULTS

- More than six in ten *Creative Living* readers are likely to consider Northwestern Mutual for future investments needs, 15% more than average clients.
- More than eight in ten *Creative Living* readers are likely to consider Northwestern Mutual for future insurance needs, 10% more than average clients.
- 94% of subscribers see *Creative Living* as a favorable

representation of Northwestern Mutual’s brand.

- 80% of the prospects who receive *Creative Living* know the name of the representative who distributed it.
- 96% of subscribers feel *Creative Living* is a positive touchpoint.
- 98% of those who receive the magazine report that they read it.

“Our hope is that clients will think of Northwestern Mutual as their preferred financial security company, and will think of their Northwestern Mutual financial representative as their preferred financial expert,” Rolland said.

He added: “The key is to know and test your strategic business case through careful research. PR professionals need to be able to show how their products help to achieve shared business goals.

Once that business case is created, you’ve got to promote that business case to key stakeholders in a way that breaks through the clutter and makes them stop to take notice.” PRN

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“The magazine’s editorial team also sought out information from the company’s financial representatives to find great stories involving company clients.”

Branded Content

► Page 1

BRANDED CONTENT

In 2012, **Prada** did a video series with highly recognizable talent, including Roman Polanski as director and Helen Bonham Carter as the main star. The result is quirky, original and witty—and the brand's message, though subtle, is unmistakable: Prada is all about luxury, style and sophistication.

Another great example is 2013's award-winning **Chipotle** animated video about a scarecrow creating a restaurant and using the highest standards of food quality.

The video is beautifully made, and it subtly communicates the key messaging of Chipotle's high-standards in food quality. It has been viewed nearly five million times.

Chipotle created an entire online content universe around this concept with a game, a song and a charitable initiative that accompanies the video and destination site.

But branded content can also go dangerously wrong when the story and the audience are at odds. In early 2013, an advertorial for the **Church of Scientology** appeared on **TheAtlantic.com**.

The piece covered the growth of the group and the key role the church's leader, David Miscavige, played.

Atlantic readers were upset by the sponsored content especially since both the magazine and audience have long expressed concerns about the church.

The Atlantic quickly pulled down the article and apologized to readers. Ultimately, The Atlantic had not considered the impact branded content could have on its readers.

THE POWER OF 'S.C.A'

The best branded is communicative without being jarring. It grabs its audience's attention, and it's relevant to its target market. To achieve this, Skype and Kaplow follow three key steps—Strategize, Create, Amplify.

► **Strategize: Know Your Audience.** Make sure you deeply understand the audience your brand is trying to reach—where they go for entertainment, news, and to interact with friends and peers. Additionally, where content is published must match the core audience's interest.

When Skype understood it needed to make a shift in its narrative, the company first looked at its target audience and determined that audience's wants and needs through an exercise in social listening,

27 minutes

Average time spent on a Skype conversation.

Skype

market research, competitive analysis and existing Skype blog content evaluation.

As a result, Kaplow and Skype discovered that Skype users had one thing in common: a propensity for sharing personal stories.

► **Create: Tell a Good Story.** Much like the Prada and Chipotle examples, a good story captures and keeps an audience's attention, and it most likely will inspire them to share or talk about the brand experience. Skype followed key best practices to source, craft and tell stories similar to what would be expected from a media outlet.

For its Stay Together campaign, Skype monitored traditional and social media channels, and identified unique Skype users with rich stories. Kaplow and Skype reached out to those users and conducted interviews to learn more about their Skype experiences.

One user sourced was Denis from Uganda. He hadn't seen his family for many years, but Skype enabled him to participate in a family portrait despite being half a world away. Skype created a video showcasing the portrait, and it has been viewed over 500,000 views.

Another video is about Paige and Sarah, two young girls who were best friends but had never met in person. Skype allowed them to grow up together and share experiences

about their physical challenges. The video has had more than two million views.

► **Amplify: Build the Right Ecosystem.** Picking the right platforms and timing is fundamental to succeeding in getting eyeballs to content. Before embarking on the Stay Together Campaign, a clear and strategic content marketing plan was crafted with potential content types and channels to leverage. For Skype, this meant considering its owned, earned and paid channels including the Skype blog, **Facebook**, **Twitter** channels and media and blogger outlets.

Skype also recognized that it needed to make its blog network the center of its branded content efforts as well as a business driver in terms of product downloads, new user registrations and premium orders.

