

Media Relations Redefined

Embracing the Changing Media Environment

The role of the PR professional is ever-evolving. Today's communicators are tasked with supporting corporate strategy and driving C-suite initiatives, while working to reach and engage a growing number of stakeholders across both traditional and emerging channels. But the emphasis on earned media remains critical as ever. Our latest survey found that **82% of communications professionals agree that media relations is a central function of their job.** We also uncovered how media relations is evolving in response to shifts in the broader media landscape—communicators are prioritizing new channels, engaging in influencer relations, and leveraging PR tools to drive successful outcomes.

A significant number of respondents characterized social media influencers as “very relevant” and identified them as key targets for media relations — also citing podcast hosts as highly important to their outreach. While there's no doubt that traditional journalists are still a top priority, this shift to social signals changing tides in the media environment as audiences embrace new platforms and channels. To meet key stakeholders where they are, today's PR pros are exploring interactive and influencer-driven channels to make an impact.

PR tools are increasingly being used to get the job done. In fact, 83% of respondents find tools that monitor earned media coverage most helpful, followed by 75% who prioritize tools that measure results and performance. As today's PR professionals juggle more responsibilities than ever before, they're now leveraging automated and AI-powered tools that can streamline key job functions such as media monitoring, automated press release creation and more.

Respondents emphasized that the need for a human touch in media relations is not going anywhere. PR pros are still responsible for driving communications strategy and maintaining key relationships with members of the media — requiring skills that cannot be replaced or automated. Rather, these tools represent a step forward for communicators, empowering the way they tell their brand stories and maximize efficiency in a fast-paced environment.

One thing is made abundantly clear in this survey: To succeed in this ever-evolving landscape, communicators must embrace a changing media environment—and the cutting-edge tools that come with it — while continuing to leverage proven media relations techniques.



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Media Relations: A New Story

Communicators spend as much time on it as ever. The commitment to evolve their methods of employing it are stronger than ever. Media relations, while clearly being redefined, remains firmly atop most PR pros' daily to-do lists. It's a reality, finds this PRWeek/Notified study, that is here to stay.

Words **Chris Daniels**

The responsibilities that communications pros have on their shoulders are weightier and more far-reaching than ever. From "traditional" tasks (such as brand reputation and crisis response) to more recent matters (employer branding, purpose and diversity, equity and inclusion), it all sits partially, if not entirely, within comms' purview.

What of interacting with the media — long considered the backbone function of the public relations discipline? Where does that rank amid all of the responsibilities now on communicators' plates?

Media relations is still at the very top of the list and remains a crucial element to the success of the modern PR pro and their expanded remit.

That is immediately and emphatically clear based on this inaugural Notified/PRWeek *Media Relations Redefined* survey. Want numbers? How about the fact that 82% of respondents agree that media relations is one aspect of their job to which the most time and effort is still devoted.

“So, while the size of the traditional media landscape has shrunk, the broader media environment has actually expanded — and will continue to do so.”

Lisa Davis
Senior Director of Marketing, Notified

“It is critically important,” underscores Daphne Dickerson, VP of global comms at UPS. “The reality still holds true that journalists — and I use that term broadly — are in the driver's seat of telling stories to which people listen and respond.”

“Nurturing authentic connections will always be at the core of our industry's success,” concurs Steph Lund, CEO of North America, M&C Saatchi Sport & Entertainment. “Outside of those connections, trendspotting and forecasting, and evaluating and developing measurement efficacy across our work, is where comms professionals at our agency spend the most time.”

Media's new meaning

So what, exactly, has been “redefined,” you ask? Plenty. And it starts with, as Dickerson alludes to, the redefinition of what “media” is.

“While it's true survey respondents associate media relations with traditional journalists, they also associate it with social influencers and even podcast hosts,” says Lisa Davis, senior director of marketing at Notified. “So, while the size of the traditional media landscape has shrunk, the broader media environment has actually expanded — and will continue to do so.”

Meanwhile, the adoption of ever-sophisticated tools to help brands and agencies navigate their media relations work reflects the vastness, complexity and constantly changing nature of the sector.

Five out of six respondents find tools that “monitor earned media coverage” most helpful (83%). That is followed by tools that “measure results/performance” (75%) and those that “manage media contacts and lists” (72%).

As for who is on those lists, that has very much evolved of late. Traditional journalists remain “very relevant” targets for media relations efforts, to the tune of 90% of respondents saying so. Given the reduction of “traditional media” outlets, though, **it is worth noting that online-only media outlets outpace print media in relevancy (87% to 70%).**

Social media influencers, with 29% of respondents characterizing them as “very relevant,” are also identified as key targets of media relations. In other words, more than a quarter view them as members of the media.

→ HOW IMPRESSED ARE YOU?

Another aspect of media relations that is being redefined is the reliance — or lack thereof — on impressions.

A mere few years ago, media impressions were still prominently featured in any and all reports in which communicators described the impact of the media coverage they sought to attain.

Based on our survey results, that is changing. How much so? We asked respondents whether they still use impressions as a metric to gauge the effectiveness of their media relations efforts:

Very much so: 21%

Somewhat: 42%

Minimally: 27%

Not at all: 10%

Observation: Nearly four out of five respondents (79%) are less than resolute in their reliance on media impressions, with well more than a third (37%) barely or not at all reliant on them. These are clear indications that the metric is not nearly as valued as it once was.

