

# Rapid adoption of new tech, media: opportunities for PR

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By [Sally Falkow](#) 19 Jan 2011



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The study, conducted by Dr Nora Barnes, director of the Center for Marketing Research at the University of Massachusetts in Dartmouth and a senior fellow with the Society for New Communications Research, also found that smaller companies, those listed in the Inc 500 list, were adopting social media at an even faster pace.

This rapid adoption of new media and new technologies presents some interesting opportunities for the PR profession:

- **Reputation management:**

The availability of easy online publishing tools has given everyone a voice and the power to reach an audience. This has many positive aspects, but it also opens the door to greater risk and the need for constant vigilance.

Inaccurate information and bad news can spread rapidly online. Reputation management has long been a core PR function and now, more than ever, we have to be aware of what is being said about the organisation and be able to take effective action to correct any threat to the organisation's image.

Listening to the online conversations and having a PR team that is trained to react effectively is no longer an option - it is a necessity. You can't afford to be caught unawares or react incorrectly.

Nestle's response to the Greenpeace attack is a case in point: several social media and PR analysts have commented that the initial handling of the attack only made things worse. One case study refers to Nestle's "seemingly unprepared and not particularly PR-savvy social media team."

Web strategist Jeremiah Owyang warns that citizen activists and organizations such as Greenpeace are [incredibly well organised](#) and that every company must have a well-trained PR team that can handle a social media attack and have [digital crisis plan in place](#).

In the past, PR agencies have provided media training to their clients. It's time to expand that to social media training. But that, of course, assumes that the agency has the knowledge and experience to impart that training.

- **Getting smart with the data:**

One of the positive aspects of the online world is that there is a wealth of information available and this makes it possible to measure outcomes, not just outputs.

In the summer of 2010 The International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC) met in Barcelona to discuss PR measurement. AMEC is the global trade body and professional institute for agencies and practitioners who provide media evaluation and communication research.

The Barcelona Principles that were adopted at this summit made a very strong case for the need to move to more progressive measurements that show the organisational impact of PR activities:

- Goal setting and measurement are important
- Media measurement requires quantity and quality
- **AVEs are not the value of public relations**
- Social media can and should be measured
- Measuring outcomes is preferred to measuring media results (outputs)
- Organisational results and outcomes should be measured whenever possible
- Transparency and replicability are paramount to sound measurement.

[In this interview](#), Philip Sheldrake, chair of the Measurement Group at the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, runs through the principles and interviews AMEC's executive director Barry Leggetter and Katie Delahaye Paine of KD Paine & Partners (the 'Queen of Measurement'!) about the principles and what they mean for PR practitioners.

Listening to the conversation is a given; digging into that data and extracting actionable insights that can drive content strategy and engagement is a skill PR folk have to master in 2011. Building relationships is done through communication. That means developing good content.

PR content in 2011 will go way beyond press releases -it should include website meta tags, page content and blog posts. Twitter and Facebook content, along with white papers, case studies and journalistic-quality articles, will be required.

Using data analysis to discover what content to create and how to deliver it can make the difference between just 'throwing some content against the wall' and hoping for the best - or developing a finely targeted and focused campaign that meets the information and emotional needs of your community and contributes significantly to the bottom line.

Data mining will uncover opportunities and threats and identify all the influencers you should be working with. The PR team at SAP, the world's leading provider of business software, found that while they were working with 15 influencers, there were in fact 45 important influencers they should be engaging.

## • **Media relations:**

The international media landscape is dramatically different from what it was five years ago. As media consumption patterns change, so too does the PR media-relations function have to change.

Every media outlet has a website and is eager for online content. Journalists are looking for more than just a print press release - all news content has to include multimedia digital assets.

Although a recent Statistics South Africa report shows that only 10.9% of South Africans have access to the Internet would be wise to keep an eye on the rapidly expanding use of mobile phones to access the web for news and information and to communicate with peers.

The International Telecommunication Union estimates that there will 5.3 billion mobile subscriptions worldwide by the end of 2010. That's equivalent to 77% of the world population and it's a big jump from 4.6 billion mobile subscriptions the end of 2009.

In this arena, SA is not lagging far behind: 62% of SA adults with a per capita income of less than R5 per day

personally own, rent or have use of a cellphone. According to South Africa.info, 60% of mobile phone users are able to browse the Internet on their device. It would be productive to make all company news content accessible online via a mobile device.

2011 promises to be an exciting year. The PR profession is well-placed to reap the benefit of these changes if we embrace the new technology and master the skills necessary to deliver these new ideas to our companies and clients.

**For more:**

- Biz Trends 2011: [Marketing & Media South Africa](#)
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- Biz Trends 2011: [Retail](#)
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## ABOUT SALLY FALKOW

Sally Falkow APR is president and co-developer of PRESSfeed ([www.press-feed.com](http://www.press-feed.com)), the social media news hub. Originally from South Africa, Falkow now lives in Pasadena, California. She is an adjunct professor for social media strategy and content for public relations at the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at USC in Los Angeles, California. She blogs at [www.proactivereport.com](http://www.proactivereport.com) and you can follow her on Twitter at [@sallyfalkow](https://twitter.com/sallyfalkow). View my profile and articles...

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