

## 2016 State of the Media Report

Cision, one of the leading providers of software and programs for PR professionals, released the results of its 2016 State of the Media Report in February. The report provides valuable guidance to marketing and communications professionals on how to pitch news to the media, develop relationships with journalists, earn trust as a resource, and take advantage of emerging trends in media relations. Nearly 350 journalists, bloggers and influencers in the United States and Canada participated in the survey.

It is not surprising that the majority of the survey respondents use social media platforms to build relationships (nearly 75 percent), monitor public opinion (close to 65 percent) and find sources for stories (52 percent). Nonetheless, only 20 percent of journalists report receiving pitches on social media.

Twitter is considered the most valuable social media channel by 40 percent of the participants and 22 percent feel its value will increase in the next year. Twitter introduced the Curator and Moments platforms in 2015 to allow journalists and writers to easily filter, curate and disseminate content. Facebook introduced tools as well last year to encourage and maximize journalist engagement. Instant Articles allows publishers to post articles within Facebook, and Signal provides journalists with the ability to find compelling content and story ideas on Facebook and Instagram.

Live-streaming apps like Periscope and Meerkat are expected to become more important to journalists. Ten percent anticipate that Periscope will be a valuable resource in 2016. Nearly 10 percent report the same about LinkedIn and close

to 8 percent expect to rely more on YouTube. A mere 1 percent of the respondents believe that Meerkat will increase in value to them in the next year.

Incorrect information posted on social media was one of the biggest obstacles journalists faced in 2015. Only half of the participants believe that the information available on social media platforms is reliable.

Journalists feel that it is important to know whom to follow during breaking news events to find accurate sources of information and factual data faster. Eighty-eight percent of the journalists that participated in the study would rather have the right information than be the first to report the story.

The study confirmed that 93 percent of journalists still prefer to receive press releases and story leads via email, even if they have a relationship with the source. As expected, pitches should be thorough and contain all of the information journalists need to write an article. While writing a release or pitch, always answer the questions: who, what, where, when and why? Make sure to include relevant dates, times, prices, availability and other important data in the pitch.

Michael Smart, an independent communications trainer who posted a blog on Cision's website entitled "5 Ways to Get Reporters to Respond to Pitches," suggests:

- 1. Get on a reporter's radar screen.** You will have greater success with journalists opening and responding to email pitches if they know your name and are familiar with your firm.
- 2. Find emerging outlets to pitch.** It is harder to get media outlets like the *Huffington Post*, *USA Today* and *The New York Times* to cover your story. Instead, pitch outlets that are popular in your specific industry and area of expertise. Consistently look for new publications and programs that are gaining traction.


- 3. Pitch interesting content.** Although you might think that the topic of your pitch is timely and interesting, journalists may not agree. You can increase the likelihood that your pitch will be picked up by combining what you are doing with an initiative from another brand. For example, when Aflac wanted to share news of their recent donation to pediatric



what we need to know before actually reading (or listening to) the content itself. In fact:

- ✓ Colored visuals increase people's likelihood of reading content by 80 percent. (Source: Xerox)
- ✓ People retain 65 percent of information three days after they see/read it if paired with a relevant image vs. hearing it alone. (Source: LifeLearn.com)
- ✓ Content with relevant images gets 94 percent more view than content without. (Source: Kissmetrics)
- ✓ Using the word "video" in an email subject line increases open rates by 19 percent and click-through rates by 65 percent, and can even reduce unsubscribes by 26 percent. (Source: Syndacast)

Cut through the content noise by creating visual content to appeal to your clients. All of the content you produce should be visually appealing in order to catch your readers' eyes and entice them to click, turn the page or comment.

Developing engaging content for your clients doesn't have to be as hard as we sometimes make it out to be. With a little extra planning and strategizing, you can have exceptional content that your audience will keep coming back for. Establish a routine and set yourself up as the firm that is producing informative, relevant content, and your audiences will thank you. 

## About the Author

*Melissa Harrison is CEO at Allee Creative, a content marketing firm located in Minnesota. Melissa has 15 years' experience working with B2B and professional service organizations in areas of marketing strategy and content creation. She has been named a "Top Content Marketer" by Content Marketing Institute and a "Top Young Entrepreneur" by Minnesota Business Magazine. Tweet her at @alleecreative or visit [www.alleecreative.com](http://www.alleecreative.com).*



## Getting to the Crux of What Your Clients Want

How do you know what kind of content your clients like to read? Can you easily figure out where they "hang out" online? In short, yes. Don't be afraid to ask your clients what they're looking for. Here are three ways to get started:

**1. Surveys.** Use your current communications methods to survey clients and other key audiences about the type of content they want to read and how they want to receive it. Add a short survey link in your e-newsletter. Add comment/survey cards on the tables at client appreciation events. Add a feedback button to your website with standard questions. Use your website's contact form and add the line, "Where did you hear about us?"

**2. Social media analytics.** If your firm is active on social media, assess each channel's analytics to get a sense of the demographics (such as age, location, and gender) of your online audience. Understanding these demographics will help you create content specific to those groups of people. You can also ask content-related questions on these channels as status updates in order to encourage ongoing conversation and gather more ideas for future content from those who are most engaged with you already.

**3. Website analytics.** Check your website analytics on a regular basis (monthly, at a minimum, to start). You will be able to quickly see the top areas/pages of your site that clients and prospective clients visit. This information can give you insight into the types of content, articles and information your website users are interested in. Make sure these pages are updated regularly, and think of ways you can re-purpose the content on those pages.

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cancer research, they made the story more interesting by including a pre-existing NASCAR sponsorship to create a contest called Color Carl's Car. CBS, ESPN and other major media outlets covered the story.

**4. Bulk up your news.** Help a Reporter Out (HARO) is typically used by journalists to find sources for articles. Communications professionals can flip the model and send out requests for input from other brands on similar initiatives to give them the opportunity to jointly create a stronger pitch.

**5. Customize pitches.** Research publications, topics covered and who writes on what. Journalists expect you to know who they are and what they cover, and to explain why your story would be of interest to their readers. Generic pitches are likely to be ignored because they may not be relevant to the reporter or media outlet.

The 2016 State of the Media Report contains additional information of value to marketers and communications professionals. This complimentary report is available at [www.cision.com/us/resources/white-papers/](http://www.cision.com/us/resources/white-papers/). 