A plan for podcasts

Very close behind are podcast hosts, with 27% deeming them to be “very relevant.” **In fact, if you combine the “very relevant” and “somewhat relevant” responses, podcast hosts are actually considered more relevant to media relations than even social media influencers (72% vs. 66%).**

“We work with, and target, podcast hosts,” asserts Sarah Meron, VP, corporate affairs at IBM. “We treat them as journalists. We treat podcasts as media outlets.”

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For instance, IBM CEO Arvind Krishna was interviewed on the podcast *Outside In*, hosted by Charles Trevail, the executive chairman of consultancy Interbrand Group. Krishna spoke about the remote- and hybrid-work future, the business opportunity behind sustainability and the case for a more diversified supply chain.

“The podcast was a good opportunity with a credible list of

other CEOs who had participated in the past and some plainly obvious enthusiasm for the series on social media,” continues Meron, who adds that podcasts have a unique place in the media ecosystem.

In addition to being a long, in-depth, immersive format, she says “one of the positives about them is that they are usually relatively flexible on timing and are not quite as driven by breaking news as other media vehicles.”

However, Meron advises PR pros to do their due diligence on the podcasts to target and those to avoid.

“Measuring the reach of a podcast is difficult and the levels of quality and professionalism are all over the place,” she cautions. “It’s been a mixed bag in terms of results.”

Bret Werner, president of MikeWorldWide, says the agency approaches podcasts on behalf of clients “no different than if we were trying to book someone on a late-night cable show or morning talk radio.”

However, the “who” in terms of the people “booking the talent is still in its infancy,” he adds. “That part is still a bit of a Wild, Wild West.”

The rise in popularity of podcasts as a medium for people to get their information has been meteoric, but figuring out the podcast hosts who truly yield influence is also less clear without a deep dive, adds Werner.

“Podcasts are growing by leaps and bounds on a daily basis, but understanding where the influence lies is the key,” he notes. “Of all the podcasts that could be a target for a client, you need to identify the ones that have real impact on an audience.”

Podcast hosts who have day jobs outside journalism are also getting savvier in their relationships with media.

Chris Christensen, who works as an engineer at American Express, hosts the award-winning podcast *Amateur Traveler*, which he started in 2005. Last year, it had 1.74 million downloads, up 22% from 2021.

The program, which usually features an interview with a destination expert, now has an online media kit and guidelines for pitching. (For instance, ideas should be evergreen and not tied to one-time events).

“I would say 95% of the pitches I get don’t fit the format of the show,” says Christensen. Those that do have better success, of course.

“We recently did a show on Malaysia that came from a PR pitch,” he recalls. “I was pitched the concierge of The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, who came in and talked about the kind of itinerary he would recommend. I still hesitate to call myself a journalist, but journalists have told me that I am, so I am coming around to it.”

UPS’ Dickerson doesn’t yet have relationships with podcast hosts like she does with traditional journalists. However, that will change as she does get pitched podcast opportunities by the brand’s roster agencies and it is clearly a media of the moment — and for many years to come.

“If you’re being thoughtful about what the future looks like in media, it includes podcasters,” suggests Dickerson. “All of our sources for information are going to look different. So, if you’re not into podcasts now, you probably need to get into it, primarily because that is going to be one major source of where people will get information.”

→ **IN YOUR WORDS**

On page 8 of this report, we focus on six types of media contacts and seven types of media outlets and detail how relevant each one is to your current media relations efforts.

(The contacts: traditional journalists; social media influencers; bloggers; podcast hosts; webcast hosts; radio hosts)

The outlets: print media; online-only media; TV; radio; blogs; influencers; podcasts)

Additionally, we asked if there were any other types of contacts or outlets that stood out in this regard as particularly important. Some interesting responses were provided:



It's OK to pay

Media relations is also undergoing an evolution in terms of what brands and agencies can do, from a tactical perspective, to supplement earned media.

This is being driven by paid-media tactics and pros' growing savvy about how to use it with earned. Compared to just three years ago, the survey discovered 60% of media relations pros are working more on social media advertising and 40% more on sponsored content.

MikeWorldWide utilizes paid media across social channels, as well as through programmatic placements (such as banner ads, native articles, etc.) to tee up an audience.

"It can play a strategic role before earned coverage by driving awareness to the key target audience — including potential writers — around activations, campaigns, product launches and more," counsels Werner.

The firm also uses it to boost the impact of key earned placements.

On behalf of client Diplomático Rum, for example, the agency "amplified content from *Esquire* and *Elle*, driving additional awareness and traffic to the articles," adds Werner, with targeted paid programmatic and social ads.

“Paid media can also be used as a strategy to divert audience focus from competitor coverage.”

And when an online listicle of top rum brands includes their client, MikeWorldWide also uses paid to surround the readers with Diplomático branding.

This strategy "can boost the brand awareness and impact of inclusion on the list," he points out.

Paid media can also be used as a strategy to divert audience focus from competitor coverage. If a rival brand gets a positive write-up, Werner feels paid placements can be used "to surround the content with messages that remind readers of the unique value proposition of your product."

In a massively fractured information-consumption landscape, IBM's Meron says a combination of earned and paid is needed "to reach all of your audiences."

She brings up another key factor to the rise of paid as part of an earned strategy.

"Paid content, particularly when produced by a media outlet, can actually be good," suggests Meron, noting that her team has worked with publications such as *The Atlantic* and *The Washington Post* on paid content.