Together, Skype and Kaplow fostered a deeper connection with consumers and turned the blog network into a significant driver of Skype's core business metrics. Ultimately, visitors to the blog network increased, as did downloads of Skype apps and products. **PRN**

(This article was written by Shana Pearlman, social media manager at Skype; Nadina Guglielmetti, chief digital officer at Kaplow and Emily Listfield, chief content officer at Kaplow. The article is an excerpt from PR News' Digital PR & Social Media Guidebook. For a copy, please go to www.prnewsonline.com/pr-press/.)

We're all Journalists Now

A good story will include these characteristics:

- It draws people in.
- It's easily retold.
- It connects with us on an emotional level.
- It includes some element of romance, drama, humanity, conflict and resolution.
- It's a narrative—not a report or a press release.
- It uses a metaphor and has meaning (not data).
- It's delivered with passion and commitment.

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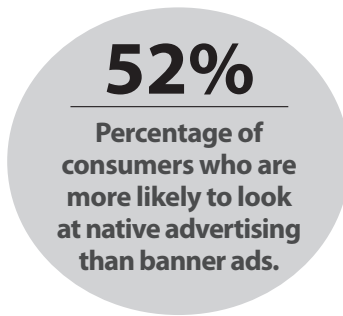
Millennials

► Page 1

group dedicated to this area of expertise, the agency has been training all of its employees to become digital experts.

In the Atlanta office many of our training sessions have been conducted by Millennials. There are senior-level executives who provide strategic oversight, but when it comes to managing the tactics, managers call on the Millennials. There are a few reasons for the trend.

• **Social media isn't new to us.** We've not only grown up with social media, it's our primary form of communication—not some mystic, foreign “other” that we need to figure out. Especially in terms of business and branding, we've been



inundated with messages from brands looking to communicate specifically with us for the bulk of our lives.

We're excellent at detecting authenticity and determining when a brand comes off as fake or impersonal. This makes us perfect candidates for gauging proper tone and effectiveness when creating content.

Millennials, Boomers Team Up To Activate Social Media

When a Millennial and a Baby Boomer meet it is a mixture of potential and experience, which can lead to wonderful social media activation. Here are a few tips on how this duo can work together effectively and serve to enhance the communications of brands and organizations.

- **Stress the importance of communication.** Over-communication is better than insufficient communication, especially in the world of social media, where things move so quickly.
- **Contextualize the project in relation to its goals.** Put the focus on the mission, the underlying purpose, the reason why the thing matters—and not about the process of how it'll get done. This gives both the Millennial and Boomer a shared sense of purpose.
- **Set their team dynamic as flat, not hierarchal.** Like any team, Millennials and Boomers need to work together to find the best way to achieve the project goals. At times they should each be leading. Neither is the boss. Under this dynamic, they have to build trust by understanding each other's strengths and weaknesses. Let your Millennial counterpart develop the social media activation plan, while you provide the strategic guidance to ensure it meets the client's goals.
- **Establish two-way teaching and learning.** This should be the case no matter the project; however in the case of social media, allow the person with the most experience to guide the other. For example, invite the Boomer to share perspective based on previous experiences, contextualizing it for Millennials with specific examples and explanations of why certain approaches are likely to work better. And on the other hand, invite the Millennial to teach the Boomer about social media models, software and Web tools. This will aid the project in a way that teammates understand.

—G.M.

• **Unlimited supply of creativity.** Millennials are used to the idea of standing out. The value (or liability) of this type of perceived entitlement warrants another discussion, but this cradle-to-college encouragement has succeeded in making us creative thinkers who are always seeking the “newer” and “better.” We're eager to learn, collaborate and share ideas with both our colleagues and clients. This makes us perfectly situated for the ever-evolving world of social media.

• **Our individualism is a benefit to you.** For many of us, self-worth and success have always been intertwined, which is why we tried so hard to succeed in school, sports, clubs, and especially work.

We are focused on our successes as individuals, but that personal success comes, in part, from being successful for our employers. We work hard for you, because we value the process of honing and perfecting our own talents and skills.

• **Our actions can help predict social media trends.** Not every Millennial will embrace every social platform. Indeed, what we don't embrace could signal a turning of the tide. For example, studies show that the 13- to 19-year-olds are moving away from Facebook.

However, the fastest growing segment on that social network is the 45-54 demo. This seems to indicate that we are already looking for the next social networking tool, app and trend.

If you're looking to stay ahead of social media trends, look no further than the cubicle next to you.

Turning over the reins may give some seasoned PR veterans pause. However, we are up to the task and are fully engaged.

Real engagement in the work itself comes as a result of the trust you place in employees to take the right action.

When senior executives make decisions far from the front line, it's little wonder why we are unenthusiastic about implementing them. Give us the power to quickly initiate and implement innovative ideas and engagement will follow.

