



PR Redefined: Public Relations in 2022

More responsibilities. More expectations. More ways to think about “traditional” tasks. More respect and reliance from the C-suite. These are new — or certainly enhanced — realities of being a PR pro in 2022. These are also the major takeaways from a recent Notified/PRWeek survey. With exclusive data and industry-leader perspectives, the pages within drill deep into how this impacts the everyday job and what it takes to excel at the function today and into the future.

Maintaining a Stronger-Than-Ever Position

Public relations is more important than ever before. This was the idea that motivated Notified's latest survey, created in partnership with PRWeek.

Over the past few years, the C-suite has turned to PR to lead the response to major global events — complex social issues, geopolitical challenges, stock market uncertainty and ESG and sustainability initiatives. There is no doubt that when it comes to corporate communications, the stakes are higher than ever. In fact, our survey found that more than 85% of PR professionals believe that PR has a stronger position within the C-suite than it did just two years ago.

Our survey results also demonstrate the tremendous progress that has been made in understanding the impact that PR can have on business. For example, 76% of respondents believe that the C-suite is more inclined to turn to PR before any other department when a crisis occurs or appears imminent.

PR professionals have an incredible opportunity to use the high-stakes work they're doing to educate internal stakeholders on all areas of the business that can benefit from a strategic, data-driven communications effort.

Of course, this means that we must continue to advance PR measurement and the use of data. One of the biggest challenges that PR will face in the coming years is creating a measurement framework for activities that are harder to track using traditional metrics — such as DE&I, crisis response and stakeholder sentiment in response to taking a corporate stance on an important social issue.

This will require innovation and even broader adoption of PR technology — from responding quickly to breaking news to understanding who is most likely to influence an important story, sentiment analysis of stakeholders across multiple channels, measuring the impact of a press release against earned and social media outcomes and understanding share of voice in ESG narratives. The amount of data that PR professionals have access to can truly demonstrate the impact of a communications strategy on the bottom line.

So, did the survey prove our theory that PR is more important than ever? On these pages, you'll see that it did. Moreover, it's only poised to become more important in the years to come, as PR aligns more closely with sales, marketing and leadership to influence decisions during critical times.

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The New ‘New’

Public relations is entering a different era. Yes, that’s been said before. However, much like all aspects of life, the pandemic has changed the game as nothing ever has — and on a daily basis. The findings of this Notified/PRWeek survey underscore how it is all manifesting itself for every PR pro.

Words **Melissa Jo Fleming**

The pandemic, coupled with continually evolving tools, has changed the ways brands communicate and how audiences get information. And if they hadn’t already done so, these realities have forever impressed upon business leaders just how vital the PR and comms function is to their entire business.

From crisis to purpose, from reputation to investor relations, comms is increasingly being brought into the conversation at the very start — and it’s remaining in that conversation throughout the entire process.

The results gleaned from the nearly 200 PR pros in a recent Notified/PRWeek survey, representing all levels of seniority and organization types, bear this out.

An overwhelming majority (95%) say that the expectations on PR are greater now than they have ever been. More than three-quarters (76.2%) feel that, as compared to two years ago, the C-suite is more inclined to turn to PR before any other department when a crisis occurs or appears imminent. Meanwhile, more than four-fifths (85.7%) agree that PR has a stronger position within the C-suite than it did two years ago.

“It’s the result of the turbulent times in which we’re living, where brands and organizations are having to navigate disruption, transformation and political climates,” explains Stephanie Marchesi, president of global health at WE Communications. “CEOs are engaging with PR on an ongoing basis. Part of the reason is that their investors and their boards are paying an enormous amount of attention to their brand story and the outcome of the announcement that was made.”

“When it comes to communications, the stakes are just so much higher than they’ve ever been,” says Ben Chodor, former president of Notified. “The C-suites rely on PR to respond to major global events, social issues, geopolitical issues, the stock market, and ESG and sustainability initiatives. There’s a huge opportunity for PR to finally get a true seat at the table.”

So Much More To Do

The sheer volume of matters in which PR pros are now shouldering responsibility — materially so — has never been higher. The C-suite, in turn, expects high-level counsel on all of it.

In truth, this is an expected result that is driven by the greater-than-ever expectations the public has of businesses to lead on myriad societal matters.

“We’re in a moment in which our society is transforming in several aspects that are bringing companies into a space in which they typically would not play such an active role,” suggests Alfredo Richard, EVP of communications at NBCUniversal Telemundo. “When that happens, the communications person comes with it. And you’re in a situation where you have to at least think through

what does it mean, what is the company’s position regarding the issue and what will be our communications strategy around that.”

One of the truly indicative findings of this year’s survey is all of the added responsibilities PR pros now have purview over that they did not a mere few years ago. And this includes issues that are new to the discipline’s scope, as well as ones they have been working on, but not nearly as much as they do now.



SHARED PASSION FOR PURPOSE?