“It’s genuinely interesting, balanced and of high quality,” she notes. “That’s a far cry from the awful advertorials of 10 years ago, which were basically baldly self-promotional ad copy.”

Dickerson says, “Paid has a place in our communications strategy — full stop.”

In fact, UPS is currently working with an agency on helping it geo-target paid media in key markets to reinforce messaging communicated through earned placements.

“If there is something that needs to be shared or shifted or considered,” she concludes, “you need to have paid and earned strategies that work hard together.”

Newsroom fodder

Online newsrooms have become a staple for brands, the survey finds, **with a massive 91% of in-house respondents saying they work at a company that has one.** The impact on media relations is clear.

Beyond just a repository of content, effective online newsrooms are places to build stories.

“It’s a brand’s trophy case,” is how Notified’s Davis puts it. “It is a destination for stakeholders where a brand or company can control their narrative, through a combination of earned, owned and branded content.”

Dickerson agrees, saying UPS’ online newsroom is carefully curated with storytelling that fits “smart brevity” — i.e., not too long and enhanced by rich creative assets.

“Our goal is for the newsroom to be a place where media and other stakeholders come to see what is going on in logistics and transportation,” she says. “The strategy is to build something that people want to come visit and learn about, whether it’s our foundation or commitments to electric vehicles.” ●

→ IMPORTANT UPDATES FROM THE NEWSROOM

When more than nine out of 10 (91%) in-house communicators work at a brand that has an online newsroom, questions pertaining to need no longer seem relevant. The need is obvious.

The key questions now focus on how to maintain them. With that in mind, we asked respondents how often their online newsrooms are updated. Answers ran the gamut. “Regularly” or “frequently” was the response for 18%.

Of the remaining pros to take the survey who provided a more specific answer ...

Weekly: 36%

Monthly: 15%

Daily: 10%


Multiple times a week: 7%

Every other month: 6%

Once a year: 3%

Twice a month: 3%

Quarterly: 2%



“If there is something that needs to be shared or shifted or considered, you need to have paid and earned strategies that work hard together.”

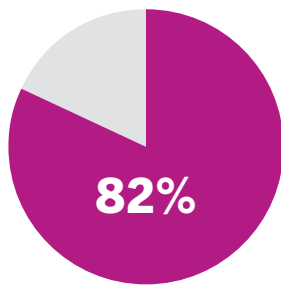
Daphne Dickerson
VP of Global Communications, UPS

Permanent Priority

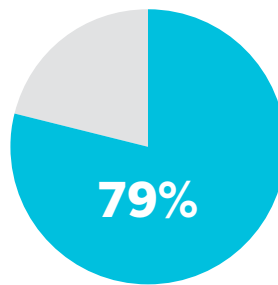
While the tactics continually change, the devotion to media relations exhibited by the large majority of PR pros does not. The data below both underscore that fact and bring into focus just how much PR relies on tools to help them achieve excellence in this area.

IN AGREEMENT

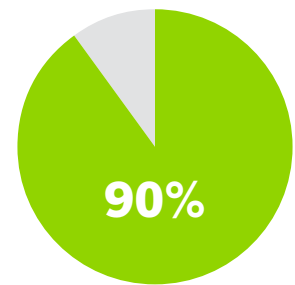
We asked respondents a trio of baseline questions to establish a key what, why and how of their current media relations efforts. In all three cases, there is a clear majority among our pool:



Agree media relations remains one of the aspects of their job to which the most time and effort is devoted



Agree that "securing earned media" remains one of their top challenges (*a key reason media relations is so important*)

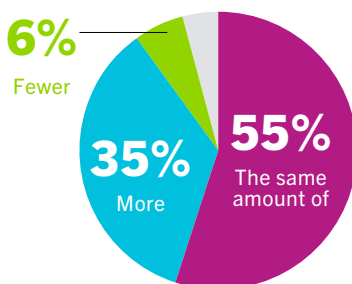


Use PR tools to help with media relations efforts

TOOL TALK

An overwhelming majority of pros use PR tools to help with one of their most important and prevalent tasks. Below, we dig deeper into the evolution of that usage:

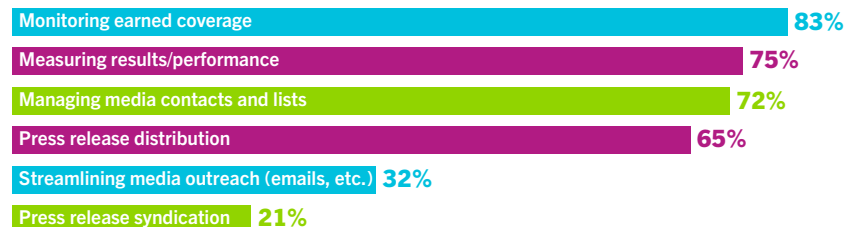
As compared to two years ago, we use PR tools to help with media relations efforts.



Note: 4% say they didn't use PR tools in this capacity two years ago and still don't.

In which area of your media relations efforts do you find PR tools to be particularly helpful?

(Respondents could select all answers that applied.)