OH, PUT ME IN COACH Millennials view social media engagement as an opportunity to flex their knowledge in areas where they have valuable insight.

In this arena, managers should support the energetic efforts of younger workers, enabling and coaching rather than deciding and directing.

They should provide greater access to knowledge and collaborative networks. They should make it easy us to build horizontal networks that span organizational boundaries and tap diverse areas of expertise.

Millennials are able to gain volumes of relevant information, irrespective of experience or position. We were raised on social media, have special skills in pulling together solutions and know how to mobilize our networks.

What we do with our personal social networks can easily be replicated with a brand. In a digital age this ability to quickly collect—and make sense—of information and respond in real time often trumps experience, especially in the ever-changing universe of social media. **PRN**

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The Best Mistakes of Communication Leaders

Scope out the 'core' of the PR opportunity

Bloomberg View columnist Megan McArdle has been on the road in recent weeks, promoting her new book "The Up Side of Down: Why Failing Well Is the Key to Success" (Viking). It's shedding new light on one of the most fundamental elements of personal and professional growth: learning from our mistakes.

McArdle argues that the U.S. is unique in its willingness to celebrate failure and then extend second chances.

Yet throughout my career I've found the PR industry to run counter to this value, which is not surprising given the nature of our profession.

Just ask a room of PR pros how business is faring—regardless of industry or economic conditions—and inevitably nine out of ten will say everything's great. It's how we're programmed.

Yet if we're to grow the profession and our fellow professionals, especially those just coming into the industry so eager to learn, it's time to rewrite that code. So let's get started.

GROW AT ALL COSTS

Peter Giles, whose eponymous firm just north of New York City

has served some of the music industry's top brands for three decades, learned the hard way about getting too big too fast.

"At one point we were growing faster than my ability to ensure quality control," he said. "It's mission-critical that each new client feels as if he is your only client, working off of an unwavering checklist of customer service gospel imperatives."

Overclocked growth can likewise cause fractures in organizational culture and performance.

During the tech boom of the early 1990s, I watched as my Boston-area agency went from 50 employees to more than 120 in a period of months, and subsequently saw a loss of camaraderie, engagement and productivity. The agency's "magic sauce" had, in effect, been diluted.

Having served as a member of the corporation's senior staff for a few years during some time of tumult, I'd become adept at helping one CEO find the door while simultaneously ushering another into the room.

So when a newly installed executive found himself facing a pile of decisions relating to industry topics of which he knew little, I was quick to offer my opinion and guidance.

Reviewing one particular project the CEO chose to defund it with little discussion. I pressed for a reversal, but too vigorously; my personal attachment to the program had clouded my sense of role.

Thankfully, a colleague and friend—our senior VP of HR—pulled me from the fray, and put things in perspective: "If you advise the driver to turn right and he instead goes left against the stream of traffic, you can either jump out the window or hang on," he said. "You have the map, but he has the wheel."

BEYOND SKIN DEEP

Working with one of the world's best-known consumer brands, I'd been teaming up with our German counterparts on an upcoming trade show.

It sent along an array of photos for approval: blond-haired, fair-skinned twentysomethings grinning as they interacted with the gizmo we were about to launch.

But then a peer from our corporate team jumped in, demanding that we include more people of color.

Despite the cost and delay, I relented, much to the frustration of my colleagues in Stuttgart.

It was a seeming win, but, in retrospect, both my colleague and I were wrong.

In my haste to keep the program humming, I didn't account for the diversity factor. We short-changed ourselves with such a narrow portrayal of our audience, when in fact the product would have a pretty extensive base of customers.

At the same time, my friend in corporate communications was too focused on race as a determinate of diversity.

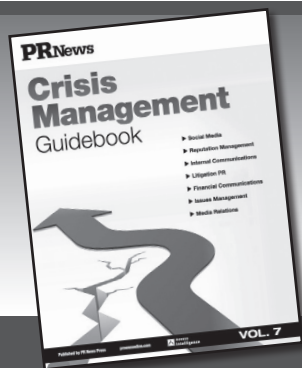
Whether we're talking diversity or other challenges facing our profession, effective PR leaders go beyond what's skin deep, finding the core of the opportunity, the issue and the challenge.

Growing up, my neighbor was a nurse who would bring home the occasional syringe to help us avoid a drive to the doctor's office.

Just before she placed the needle into my arm, she always said, "This will sting a little, but you'll be better for it down the road." Failure can be our vaccine, but only if we're brave enough to give—and receive—the shot. **PRN**

CONTACT:

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