Our survey establishes that PR pros spend significantly more time now on matters related to ESG than they did just two years ago. Does the C-suite truly embrace the need for ESG and purpose to be a central part of everything their company does? Our respondents say:

Very much so: 25.4%

Somewhat: 61.3%

Minimally: 10.5%

Not at all: 2.8%

These matters include internal comms (95.0% work on it, 45.3% more than two years ago), employee recruitment and retention (86.7% work on it, 39.8% more than two years ago) and data collection and analysis (94.5% work on it, 47.5% more than two years ago).

In terms of responsibilities that have increased over the past two years, however, the clear two frontrunners are **diversity, equity and inclusion** (93.4% work on it, with a whopping 76.2% doing so more than two years ago) and **matters related to ESG (environmental, social and governance) and purpose** (95.0% work on it, 61.3% more than two years ago).

These findings are very much in line with the daily realities of Priyanka Shah, VP of IR and comms at Kinnate Biopharma. In her career, she has clearly seen an uptick in the amount of time and resource she and colleagues devote to ESG/purpose matters, as well as “employee communications and how that ties into things such as DE+I. Employee engagement, DE+I and CSR all go hand in hand because you’re ultimately thinking about what makes a company accountable.”

“The expectation of both consumers and employees from

companies is that they want to see what the organization is actually going to do,” observes Marchesi. “Don’t make grand bold statements about the way you see the world or the place you want to have unless you can actually show some real actionable elements against it. All of this is aligned with authenticity because it’s got to be who you really are at your core.”

The PR team, she continues, is in the prime position to lead that charge — and do so with far more than just messaging.

You Can’t Get Too Much Content

At the foundation of all PR initiatives is the narrative, targeted to reach different audience segments through more and more diverse channels. This is an area where PR has always led. In recent years, the kinds of content PR professionals are using to engage with consumers, employees, investors and editors have greatly expanded.

Company newsletters, video webcasts, virtual events, podcasts, blogs and sponsored/paid-for content. PR pros have a major hand in all of those, notably more than just two years ago, our survey reveals.

The main story here, though, is very much one of old and new. In terms of what occupies the most of their time, social media is clearly in the top spot with 75.1% of our respondents saying they work on it “extensively.” That’s the new. The more traditional? That would be press releases, which are worked on “extensively” by 65.7% of our respondents.

That latter result might surprise those who have been touting the demise of the press release for some time. Au contraire.

→ WHAT ELSE ARE YOU WORKING ON?

Beyond social media and press releases, we presented PR pros seven other types of content. The percentages below represent how many of them work “extensively” on each:

C-suite leadership communications: 51.9%

Video: 42.5%

Blogs: 37.6%

Webcasts and virtual events: 37.6%

Company newsletters: 32.6%

Sponsored/paid-for content: 25.4%

Podcasts: 18.8%

The traditional press release still has value, asserts Liza Bychkov-Suloti, cofounder, partner and CCO of Shadow PR. It contains everything an editor needs: the timeline, pricing, ingredients, executive quotes, the brand voice. “The way we expect people to react to the release has shifted,” she notes. “Now it’s just a supplementary tool to be able to carry the full story.”

The goal, adds Shah, is “the trifecta of earned, owned and paid media. There’s earned content such as op-eds and stories secured through pitching reporters, but then you’re complementing that with your own brand journalism on owned channels, social, digital and other platforms where you’re putting out perspective pieces and facts. It becomes really important to have the right paid media strategy to ensure that the content is reaching the audience that you want it to impact.”

The increased involvement in paid-for activity is not to be overlooked when assessing the remit of today’s PR pro. Nor are partnerships with third parties.

At NBCUniversal Telemundo, for example, “the influencer strategy is a powerful space to operate in,” says Richard. “Trust comes with those third parties that are followed and respected by individuals. How can we make them partners so that they not only talk about what we do, but more importantly engage the followers? That’s really what matters.”

→ POPULAR RELEASE

The demise of the press release has been greatly exaggerated. How much so? Here we share the responses when we asked PR pros if they still believe press releases are a valuable part of the media mix?

Yes: 79.0%

No: 21.0%

Data and Analytics: Not If, But How Well

PR, once considered almost entirely art, is now very much a combination of art and science. Major advances in data and analytics have hugely facilitated this. In fact, the question is no longer about whether you measure and analyze. It’s what you measure and analyze and how well you do it.

The answers to these queries impact so much. The correlation between strong metrics and strong PR is inescapable. So when those who practice the discipline claim strength — or weakness — in a particular area, it merits attention.

To that end, two things stood out from the many we presented our respondents with when we asked them to indicate how strong their data was in certain areas. A vast majority (90.6%) identify audience reach as a strength, while nearly half (46.4%) admit continued weakness at measuring PR’s direct impact on the bottom line.

For the latter, Shah advises, “Focus on having that clear alignment on the goals in the priority audiences. You can’t undermine the importance of that because you don’t want to boil the ocean. Have a baseline reputation score among your predefined priority audience and then determine what measures you’ll find most valuable so that you know if you’re making an impact or not.”

The best way to track and manage the effectiveness of communications is to “learn how to use the social listening and media-monitoring tools that are at your fingertips,” suggests Chodor. “It will change the way you do your day-to-day business. What you can find is not only the data on your organization, but what your competitors are doing and what the industry is doing. Embrace the technology that is out there and continue to tell your organization’s story, but use that data.”

