The State of PR 2020

How PR teams build relationships, leverage technology and adapt to unpredictable times

A study by MUCK RACK
In this report, we seek to answer:

1. How are PR teams spending their time?
2. What are the top challenges PR pros face?
3. How do PR pros try to reach journalists?
4. How do PR pros use social media?
5. How are PR budgets changing and how are teams allocating them?
How are PR teams spending their time?
Average daily productivity software usage: PR pros use email, spreadsheets and documents

Which of the following general productivity tools do you spend the most time using on an average day?

- Email: 97%
- Documents: 87%
- Spreadsheets: 57%
- Presentations: 35%
- None of the above: 1%
Average communications and conferencing software usage: Video conferencing is as widely used as email

Which of the following types of communications and conferencing software do you spend the most time using on an average day?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Video conferencing</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct messaging</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This survey was sent out after stay-at-home orders were announced, which likely contributed to the spike on popularity of video conferencing.
Average daily project management software usage: Most PR pros are using multiple solutions— a mix of spreadsheets and project management software.

Which of the following types of project management software do you spend the most time using on an average day?

- Spreadsheets: 63%
- Dedicated project management software: 35%
- None of the above: 19%
- Other: 6%

Only 81% are using a project management solution (19% are not using anything). This data suggests that most using project management software are also supplementing with spreadsheets.
Average daily marketing and social media management usage: 37% are not using any marketing, automation or social media management tools

Which of the following types of marketing and social media management tools do you spend the most time using on an average day?

- **Social media management** (Hootsuite, Sprout social) 39%
- **Web analytics** (Google Analytics, Adobe Analytics) 29%
- **Email automation** (MailChimp, Constant Contact) 29%
- **CRM** (Salesforce, Microsoft Dynamics) 11%
- **Marketing automation** (Hubspot, Marketo) 9%
- **Marketing cloud** (Salesforce, Adobe) 6%
- None of the above 37%
Most PR pros store media lists in **spreadsheets**, with about a third using dedicated PR software.

Where do you and your team store media lists?

- **Spreadsheets** (e.g. Microsoft Excel, Google Sheets) - 83%
- **Dedicated PR software** (e.g. Muck Rack) - 37%
- **Sales CRM** (e.g. Salesforce, Microsoft Dynamics, Zoho) - 5%
- **Marketing automation software** (e.g. Hubspot, Marketo) - 4%
- **Other** - 8%
While **only 5%** previously said they **use a sales CRM**, **25%** say they **use a CRM to track media relationships**

- **6%** Rely on heavily to track relationships with the media
- **12%** Have not heard before or am not familiar with
- **19%** Use occasionally to track relationships with the media
- **63%** Have heard of but do not use to track relationships with the media

‘CRM’ is software that I:
Media databases are the most used PR tool, followed by monitoring software.

Which of the following types of PR tools do you spend the most time using on an average day?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PR Tool</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media/Journalist database</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News monitoring</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wire service/newswire</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21% of PR pros are not currently using any PR software!
What are the top challenges PR pros face?
Top challenges include **measuring business impact, tightening budgets** and lack of quantifiable measurement.

**Rank the following PR/Communications challenges your company faces**

1. Difficulty measuring business impact **71%**
2. Tightening budgets **68%**
3. Lack of quantifiable measurement **64%**
4. Finding and engaging with relevant sources **63%**
5. Tracking media mentions, compiling clips, building coverage reports **47%**
6. Recruiting/retaining the right talent **47%**
7. Collaborating effectively with team and/or other departments **42%**
PR’s biggest challenges during C-19 are loss in business revenue and placing coverage.

What have been your company’s biggest challenges during the COVID-19 outbreak?

- Loss in clients/business revenue: 54%
- Placing coverage in the new news cycle: 51%
- Finding relevant angles for pitches: 43%
- Scaling back/Elimination of PR resources and tools: 26%
Most say that **earning coverage** and **measurable results** are the top ways for PR to increase value.

**How can PR increase its value inside your organization?**

- Coverage/media relationships: 69%
- Measurable results: 66%
- Internal communication: 30%
- Team collaboration: 24%
- Technology: 20%
Most brief their executive team **weekly**, or on a **case-by-case basis**

**How often is your executive team briefed on PR and communications activities?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case by case</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upon request</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most brief their executive team **weekly** (36%), followed by on a **case-by-case basis** (25%) and **daily** (20%)
Over 50% measure success to stakeholders, executives and clients using a mixture of traditional metrics, social impact and website impact.

Which of the following metrics do you use to showcase the success of your PR and communication efforts for stakeholders/executives/clients?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Metrics</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Impact</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website Impact</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Metrics</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity Metrics</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Impact</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How do PR pros try to reach journalists?
94% say that **individual, 1:1 emails** are the most effective way to pitch journalists.

Which of the following channels do you find to be the most effective for pitching journalists?