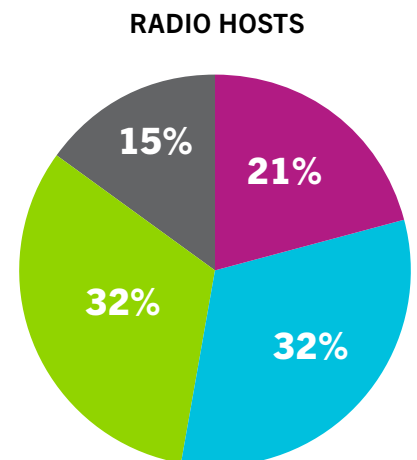
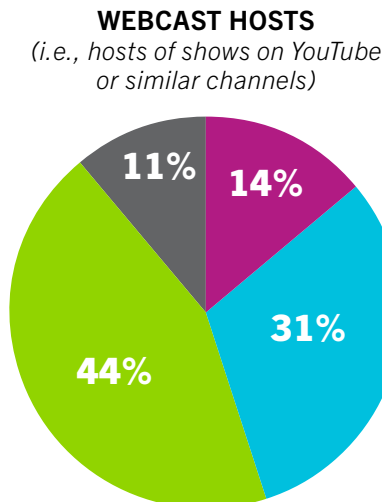
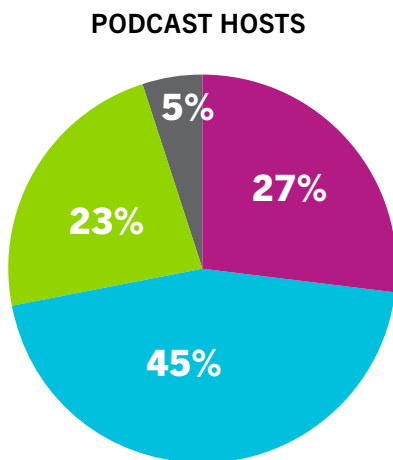
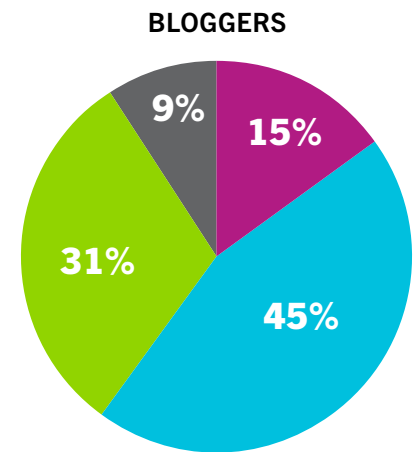
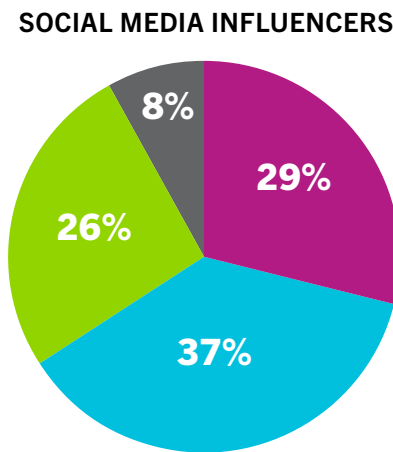
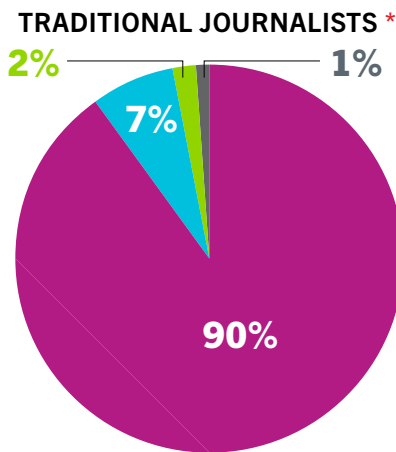
OBSERVATIONS: Media relations is still a crucial aspect of the PR pro's job. Nine out of 10 respondents use PR tools to help with it. And at least 65% (a strong majority) of communicators use those tools for foundational media relations functions such as managing contacts/lists and monitoring coverage.

Relevant Targets

We presented respondents with six types of media contacts and seven types of media outlets. We asked them to rate each one as to its relevance to their current media relations efforts. This is what they told us:



