

Embracing technology in media

 By [Jaco Pienaar](#)

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For better or worse, technology has changed how we engage with media. And despite the 'print is dead' argument, clients of public relations firms still expect to get their column centimetres. So how is technology shaping the lives of media professionals?

The Dot-Com crash showed us that while technology is a great enabler, it should not be implemented at the expense of business principles. Too often, in trying to embrace the latest trend (neknominate anybody?), communication professionals lose sight of doing the basics right and ensure messaging align to corporate strategy.



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Access to information

It is clear that we have more access to media today than at any time in our history. The adoption of mobile devices and a reduction in data rates have proven to be a boon. People from all walks of life now have access to information and tools that they were previously not privy to. This has resulted in public relations professionals needing to re-evaluate how they utilise all the channels at their disposal.

Some of the more sceptical-minded ones might argue that it is not really up to them but their clients to approve their creative tactics. And then there is still the small matter of budget. But that is a discussion for another time. One of the biggest trends in recent months has been that of creating niche content and selling that into new media as well as trade media. Granted, this will never lead to front page news of a national daily but it will ensure that the client messages are exposed to an audience who is interested in receiving their news.

Media professionals understand this. There are many examples of how local firms have targeted a variety of platforms and been getting quality exposure. But their clients need to measure returns and ensure metrics are met. So while campaigns might be mind-blowing in execution, they really do not mean all that much if coverage cannot be measured.

Rise of social networks

In the past, it was easy for a media monitoring agency to fulfil the role of an independent analyst and provide quality evaluation on the worth of coverage generated. But with the rise of social networks, real-time communication, and publishing on non-traditional platforms, many agencies are struggling to provide their public relations customers with accurate (and live) reports on how successful their campaigns are.

For their creativity to pay dividends (in the eyes of client financial departments), they need to align with a monitoring agency that is as cutting-edge as they are. This agency needs to have technology in place that can not only track and monitor what coverage is received irrespective of whether this happens in print, broadcast, online, and social, but can also put a value to that coverage.

But while coverage and metrics are essential, analysis fulfils an equally important role. If an agency cannot provide a public relations firm with insight on their media accomplishments, then it is not worth the retainer it is getting. Being at the forefront of innovation is one thing, but the agency needs to know how to effectively use technology and pair it with human knowledge in analysis to add the most value possible.

So while public relations professionals need to be mindful of the tactics used, they also need to make sure that what they are doing and the hard-won coverage gained, is analysed and provide the direction for future campaigns.

ABOUT JACO PIENAAR

Jaco is an MA Information Science graduate who specialises in research, analytical framework development, and content analysis. His thesis was on Intellectual Capital measurement and he applies this to his framework developments as well as knowledge strategies. Professionally, Jaco has worked in the journalism field, academic environment, multi-national research environment, and media analysis environment. He is currently the Chief Knowledge Officer at Professional Evaluation and Research.

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