- Individual/1:1 email: 94%
- Phone: 24%
- Twitter: 22%
- Mass email: 15%
- LinkedIn: 11%
- Newswire: 7%
- Facebook: 4%
- Other social media platforms: 4%
- Other: 2%

In our 2020 State of Journalism survey, 93% of journalists agreed that Individual, 1:1 emails are the best way to pitch them.
80% say **personalization, customization, or a relevant topic** are the most important things to include in a pitch.

Which of the following component do you believe is most important in a pitch?

- **41%** Subject relevant to the journalist
- **39%** Customization/Personalization to journalists
- **10%** Timeliness
- **4%** Catchy subject line
- **3%** Short in length
- **2%** Contains image/video/infographic
- **1%** Contains data/statistics in the headlines
- **0%** Quotes from a company spokesperson
85% say **morning is the best time to send a pitch**, while 64% of journalists also said they **prefered morning pitches** in the State of Journalism.

When is generally the best time to send a pitch?

- Early morning, 5am-9am: 30%
- Late morning, 9am-12pm: 55%
- Early afternoon, 12pm-3pm: 9%
- Late afternoon, 3pm-6pm: 3%
- Evening, 6pm-10pm: 2%
- Overnight, 11pm-5am: 1%
Almost half (45%) say Tuesday was the best day to send a pitch, while most journalists said Monday (20%).

On what day of the week do you most like to send pitches?

- **Tuesday**: 45%
- **Monday**: 12%
- **Wednesday**: 9%
- **Thursday**: 5%
- **Friday**: 3%
- **Saturday**: 0%
- **Sunday**: 0%
- **No preference**: 26%
94% cap their pitches at 2-3 paragraphs

How long is the average pitch you send to journalists?

- 71% 2-3 paragraphs
- 23% 2-3 sentences
- 6% 500-1,000 words
- 0% 1,000 words or more
Around half say that 1 follow-up is acceptable, which 55% of journalists agreed with - but only 27% of journalists wanted to receive a second

How many follow-up emails are acceptable to send after your initial pitch?

- One: 49%
- Two: 42%
- Three: 6%
- None: 3%

[Diagram showing the percentages]
91% say that pitch follow-ups are **best sent within the first week**, and 83% of journalists agreed.
91% like to maintain a relationship **over email**, and 84% of journos agreed

After you've worked with a journalist on a story, how do you prefer to maintain a professional relationship?

- **Email**: 91%
- **Twitter**: 39%
- **LinkedIn**: 34%
- **Phone**: 29%
- **Meet in person**: 47%
- **I would rather not develop these relationships**: 1%
- **Other**: 6%
How do PR pros use social media?
Twitter and LinkedIn will both be equally important to communication strategies in 2020

Which of the following social networks will be the most important for your company’s social media and communications strategy?

71% 71% 55% 50% 23% 7% 5% 4% 2%

In the 2019 survey, 71% also said Twitter was most important, though only 52% each said they consider LinkedIn and Instagram most important.
Almost 60% always or frequently follow journalists on social, which 75% of journalists said they like.
How are PR budgets changing and how are teams spending them?
44% expect COVID-19 to significantly affect their budgeting, while 38% think it’s too soon to say.
63% say their budget will either increase or remain the same over the next year.

Over the next year, my company's budget for communications/PR compared to 2019 will:

- **19%** Increase
- **37%** Decrease
- **44%** Remain the same
Most PR spend goes toward **outside agencies**, followed by **media databases** and **owned events**

Where do you spend the highest % of your PR budget (not including employee salary)?
Who took this survey?
Company types and sizes

**COMPANY TYPE**

- **Brand**: 45%
- **Agency**: 30%
- **Non-Profit**: 14%
- **Sole Practitioner**: 11%

**COMPANY SIZE (by number of employees)**

- **Just me**: 10%
- **2-10**: 24%
- **Less than 10**: 2%
- **10-49**: 19%
- **50-99**: 14%
- **100-499**: 13%
- **500-4,999**: 13%
- **5,000-9,999**: 4%
- **10,000+**: 6%
### How large is your entire company’s PR/communications team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Size</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Just me</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-10 people</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-100 people</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-1,000 people</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000+ people</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### My organization’s PR is managed by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Model</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only in-house PR team</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An in-house team + agency</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only a PR/comms agency</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR is rolled into our other functions</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annual company revenue

- Under $1M: 27%
- $1M to $9.9M: 21%
- $10M to $499M: 13%
- $500M to $999M: 3%
- $1B or more: 6%
- I don’t know/prefer not to say: 30%
In conclusion
4 Key Takeaways

1. PR pros track media relationships in a variety of places—83% use spreadsheets, 37% use dedicated software and 5% use CRM.

2. PR’s biggest challenges during COVID-19 are loss in business revenue and placing coverage. 44% say the pandemic will affect their budget, while 37% think it’s too soon to say.

3. PR pros say difficulty measuring business impact was their top challenge, followed by tightening budgets and a lack of quantifiable measurement.

4. Most PR pros agree that pitches should be shorter than 3 paragraphs and sent as 1:1 emails some time in the morning. This is consistent with journalist preferences according to The State of Journalism report.
Thank you!
Sharpen your media pitching skills with our free certification course

Enroll now!
https://mrack.co/certification