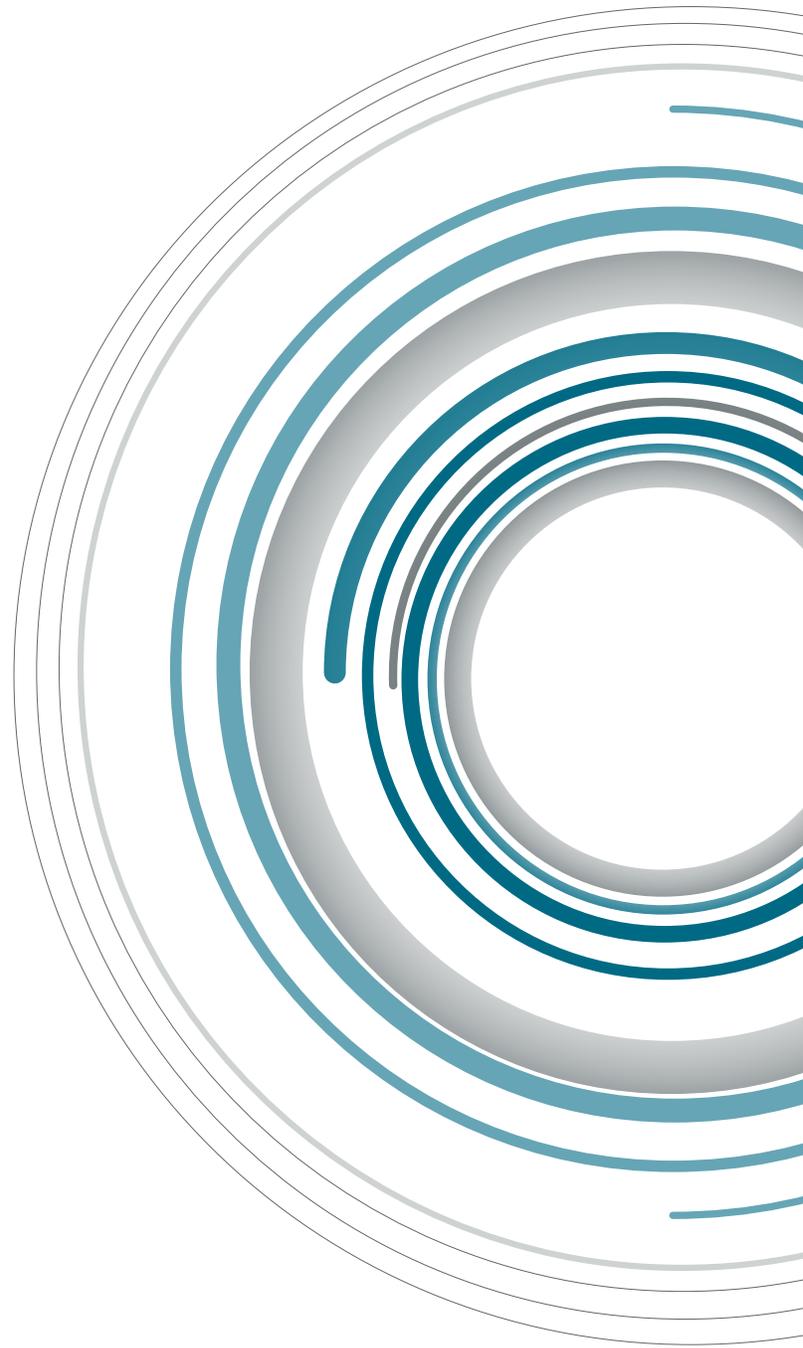


CONTENT RELATIONS

The most beneficial term
you've never heard



THE STORY OF US

Once upon a time, there were advertising people, and there were public relations people—and they hated each other.

Advertising people looked like this:



They were big thinkers, creative types, concerned with lofty things like “customer emotions” and “brand promises.”

PR people, on the other hand, looked like this:



They were deep thinkers, factual types, concerned with empirical things like “stats,” “quotes,” and “share of voice.”

But then along came a new type of person who looked like this:



And within a couple of years...



had killed off both



and



WAIT. WHAT JUST HAPPENED?

Meet the Internet: your friendly communications melting pot. Thanks to Web-based disruptions like social media and site analytics, advertising people and PR people were forced to contemporize and consolidate.

In fact, we changed more in the past 5 years than we did in the previous 50.



In a blink, formerly well-delineated communications became a messy, all-encompassing mixture of ad-style creativity and PR-style pragmatism.

