

Conversation capital shows great return on investment

 By [Ingrid von Stein](#)

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We all want people to talk about us - in a good way, of course. We all want people to say how great we are. We all get upset if we hear that someone has said something negative about us. Yes, we are all beings that operate from a place of ego. Just step back for a moment and evaluate. Why do we want people to talk about us? We want this because we then feel that we are noticed. But the question is - do you want to be noticed or do you want people to interact with you?

This is the basis of any solid communications platform. Firstly establish what you want and then work in tandem with the rest of your circle to start the conversation.

The way in which we do business today has changed dramatically and I often feel that communications professionals have not adapted fast enough to embrace these changes. Many still operate on the following premise:

Meet the client; get the client to sign a retainer agreement; draw up a communications plan; set up monthly deliverables; meet the client once a month to give our feedback report; write press releases; send to media; hope media will publish it; clip the coverage and give it a rand value and at the end of the month present this to the client in a file and in your mind you have delivered.

But this is no longer the way I feel we should be doing business.

Where to start...

The communications platforms are now so varied - a few years ago you had print and broadcast and that covered newspapers, magazines, TV and radio. But now we have terrestrial radio, digital radio, online radio, live audio-streaming platforms, social media via PC and mobile, niche industry online audio and video streaming; eMagazines; instant messenger chat, to name a few.

So where do we start and how do we get our clients out there? In many instances the role of strategic communications is an afterthought. Many clients will have their marketing and sales teams already working on campaigns/business goals, but they are just not showing the sales results that were expected and this is often the time that the communications person is brought in and given the request is to "get us out there and noticed". Alas, in many instances the client's belief is that this will translate into sales.

It's not about making sales... yet

However, strategic communications is not about making sales... The role of communications is to create conversations around your brand that are then circulated in your key market sectors and get people *talking* about your brand. That in turn leads to a brand engagement, which then leads to people interacting directly with your brand - which is *then* the perfect opportunity for your sales team to harness that engagement and encourage, and convert this to a sale.

The role of communications specialists today has changed, and the days of being the last one to be called into the marketing/sales planning is a thing of the past.

Today, the communications specialist needs to sit at the table right from the outset of the concept conversation and work with the entire team to establish, firstly, what the business goals are, and from there what the key "conversation capital" is. From there the aim is to work from this point to create and stimulate conversation in the key communities where you know your best chance is going to come from the conversion from conversation to interaction.

ABOUT INGRID VON STEIN

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