It can be difficult to measure “the real magic of what we do — creating buzz, creating a perception of something, making people believe something, want something, take action in something,” says Bychkov-Suloti. “It’s important that your relationship with measurement is really in line with how that client views success because not every client comes to us with the same formula of

what they want or need. And you have to get really creative about what that can look like to prove that the efforts are paying off.”

The real measure of PR’s impact is “visibility, reputation, engagement and behavior change,” counsels Marchesi. To continue to do that well amidst the evolving responsibilities and challenges of PR today requires constant learning.

“We have to be curious, ask questions and open our minds to new concepts to bring our clients new solutions and new progressive thinking on how things should be done,” she concludes. “The world is evolving too fast and too much for us to stay comfortable with what we used to do. We have to be uncomfortable with what we need to be doing going forward.” ●

→ **CONTINUING CHALLENGES**

Our survey clearly underscores the ongoing issues PR pros have with proving impact on the bottom line. Below we present four specific metrics and the percentages that highlight the extent of the struggle.

Customer retention

We are currently only able to gather some data in this area: **47.5%**

Our current capabilities in collecting this data are weak: **25.4%**

Increase in sales

We are currently only able to gather some data in this area: **46.4%**

Our current capabilities in collecting this data are weak: **23.2%**

Reputational changes

We are currently only able to gather some data in this area: **50.8%**

Our current capabilities in collecting this data are weak: **19.4%**

Competitive positioning

We are currently only able to gather some data in this area: **49.2%**

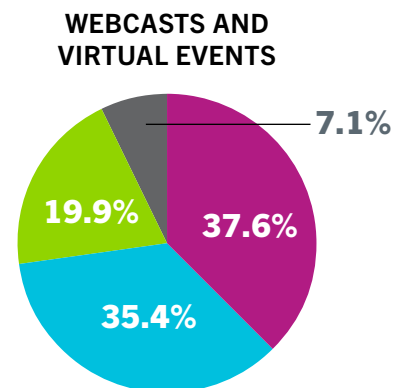
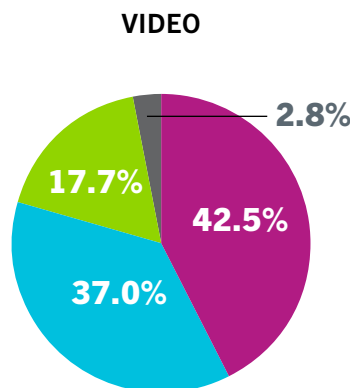
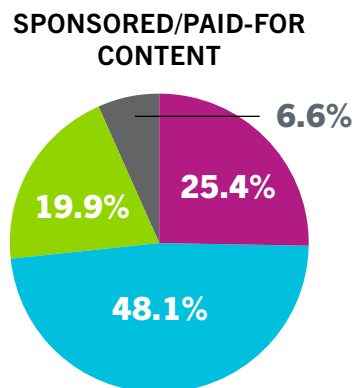
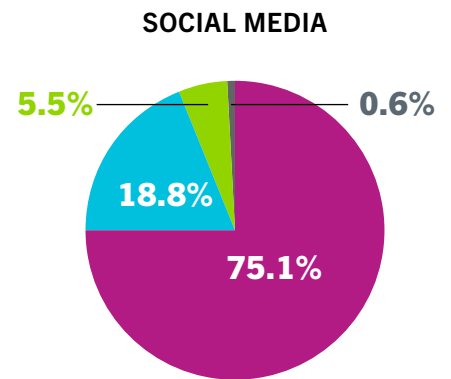
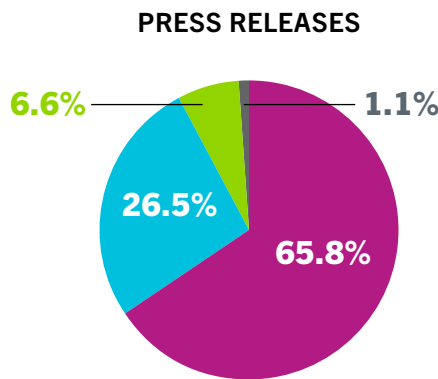
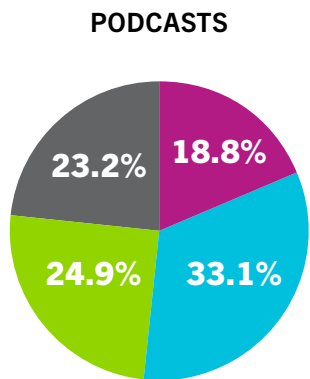
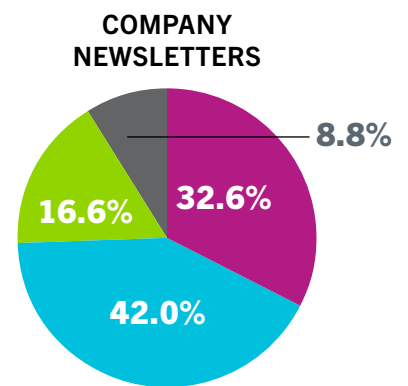
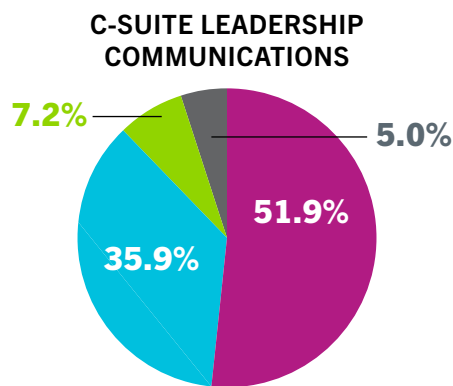
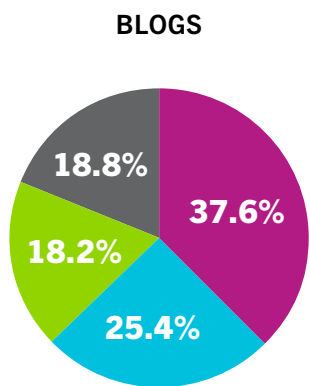
Our current capabilities in collecting this data are weak: **16.0%**