MEDIA CONTACTS

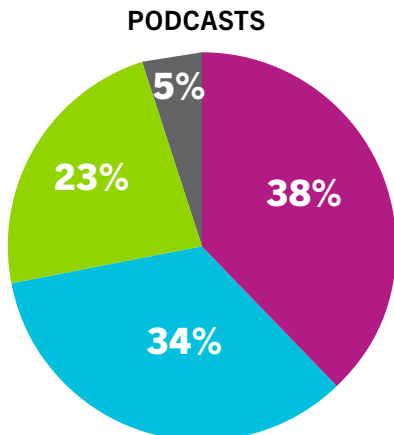
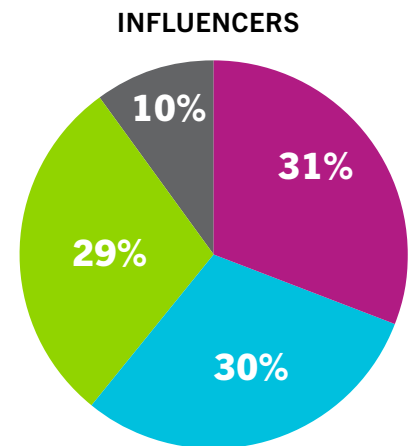
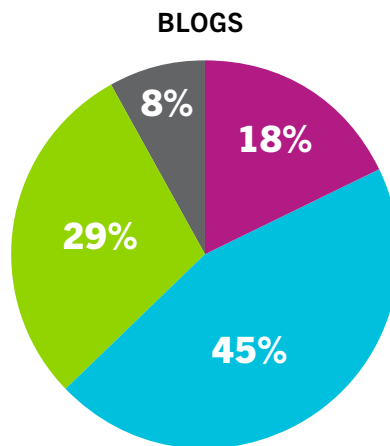
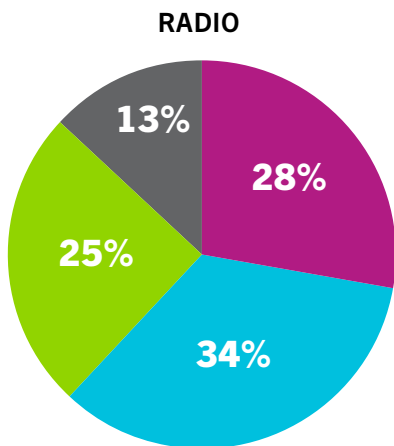
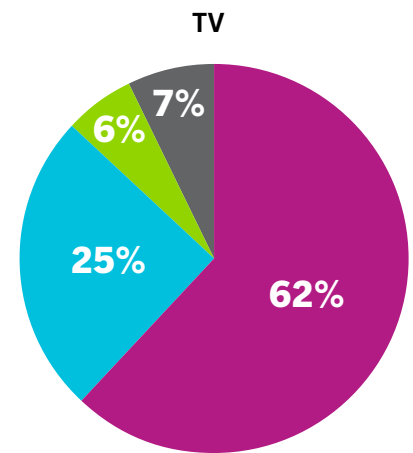
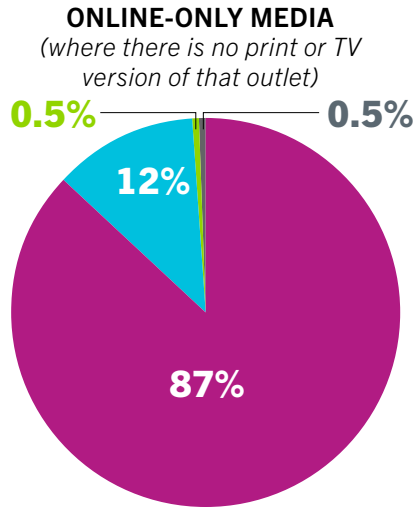
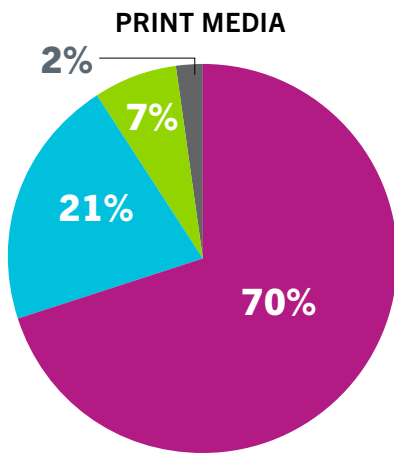


*For our purposes here, "traditional journalists" mean members of the media from long-established outlets in print, on TV and online-only press outlets.

Relevant Targets (cont'd.)



MEDIA OUTLETS



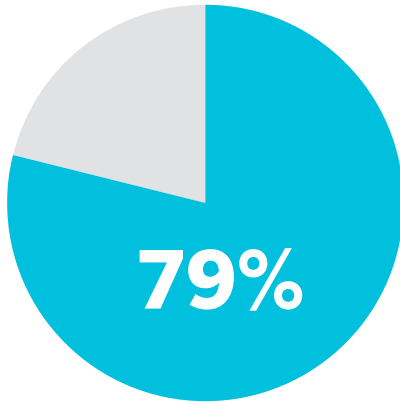
OBSERVATIONS: As covered in the preceding feature, the emergence of podcast hosts/podcasts really stands out. Among contacts, podcast hosts are deemed more relevant** than any other target, save traditional journalists.

In a similar vein, among outlets, podcasts are deemed most relevant** once you get past the staples of print media, online-only media and TV.

**For our purposes here, we equate "relevant" with those who chose either "very relevant" or "somewhat relevant."

Tried, True and New

Press releases have been synonymous with media relations as far back as most can remember. Entry into the paid-media world is a newer reality in the PR space. Below we share some key data on both tactics.



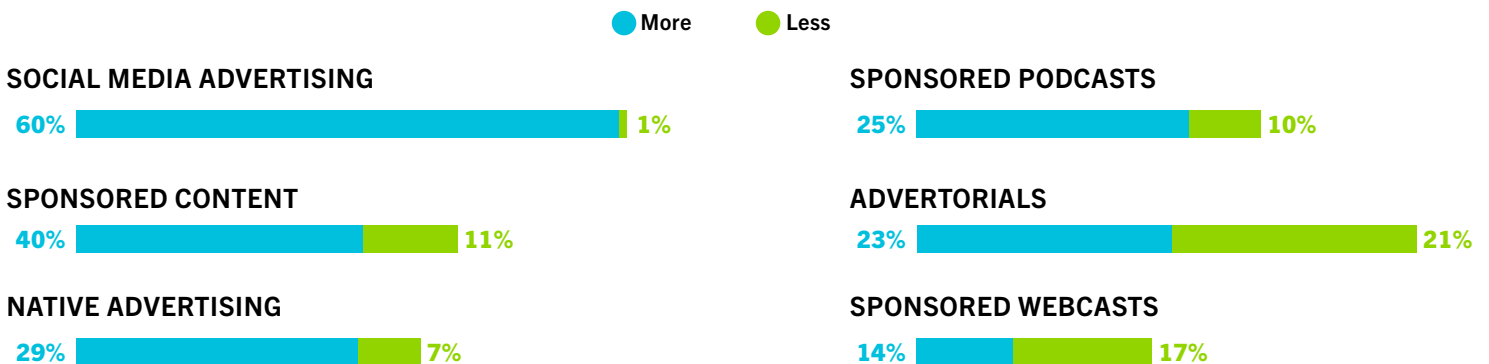
Still believe press releases are a valuable part of the media mix.

