

## OP-ED

### Earned media's day has come and PR must take advantage



Peter Granat

The social Web has pushed earned and owned media into the forefront of the marketing conversation. The time is now for PR people to claim their seat at the CMO's table. As earned media experts – and with a bigger role in generating owned content – they can finally claim equality, at a strategic level, with advertising in the changing marketing mix.

First and foremost, it's time to drop the buzzwords, get down to business, and get serious about integrated marketing. Advocate and strategize now how earned media (word of mouth, online buzz, and news coverage) and owned content can work with advertising in each campaign. Overcome budget envy and exploit advertising's unique strengths – its scale, speed, and ability to mesh with social media outreach. PepsiCo's Andrea Foote nailed it at a recent Cision webcast on the future of media when she said, "I can't see how a marketing plan can get funded today if it didn't integrate paid, owned, and earned media tactics equally."

Optimize your branded content. PR people have often created the narratives behind owned content – but now the stakes have been raised and the audience has been broadened.

Websites, videos, photos, online newsrooms, podcasts, and other owned media power stories that directly connect with your audiences. Content feeds your earned and social media efforts, works in concert with paid media, and leads to positive business outcomes.

As your mission, go beyond "changing awareness" to satisfying core business objectives: driving greater Web traffic, gaining better SEO performance, and increasing both lead generation and sales. Your story's fundamentals may stay consistent, but tailor the content for multiple social media channels, media formats, and audiences. That's the essence of social publishing.

Welcome the push for greater accountability. The fastest way to a seat at the table is proving conclusively that earned and owned media efforts lead directly to tangible outcomes. Jason Falls said it best on the aforementioned webcast: "Master the metrics. Understand how to draw lines to the three core business metrics: How much did we make? How much did we save? Are customers happy?"

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Finally, don't lose focus in earned media. PR pros have street cred, as they had to earn the trust of journalists. Credibility, transparency, and building relationships are essential now that you directly touch the most vital audience: your customers. ●

Peter Granat is president and COO of Cision North America.

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