“When it comes to communications, the stakes are just so much higher than they’ve ever been. The C-suites rely on PR to respond to major global events, social issues, geopolitical issues, the stock market, and ESG and sustainability initiatives. There’s a huge opportunity for PR to finally get a true seat at the table.”

Ben Chodor
President of Notified

Content Report – Part 1

The types of content PR pros are responsible for producing (either entirely or partially) has greatly expanded in recent years. On this page, we focus on nine types of content and detail how much time our respondents spend on each.

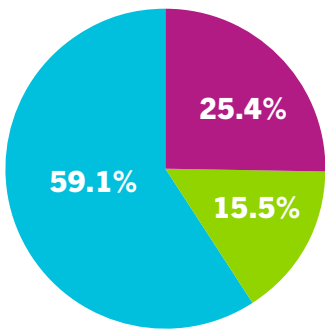


Content Report – Part 2

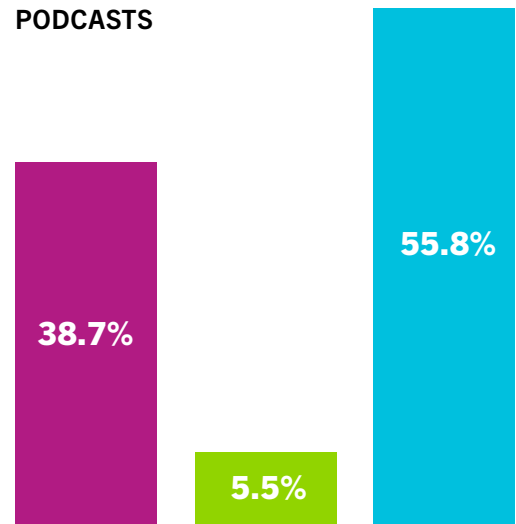
On the previous page, we revealed how much time our respondents spend on nine different types of content. On these next two pages, we reveal how all of those responses differ from what they would have been two years ago.

- Yes, my answer IS different — and I work on this MORE than I did two years ago
- Yes, my answer IS different — and I work on this LESS than I did two years ago
- No, my answer is the SAME as it would have been two years ago

BLOGS



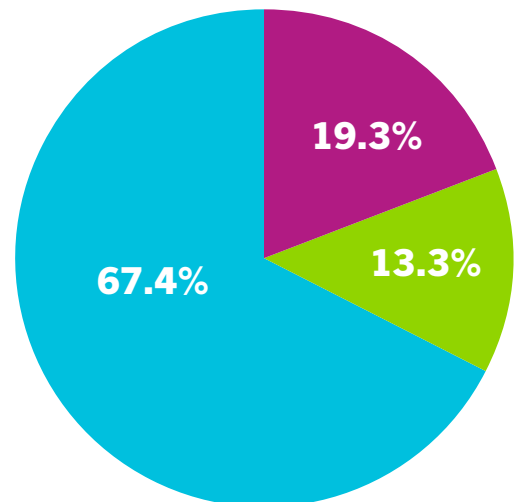
PODCASTS



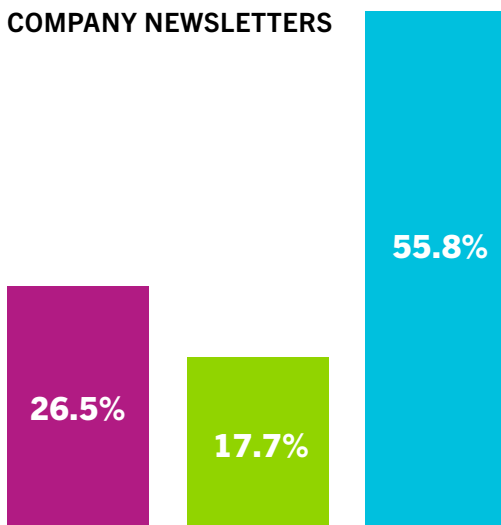
C-SUITE LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATIONS



PRESS RELEASES

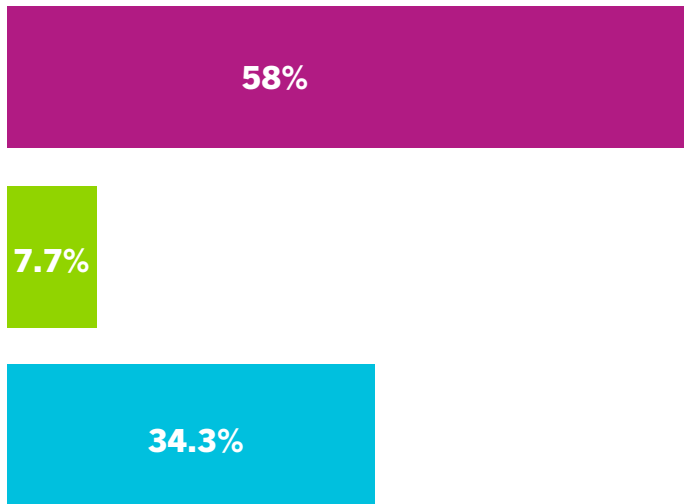


COMPANY NEWSLETTERS

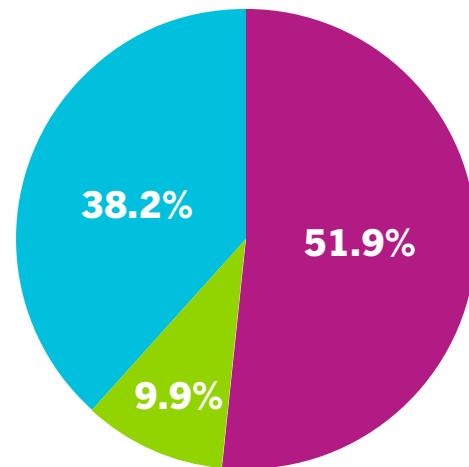


- Yes, my answer IS different — and I work on this MORE than I did two years ago
- Yes, my answer IS different — and I work on this LESS than I did two years ago
- No, my answer is the SAME as it would have been two years ago

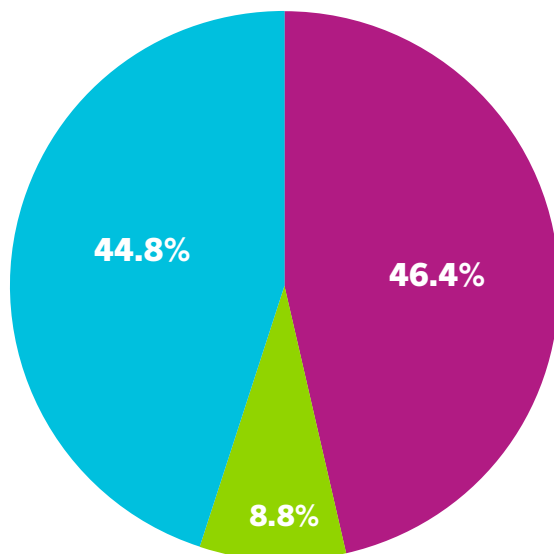
SOCIAL MEDIA



WEBCASTS AND VIRTUAL EVENTS



VIDEO



KEY TAKEAWAYS: Not only is **social media** the content worked on by the highest percentage of our respondents (99.4% in total), it’s also the content form that the highest percentage works on more now than they did two years ago (58.0%).

Beyond social media and press releases, the only other content type on which more than half our respondents work “extensively” is C-suite leadership communications (51.9%).

Meanwhile, in terms of content PR pros notably work on more than they did two years ago, sponsored/paid-for content (43.6%) and webcasts/virtual events (51.9%) stand out.

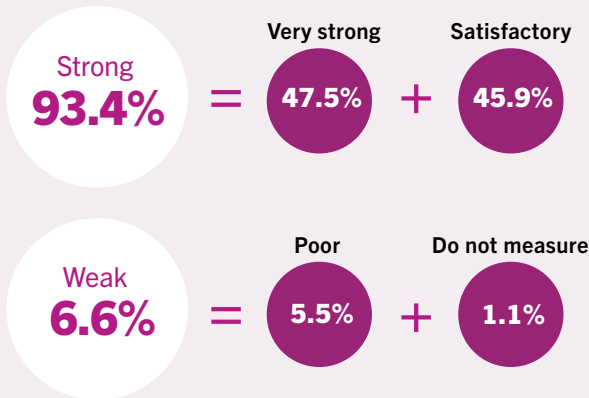
SPONSORED/PAID-FOR CONTENT



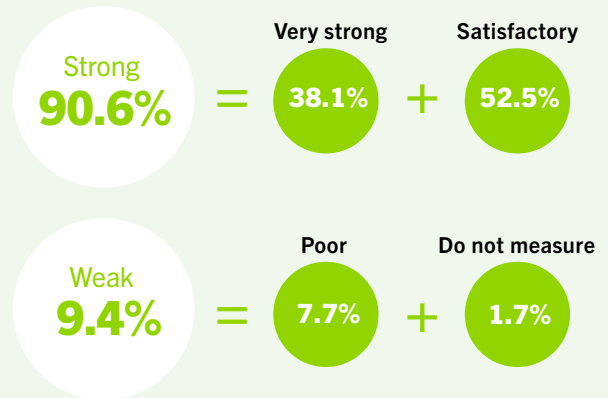
Even More Metrics

Measuring is among the myriad tasks PR pros are doing more of than ever before. And not just the measuring itself, but the things for which they are collecting data have vastly increased. The data on these next two pages focuses on eight metrics and reveals not only how many PR pros measure each one, but how strong their data is in doing so.