Reaching people online turned into a communications free-for-all. Businesses got confused. Agencies got confused. We knew some adjustments were needed, but which ones?

More to the point, when we tried to “bucket” our new media components, we ended up with a pair of messy buckets, and a pile of new media on the floor.

Introducing “the unbucketable”



In fact, the problem was even worse than we realized.

On the Web, even our old, familiar media tactics came unmoored. What's the functional distinction, for instance, between a paid-for video advertisement and a video "advertorial" feature? And does it really take two separate agencies to coordinate the placements?

Once we took a step back to see the bigger picture, it was obvious: The functions of advertising content and editorial content were remarkably similar in a post-Internet world. Web, the great equalizer, had bridged the gap.

But we still didn't know how to cross it.

RISE OF THE MEDIA AGNOSTICS

Rise of the what now?

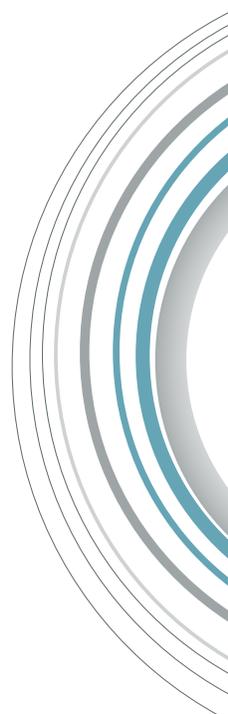
In technology circles, the word "agnostic" means "unbiased" or "neutral."

"Vendor-agnostic" and "solution-agnostic" are positive-minded terms meant to underscore a company's honesty and impartiality. Without this agnosticism, it is implied, service providers are inherently rooted—via financial ties—to a specific vendor or solution set.

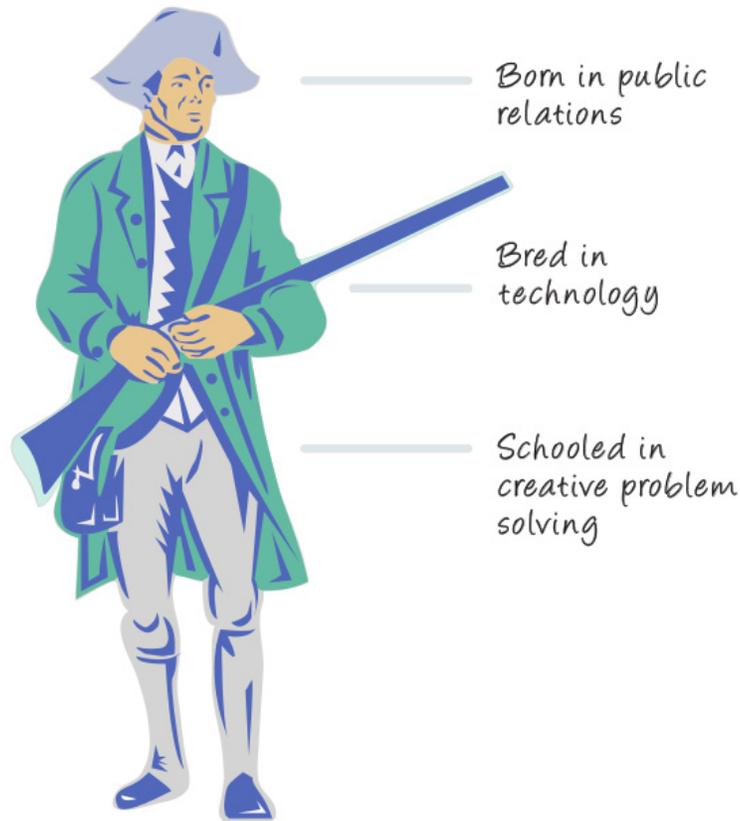
We find the same problem in communications. If you ask an advertising person to solve your communications problems, she's likely to recommend advertising. The same goes for PR people, inbound marketing people, and all the other people in our industry. It's not that we're being willfully deceptive; we're simply predisposed to the lens of our own specialization.

In today's post-Internet world, in which most of media's functional distinctions have been effectively obliterated—this makes even less sense than ever.

What's needed, rather, is a communications specialist whose expertise lies not in any particular media, but in a commitment to new media objectivity.



How to spot a member of the media agnostic revolution



Media agnostics can come from anywhere. But more often than not, they seem to emerge from the public relations side of the fence. And here's why:

With vastly more access to unfiltered information—courtesy of the Internet—consumers are balking at traditional push marketing tactics, and turning more and more to third-party validations (which have historically been PR's sovereign territory).