When asked to identify the key aspects by which they gauge the effectiveness of press releases, our respondents said the following:

- 89% Earned media (*coverage that resulted from the release*)
- 69% Media inquiries (*requests for interviews/additional info generated by the release*)
- 69% Social media activity (*conversations across social sparked by the release*)
- 62% Web traffic
- 25% Lead generation
- 24% Event registrations/content downloads

PAYING MORE ATTENTION

Paid media has increasingly become part of PR's toolkit. Below, we list six different types of paid media. In each case, we reveal the percentage of respondents who work MORE and LESS on it than they did three years ago.



OBSERVATIONS: Sentiments about the importance of press releases have remained consistent, as the 79% who still deem it a valuable part of the media mix match those who said the same in a survey Notified/PRWeek conducted last year.

It is noteworthy that web traffic — traditionally a marketing metric/KPI — is not very far behind media inquiries and social media activity in terms of aspects used to gauge press releases' effectiveness.

As for paid media tactics, in five of the six areas above more PR pros have increased their related efforts as compared to just three years ago — in four of those areas, significantly so (social media advertising, native advertising, sponsored content, sponsored podcasts).

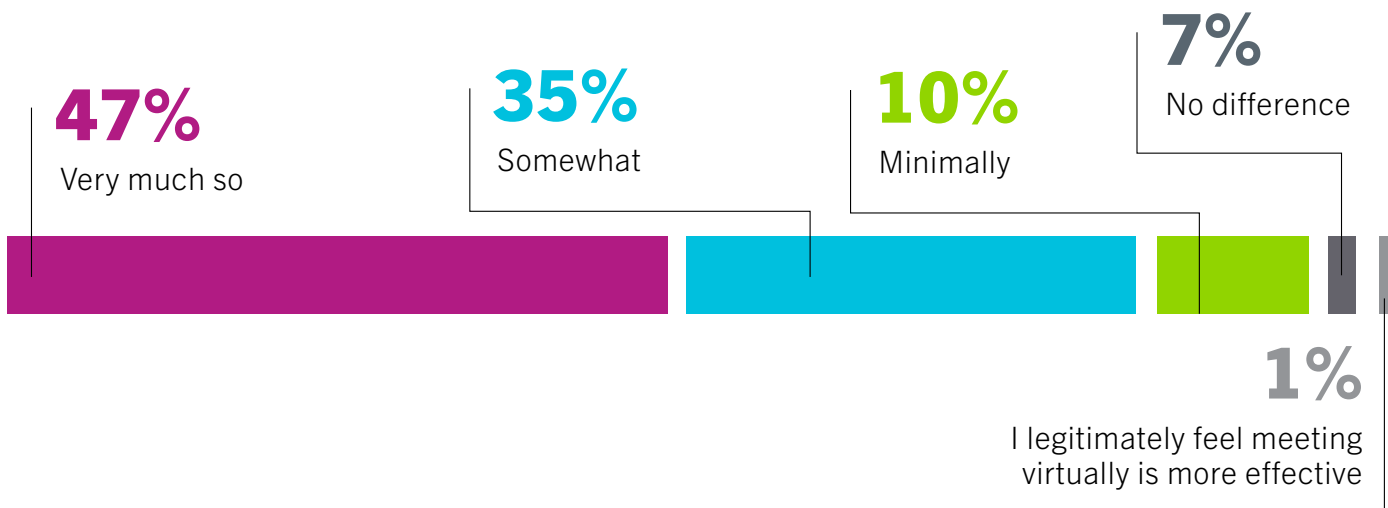
Relationship Status

At the end of the day, the interaction between communicator and journalist is at the heart of media relations. The data on this and the following page shed light on PR pros' current appetite for in-person meetings, how they get the press' attention — and the pandemic's impact on both.

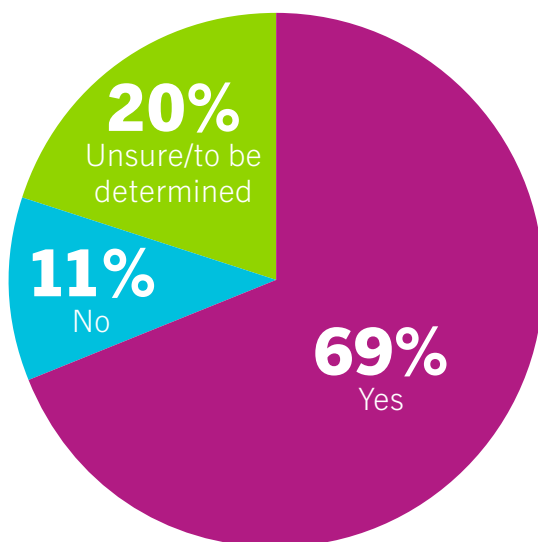
IN-PERSON OR VIRTUAL?

Before the pandemic, many relationships between PR pros and journalists were established and/or strengthened via in-person meetings. Due to the pandemic, much of what people did in-person they started to do virtually. Where do things stand now?