MEDIA IMPRESSIONS



AUDIENCE REACH



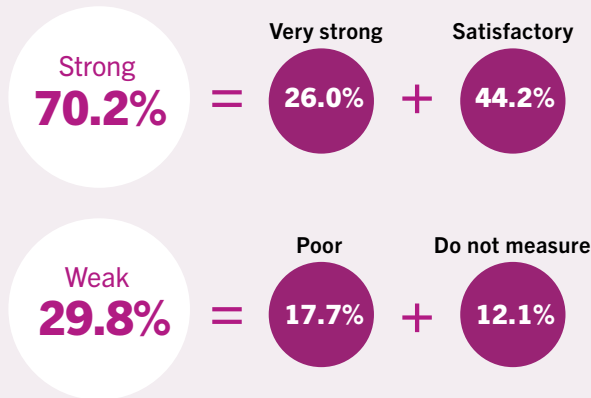
SOCIAL MEDIA SHARES/MENTIONS



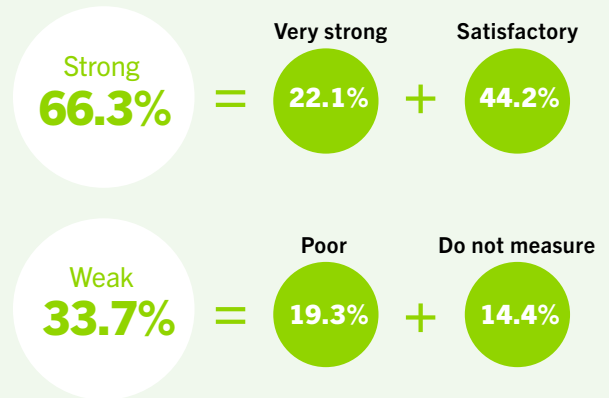
AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT ON YOUR WEBSITE



SHARE OF VOICE



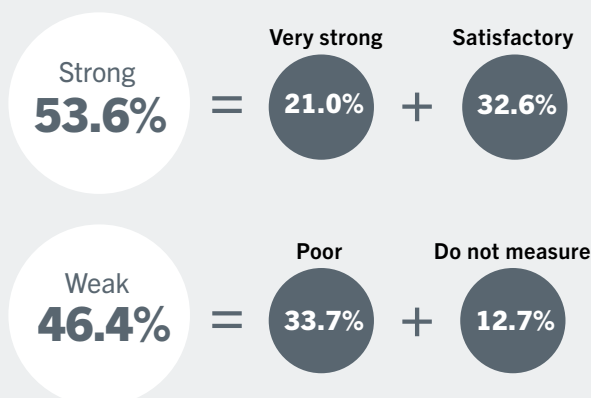
CONSUMER SENTIMENT



OTHER KEY STAKEHOLDERS' SENTIMENTS (E.G., EMPLOYEES, INVESTORS)



PR'S DIRECT IMPACT ON THE BOTTOM LINE



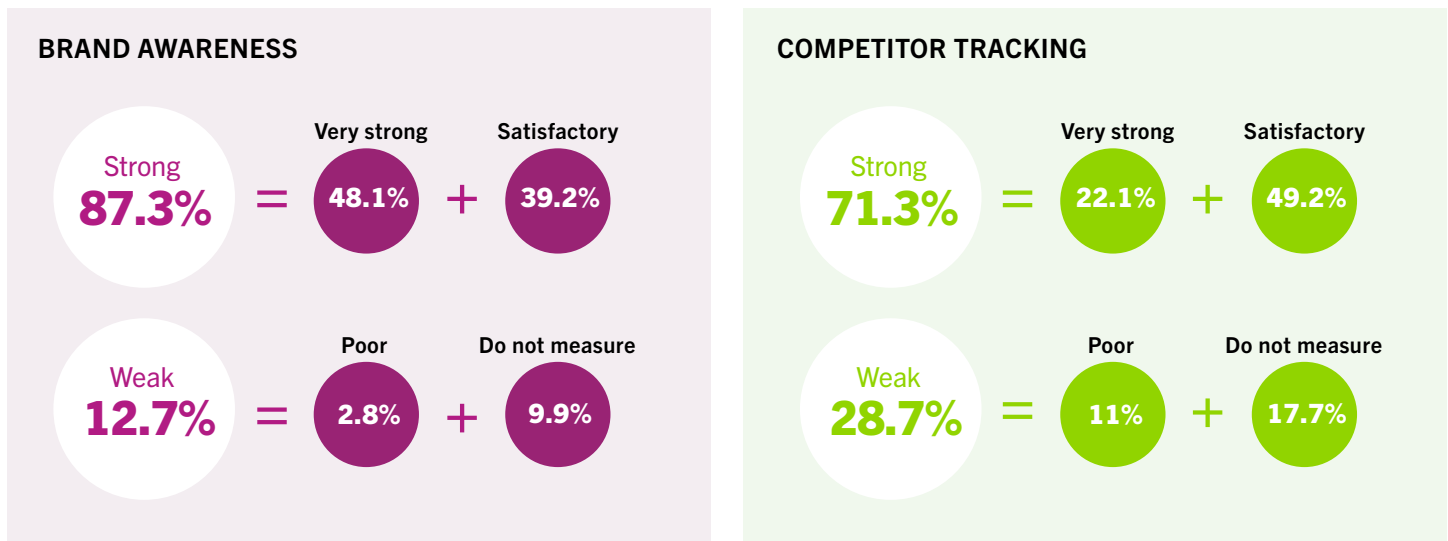
KEY TAKEAWAYS: On a macro level, it is noteworthy that at least 81.8% of PR pros actively seek out all eight of these metrics to at least some extent.