Born of the fact-centric public relations realm (as opposed to the emotion-centric advertising universe), media agnostics revere credibility above all else.

The only trouble is, credibility in today's fractured media landscape is not so easily defined. Whereas in the past consumers received their information from a handful of sources, today's information landscape has a seemingly endless number of Web-based channels. Thus, the successful media agnostic is forced to define consumer "credibility" for each individual audience.

Let's not forget, in fairness to Madison Avenue, that traditional TV advertising has its own unique credibility—an implied expression of money, stability, and commercial backing. Truly, there is no single medium with ultimate credibility. And that's precisely the point of agnosticism.

INTRODUCING CONTENT RELATIONS

So, what's to be done with this new information? How should you, the CMO, realign your communications efforts in a media-agnostic fashion?

The first step is the easiest. You must acknowledge (grudgingly, if need be) that the perfect media channel for your corporate messaging might not be invented until a week from now, in some high school student's parent's garage. And if you can accept this—the philosophy of complete channel neutrality and total media flexibility—you will be ready for your true epiphany:

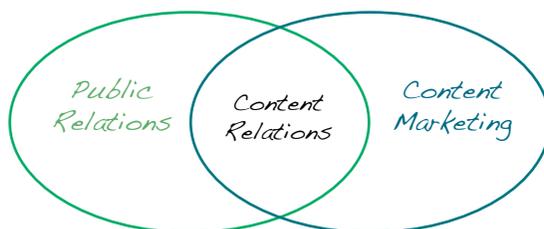
It isn't that we're tearing down silos and integrating disparate efforts. It's that there never were any silos or disparate efforts to begin with.

Everything we do in communications—everything we've ever done in communications—is simply content. The thirty-second television spot, the Time Magazine cover story, the “free guitar lessons” flyer you taped to the rec-center bulletin board. All content.

Only we've been placing this content in needlessly differentiated containers and hiring an army of adversarial communications professionals to accentuate conflicting interests and muddle the whole notion of ROI.

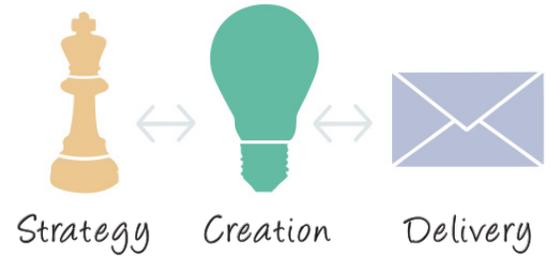
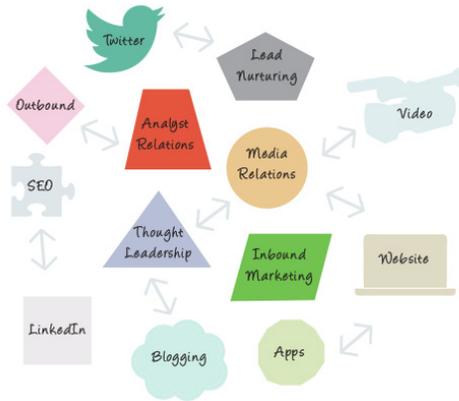
On the other hand, had we taken a media-agnostic approach to content, we could have integrated our tactics, eliminated redundancies and competing interests, and created a clear consensus agenda.

We call this Content Relations—the intersection of content marketing and public relations.



Here's how it works:

Chaos vs. order



Once we begin to view everything as content, the field of communications becomes quite simple. In fact, it's only three steps.

We strategize what content is needed, we earn or buy that content, and then we manage its delivery.

Content's really big tent

Content

Strategy

Define your buyers, their behaviors and preferences.

Assign value to specific content forms, themes and channels. Specify your itemized content needs.

Creation

Earn the content you can earn.

Build or buy the content you cannot earn.

Delivery

Place, circulate and promote your content for maximum impact.

That third pillar (content delivery, sometimes termed content management) is frequently neglected. After all, we've spent years "teaching to the test"—producing and managing content for the express purpose of fitting a particular media channel.

Again, Web has forced our hand. So bloated and overfilled is the modern Internet, that it's almost impossible to find even the strongest, most precisely tailored content unless it's strategically and comprehensively promoted.

This doesn't have to be an unwelcome development. A team of media agnostics, with a flexible communications plan can take content strategy, creation, and delivery to new heights of precision and efficacy.

The solution is here, it's tested, and it's more efficient and less expensive than you realize.

But we can't help you until you take the first step.

STOP WASTING YOUR BUDGET ON THE OLD HABITS OF ADVERTISING AND PR

[Give us a visit, and we'll show you a better way.]

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