Do you believe it makes a material difference to meet with the media in-person as opposed to virtually?



Do you plan to meet with the media in-person more in 2023 than you did last year? *



OBSERVATIONS: Much as it seems to be in other instances, there is a desire among PR pros to bring back in-person meetings with the media. The majority feels it makes a difference and expects to do more of it this year.*

Meanwhile, the data indicate communicators are going extra lengths to ensure their pitches are immediately impactful to journalists whose time and availability demands it.

**It should be noted that if you only focus on those who provided a definitive response, 86% do plan to meet with the media in-person more this year than they did last year.*

Relationship Status *(cont'd.)*



PERFECTING THE PITCH

Journalists' time is more valuable than ever, so it is incumbent upon PR pros to ensure their pitches are precise and well thought out. We presented six tips that would certainly help achieve this mandate. To what degree are communicators adhering to them in current media-outreach efforts? We found out.

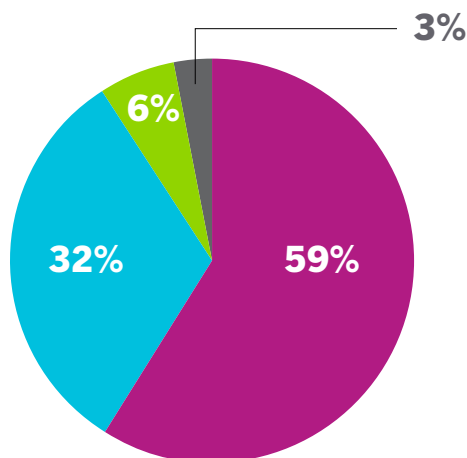
I make a point of familiarizing myself with the journalist's/influencer's work and preferences before I pitch them (esp. when I have never pitched them before).



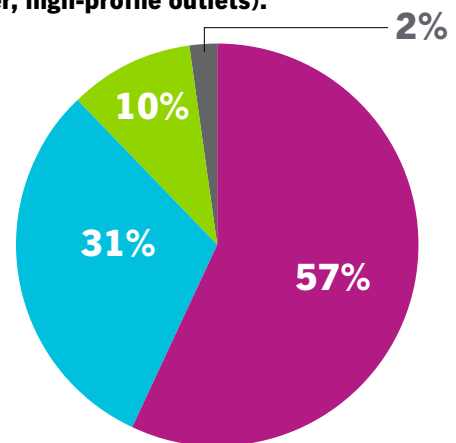
I do a good job of keeping my outreach topical and informative (as opposed to being a sales pitch).



I currently have a database that identifies journalists/influencers whose interests align with my message.



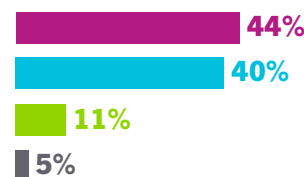
Local and smaller outlets are still very much on my radar when pitching (as opposed to focusing solely on the bigger, high-profile outlets).



My media outreach efforts are organized enough to where I have achieved a good balance where I provide the journalist/influencer ample time to properly consider it, but still create enough of a sense of urgency.



I am more inclined to offer a full exclusive to an outlet than I would have been previously in order to secure coverage.



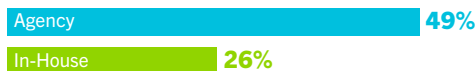
Agency vs. In-House

Throughout the data, there are interesting and notable differences in the responses given by agency and in-house professionals. We highlight those here.

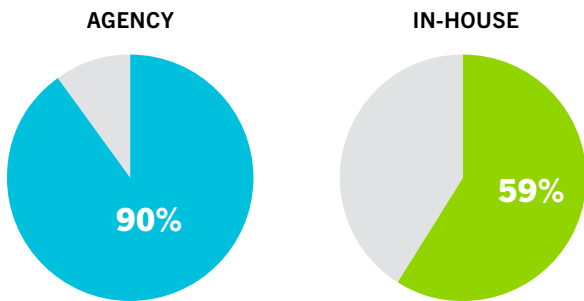
Media relations remains one of the aspects of my/our team's job to which the most time and effort is devoted.



As compared to two years ago, I/my team use(s) more PR tools to help with media relations efforts.



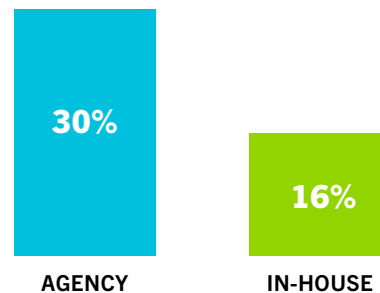
We find PR tools particularly helpful with managing media contacts and lists.



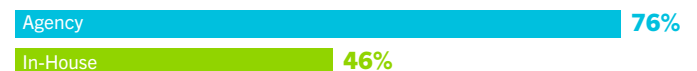
PODCASTS are VERY RELEVANT to our current media relations efforts.



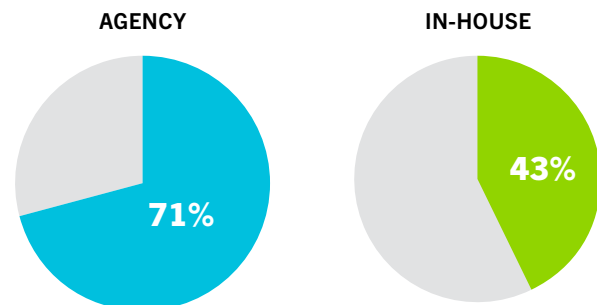
We still VERY MUCH use "impressions" as a metric to gauge the effectiveness of media relations efforts.