In terms of the strength of the data they are collecting, the clear front runners are (with at least 90% of respondents answering positively): **media impressions, audience reach and social media shares/mentions.**

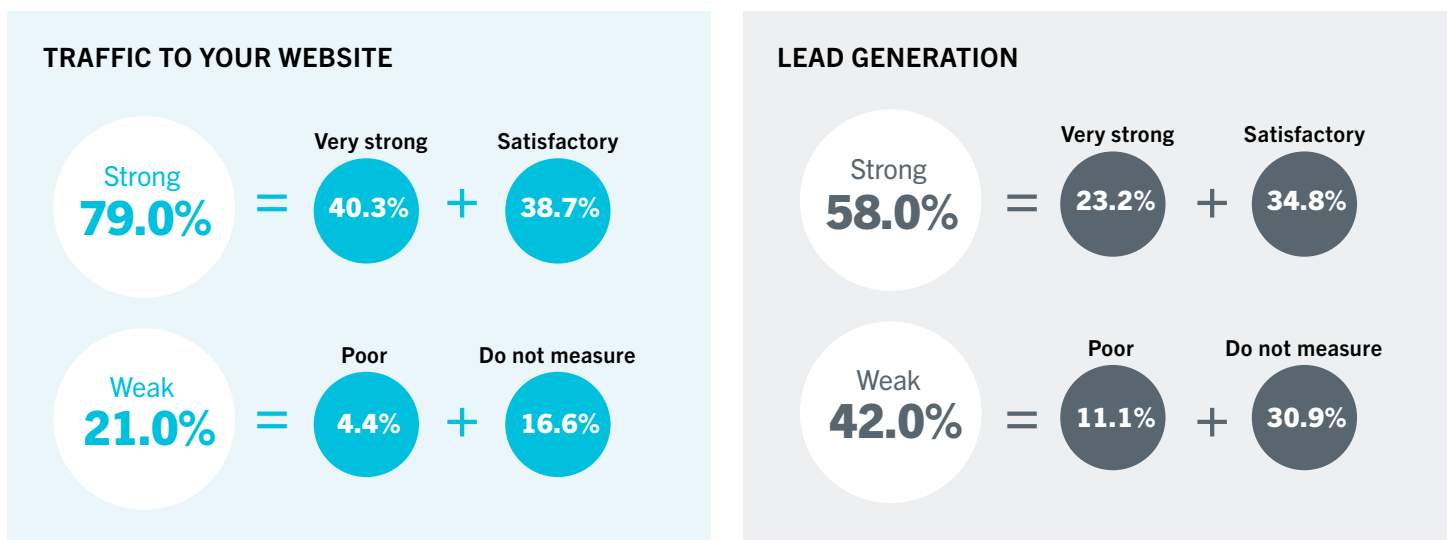
The biggest negative, however, remains consistent with other survey findings: Nearly half of our respondents concede weakness when it comes to measuring for **PR's direct impact on the bottom line.**

Measuring Up To Marketing

In a previous Notified/PRWeek survey, PR pros nearly unanimously (98%) recognized the importance of mastering and applying marketing competencies. Below we list four performance metrics that have typically fallen to marketing. The data below will reveal how many PR pros are measuring for all four — and how strong they are in doing so.



KEY TAKEAWAYS: Lead generation is the standout metric for many reasons. Not only does it net — by far — the most negative responses in terms of data strength, but it also (again, by far) is the one our respondents don't even measure. Inasmuch as this is the most direct metric related to the bottom line, this is consistent with our overall survey findings. PR pros' predominant success on measuring brand awareness is noteworthy, as well.



Competing Sentiments

It is always interesting — and often telling — to compare how agency and in-house pros respond to the same query. This survey certainly found some noteworthy differences to how both groups responded on many fronts. We share highlights of that below.

