

# Everyone's reading... their phone

By  Marion Scher

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When people think of public relations they think 'press release'. They think of discussions with the client, research and formulating a release that will ultimately be signed off by the client and sent out to media - hopefully landing on the right desk on the right day. The desired result being a mention in their publication, on radio, or prize of all prizes, television.

The idea being that their target market are actually reading that publication, listening to or watching specific programmes and, if they're really lucky, they may actually take notice of whatever it is you want them to notice. It's all a bit of a lottery really, even with a well-written release addressed to a person who cares.

So, what's changed? How do we reach the market of 2015? It should be obvious - the answer is staring at you. Just look around your office or watch people waiting for transport, in the queue at a supermarket, sitting with friends in a restaurant - everyone's on their mobile or their tablet.



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The first thing they do when they wake up is check their messages on their phone or their tablet and this goes on throughout the day right up to just before they go to sleep. This turns all the old marketing thinking on its head. After all, are you marketing to a particular LSM or just to anyone who has a smartphone? This could mean the guy who sweeps the street or the private banker driving the latest German car.

Today, news travels at the speed of light. Before you could even send out a release and hope it's picked up, a story can reach thousands and thousands of people via social media. That's assuming it's newsworthy, of course.

The downside of this is you don't always have control of the comments your news generates - so on the other side of spreading the word quickly is monitoring what's being said out there. A public relations campaign can literally be changed in a few seconds just by looking at what people are saying.

## Instant coverage

I used to tell clients to make sure you have a good press photographer at an event and then send the pics with captions to the media instantly and, with any luck, you might make that day's papers. Well, today you can be online and published in seconds, posting events as they happen or are about to happen.

There are many who don't particularly care to go this route and prefer the traditional way of writing and sending out releases - and that's fine if you're getting results. You have to ask yourself, 'is this the best method for the market I'm trying to reach?' Then your next question has to be whether your staff need to update their skills and your services to keep that competitive edge.

If you decide to stay with the conventional release then remember one thing - people don't read today, they scan. And their eyes take in infographics and videos a lot easier than they do text. A good video can go viral in no time - it's more effort but worth it. And with just one click it reaches another person and another person and...

## ABOUT MARION SCHER

Marion Scher ([www.mediamentors.co.za](http://www.mediamentors.co.za)) is an award-winning journalist, lecturer, media trainer and consultant with 25 years' experience in the industry. For more of her writing, go to her Bizcommunity profile or to Twitter @marionscher.

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