At present, I VERY MUCH SO have a database that identifies journalists/influencers whose interests align with my message.



Local and smaller outlets are still VERY MUCH on my radar when pitching (as opposed to focusing solely on the bigger, high-profile outlets).



OBSERVATIONS: Both agency and in-house pros clearly still view media relations as a crucial aspect of their job. However, it's almost unanimous among the former, while slightly more than a quarter of the latter don't express this belief as strongly.

Similarly, in terms of both usage and sentiment on effectiveness, there is a notable gap between agency and in-house pros when it comes to PR tools.

While there is a lot of common ground between both segments in this survey, the discrepancies that do exist are still telling.



ABOUT NOTIFIED

Notified is committed to making it easy for brands to create and share powerful stories with the world. Our suite of world-class, award-winning solutions and our dedicated customer-service team are relied upon by more than 10,000 global customers, from growing businesses and public companies to some of the world's most recognizable brands.

Notified's solutions help businesses effectively share and amplify their stories to customers, investors, employees and the media. From [press release distribution](#) via GlobeNewswire to [earnings calls](#), [IR websites](#), [social listening](#), [media engagement](#), [webinars](#) and [digital experiences](#), Notified has you covered.

Visit Notified.com to learn more.

PRWeek

ABOUT PRWEEK

PRWeek epitomizes the modern business publishing brand, spanning online, print, events, and social media, incorporating a paid-for content strategy and gated website. Launched in November 1998, it is the essential title for PR pros.

PRWeek reflects an industry playing a more pivotal role than ever, not only in the marketing strategies of companies, brands, and organizations, but also within boardrooms and in the C-suite.

In the transparent world epitomized by social media, corporate reputation is crucial. Executives need timely, authoritative, insightful content to navigate this landscape — that's where PRWeek comes in.

Breaking news, analysis, and opinion fuels PRWeek's content. And the brand extends into the iconic PRWeek Awards, annual conferences, roundtables, webcasts and virtual forums.

For more, visit prweek.com.

METHODOLOGY STATEMENT/RESPONDENT PROFILE

The Notified/PRWeek survey was conducted by PRWeek and completed by 154 PR/marcomms professionals in the U.S.

Broken down by type of organization for which they work: PR agency — 38%; In-house — 55% (Corporation: 48%; Nonprofit: 7%); Other — 7%.

By title, the largest groups of respondents represented: Agency CEO/president/managing partner (23%) and VP (16%). Also represented among the respondent pool were the titles of CMO, CCO, EVP, SVP, head, executive director, senior director and director.

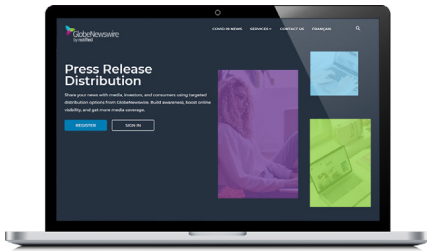
By gender, respondents were 56% female; 42% male; 1% gender non-binary; 1% prefer not to say.

Numerous industry sectors were represented in the respondent pool, the following by at least 5% of the overall group: Tech/internet (18%); Healthcare/pharma (17%); Professional services — financial services; law/legal (12%); Arts/Entertainment/Media (9%); Consumer packaged goods (8%); Food and beverage (7%); Government/Public services (5%).

The survey was conducted online between January 31 and March 4, 2023. Results have a margin of plus or minus three percentage points.

PR Solutions From Notified

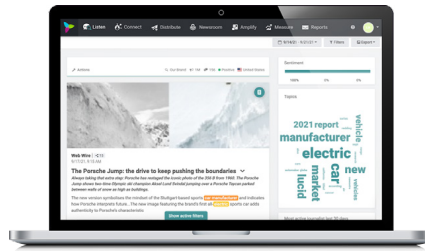
Optimize brand value, increase earned media, and drive meaningful business impact.



GlobeNewswire

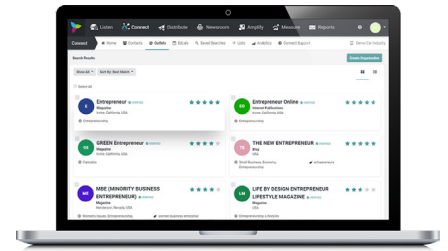
Press Release Distribution

Drive brand awareness and earned media coverage with targeted news distribution to media and consumers worldwide.



Notified PR Platform

Get monitoring, media contacts, distribution, and PR measurement in one place, with software that's integrated, intelligent, and easy to use.



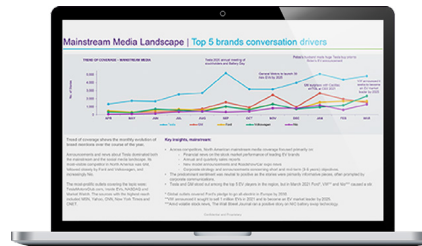
Media Database

Discover media and influencers from a smarter media database powered by AI and human curation.



Social Listening & Media Monitoring

Track online, social, and earned media for brand mentions and insights that drive more strategic communications.



Executive Media Briefs & Media Analysis Reports

Get customized reports prepared by our research team that are carefully curated to give you relevant analysis and meaningful insights.

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