We work on matters related to DE&I more than we did two years ago



We VERY MUCH feel that upper management at our brands/clients have come to truly embrace the need for ESG and corporate purpose to be a central part of everything the company does



We have strong data on customer retention



I still believe press releases are a valuable part of the media mix



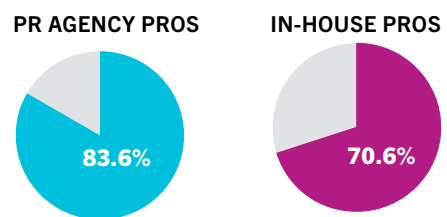
We have solid to very strong data on the amount of time people spend on the website



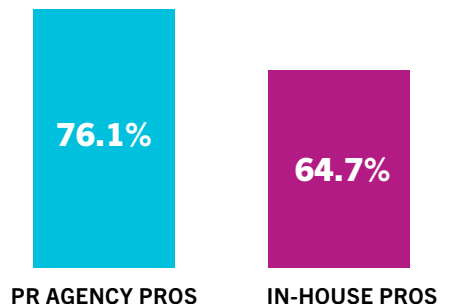
We have strong data to equate PR efforts to sales increases



As compared to two years ago, our C-suite is more inclined to turn to PR before any other department when a crisis occurs — or appears imminent



We have a solid to very strong ability to measure share of voice



KEY TAKEAWAYS: The areas focused on above cover both functional aspects of the PR pro's job, as well as sentiments they have, so the differences between both groups surveyed cover a lot of ground.

In the majority of areas above, both PR agency and in-house pros convey strength, but one or the other is just that much stronger.

The biggest chasm is found in the ability to collect data on **customer retention**. In-house pros (37.6%) can still improve a lot in this area, but they are far ahead of their agency counterparts (13.4%), who are simply weak here.

In Your Words

Beyond the answers they chose from our questions, we asked respondents to express the one major way — either tactically or in the manner in which the discipline is perceived by others — PR is different in 2022 than it was two years ago. Here were some of our favorites.



Organizations are somewhat adrift in the digital media universe and want direction and certainty. We're expected to have the answers.

Supports almost every single function within our organization.



PR is the frontline worker of the marketing mix — understanding the needs and desires of employees and consumers best.



The pressure is on. There's a microscope on spend and how PR is delivering ROI, more than ever before.

PR is finally being held to the standard that it should always have been — impact on revenue.



Given the crisis tied to the pandemic and other social issues, PR is more at the center of the business.



PR is now invited to be at the table at all times in our local government.



There is less of a divide between top leadership and the most entry-level PR practitioners.



It is no longer just to get earned media. Expectations have broadened to include influencer engagement, sponsored content, paid content.

PR is viewed as a leverage tool to gather leads, build revenue and retain donors at our nonprofit.



Those who do it well are more strategic and offer integrated services that provide actionable insights and ways forward.



PR has reasserted itself as a mandatory process early in a company's formation.



More pressure — and opportunity — to be part of the sales / demand-generation pipeline.



PR is not just PR anymore. It's brand building.



ABOUT NOTIFIED

Notified is the world's only communications cloud for public relations, investor relations, and events to drive meaningful insights and outcomes. The Notified PR Cloud helps you optimize brand value, increase earned media, and deliver measurable business impact using a suite of solutions that includes:

- The Notified PR platform
- Press release distribution
- Social listening and media monitoring
- Media contacts database
- Executive Media Briefs and Media Analysis Reports

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 181 PR professionals in the U.S.

Broken down by type of organization for which they work: PR agency — 37%; In-house — 47% (Corporation: 32%; Nonprofit: 15%); Other — 16%.

By title, the largest groups of respondents represented: Agency CEO/president/managing partner (20%) and director (18%). Also represented among the respondent pool were the titles of CMO, CCO, EVP, SVP, VP, head, executive director and senior director.

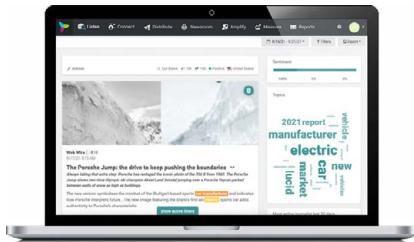
By gender, respondents were 55% female; 44% male; 1% gender non-binary.

Numerous industry sectors were represented in the respondent pool, the following by at least 5% of the overall group: Healthcare/Pharma (13.8%); Tech/Internet (13.3%); Education (9.4%); Nonprofit (8.8%); Arts/Entertainment/Media and Professional Services (6.6% each); Food and Beverage and Industrial/Manufacturing (5.5% each).

The survey was conducted online between February 15 and March 9, 2022. Results have a margin of plus or minus three percentage points.

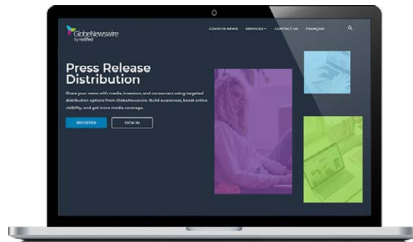
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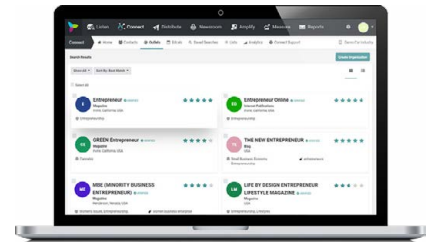
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