



THE PR JOB SPEC OF THE FUTURE

The PR job spec of the future

As one very accomplished technology entrepreneur said to us recently:



“Life is change.

The one thing you can depend on is your situation will be different in a year, and *very* different in ten years.”

He is of course spot-on. And he presents a good analogy for the situation PR and marketing professionals are facing.

Brand marketing strategies are evolving at an exponential rate – due to the ever-changing behaviour of buyers, and the ever-changing nature of the communication environments (AKA social media) they inhabit. It of course means agencies’ supporting role to their brand clients must evolve at the same pace.

Five years ago...



...most public relations teams
(both in-house and agency) would deliver media relations
- not public relations in its widest sense.

Within brands, the PR (media relations) campaign would run completely separately to the marketing campaign that incorporated elements, often delivered by agency suppliers, such as **creative**, **DM**, **SEO** and **PPC**. Very rarely would a PR and marketing manager collaborate, and equally rarely would the PR agency collaborate with their marketing supplier counterparts.

However, PR and marketing managers are beginning to take a more holistic approach to their comms strategy, while striving to be more thorough and consistent in the execution of that strategy across the myriad channels to market. The industry is transitioning from many suppliers offering a specialist service, to few suppliers offering multiple services. Integration is becoming easier.

Which is why it was surprising to see a senior agency figure's definition of PR on Forbes.com in October 2013:



Reading this felt like a large step back in time



We don't buy ads.

We don't write stories for reporters.

We don't put up billboards.

We don't come up with catchy phrases to make people buy more products they probably don't need...

So what do public relations [people and] agencies do? PR [people], as opposed to advertising [people], promote companies or individuals via editorial coverage. This is known as earned or free media – stories appearing on websites, newspapers, magazines and TV programs – as opposed to paid media or advertisements.



The point is



In 2014 and beyond, the *raison d'être* of most PR professionals will not be to achieve print coverage. Neither will they specialise solely in media relations. The ambitious (dare we say smart?) ones will in fact go in the opposite direction – executing campaigns over ever more channels than just the media, hiring staff and using agencies that offer an ever broader portfolio of services complementary to traditional PR. This won't just be free media, but owned and earned also.

Traditional PR is becoming integrated communications. It's certainly where **Octopus Group** is going.

From a staffing and skills standpoint, this means rapid change in the job description of PR people looking to increase their value to stakeholders – whether that be a corporate comms director reporting into the board of a tech PLC, or a PR executive at the outset of their career, reporting into their PR manager.

It's why job descriptions like this one (next page) posted last month on a UK job board which will remain nameless are thankfully becoming rare:



PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR) EXECUTIVE

This public relations executive will be responsible for handling all aspects of planned publicity campaigns and PR activities, which will include:

- **Planning** publicity strategies and campaigns
- **Writing** and producing presentations and press releases
- **Dealing** with enquiries from the public, the press, and related organisations
- **Organising** promotional events such as press conferences, open days, exhibitions, tours and visits
- **Analysing** media coverage

What's good about this job description:

- ✓ It's got bullet points. We like bullet points . . .
- ✓ ... A lot

What's not-so-good about this job description:

- ✗ 'Press releases.' 'The press.' 'Press conference.'

The vast majority of PR executives will be doing so much more than simple media relations – certainly more than dealing with the print media (AKA the press). Social media has broadened PR's horizons over the last five years.

- ✗ 'Dealing with enquiries from the public, the press, and related organisations.'

Unless PR execs are staffing the likes of the Google, Apple or Microsoft press offices, they won't do much sitting around waiting for the phone to ring from the Huffington Post. So much of the job is about proactively executing brand building campaigns in order to increase brand advocacy, drive website visitors and ultimately support sales-pipeline growth in an ideal world. It's not about sitting on hands waiting for incoming calls from media and analysts.

As a result, job descriptions are set to change radically. We'll therefore see fewer traditional (dare we say bland?) job descriptions like this one (next page) we spotted on a UK job board last week:



PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR) EXECUTIVE

- Excellent **communication** skills both orally and in writing
- Excellent **interpersonal** skills
- Good **IT** skills
- **Presentation** skills
- **Initiative**
- Ability to **prioritise** and **plan** effectively
- Awareness of different **media** agendas
- **Creativity**



Instead, there will be two categories of job description:

Specialists: that execute campaign 'strands'.
Media relations supremo, designer extraordinaire, planning brainbox, creative whizz, content genius.

Consultants: that plan and project manage.
Incisive-thinking, commercially-minded, strategists that devise a brand's over-arching comms strategy, and bring a thorough understanding of the ways and means of delivering a multi-channel strategy.



Looking specifically at the PR consultant category, the job description of the future could well look like this:

- ✓ The fortunate and talented PR consultant that secures this role will be responsible for **creating, adapting and executing the voice of our brand** across all its touch points with our customers and prospects.
- ✓ They will **work collaboratively with the specialist delivery teams** to ensure all communications are telling a story that generates brand awareness and advocacy, and ultimately supports sales.
- ✓ They will **solve communications challenges** and develop original solutions across a number of platforms, with day-to-day responsibility for the smooth and effective running of our brand's ongoing campaign and periodic projects.
- ✓ They are the glue between all comms disciplines – above and below the line - pulling together the right resources with a focus on great delivery, with a good working **knowledge of the full marketing mix** and an astute eye for managing budgets when using third party partners.

Fundamental elements of the role include:

- ✓ **Planning** – Create and maintain integrated marketing plans including project timing plans, working with input from specialist departments when needed.
- ✓ **Innovation** – Drive strategic thinking and innovation across all communication platforms.
- ✓ **Collaboration** – Be the hub of communication for comms campaigns – in regular contact with internal and external partners engaged in delivery.
- ✓ **Project management** – Manage, schedule and deliver multiple work streams across our brand's comms channels – considering agreed scope, timings and budget.
- ✓ **Multi-channel** – Understand all delivery channels that form part of our integrated campaigns – including paid, earned and owned.
- ✓ **Digital & social** – Possess a good working knowledge of the role of digital across paid, earned and owned media. From site and application builds through to PPC, SEO and social media.
- ✓ **Commercial awareness** – At all times stay abreast of our spend across all our digital assets and suppliers – closely managing campaign costs and where possible, deliver cost-saving efficiencies to the business. Always be conscious that great marketing and comms is ultimately about making our brand more commercially successful.



Times are changing

PR is not just media relations. Above-the-line activity no longer just sits with the marketing department. Brands need comms teams that are multi-talented, multi-channel and supremely commercial. PR teams need to recruit in line with that, and this starts at the job spec. Get it right, because the cost of hiring the wrong talent is significant.

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