

Blurring Lines, Turf Battles and Tweets: The Real Impact of Integrated Communications on Marketing and PR



A Vocus Snapshot of Integrated Communications in 2010

Summary

From March 10, 2010 to March 31, 2010, Vocus surveyed 966 public relations professionals about their perceptions of integrated communications. Survey participants were provided the following definition:

- In the context of this survey, the term “integrated communications” means a management concept that ties all aspects of marketing communication, including, but not limited to advertising, search marketing, sales promotion, public relations and direct marketing, together to function in a unified and comprehensive fashion as opposed to functioning in isolation or silos.

Key findings include the following:

- **The lines between PR and marketing are blurring.** Marketing and PR have formalized working relationships, but data suggests “formal” does not necessarily mean “functional.” 78% of marketing and PR professionals say they report to the same boss, while 77% of the same group report formal working relationships to create a common communications strategy. However, 67% hold cross-functional meetings only “sometimes.”
- **“Turf battles” still evident.** Despite formalized processes or structures, 34% cited “organizational structures, functional silos, or turf battles” as the single largest barrier to integrated communications. The next largest barrier is budget shortcomings with 20% of respondents.
- **Ownership of social media and blogging still undecided.** PR and marketing each have a strong sense of ownership. 43% of PR professionals feel they should own social media, while 34% of marketers make the same claim. 37% of PR professionals think PR should own the corporate blog versus 23% of marketers expressing the same sentiment.
- **Benefits and communication measurement provides common ground.** 56% of marketing and PR professionals say integrated communications increases overall effectiveness of their outreach programs. 48% cite sales and ROI as the single most important factor in measuring the results of an integrated communications strategy.

Introduction

Social media has reinvigorated industry discussion on integrated communications, a concept that has existed for several decades. Until recently, it seemed more idealistic than practical, with PR and marketing often functioning independently, reporting to different department leads, and ultimately measuring different results.

Traditionally, PR has focused on reputation, earned media, third-party validation, and awareness-building – while marketing has been generally focused on advertising, sponsorships and lead-generation. Clearly, this is a broad generalization, and while there are always exceptions, the conversation has centered on how these two disciplines should be orchestrated to increase the overall effectiveness of outreach.

Social media is facilitating the marriage of the two since it contains elements that both disciplines find appealing and complementary to their existing efforts. Consequently, the debate has shifted towards who should “own” social media and, more importantly, how best to integrate social media with broader marketing or communications channels.

Undoubtedly, social media has provided PR the opportunity to obtain more central role in marketing, and there appears to be a trend for senior executives with PR backgrounds taking the helm of the overall marketing organization.¹ Further, “PR agencies are taking an early lead in the social-media world,” according to Simon Clift, chief marketing officer (CMO) for Unilever as attributed in *Financial Times*.² “PR used to be considered the poor relation of advertising,” he continued in the article.

However there are caveats to pinning social media responsibilities to one department or considering social media as a channel in isolation. As Beth Harte, an adjunct professor and Sr. Subject Matter Expert, Digital Marketing at Serengeti Communications, wrote on her blog prior to this study, the term “social media marketing” implies an independent channel, both separated from and replacing other or traditional marketing disciplines.³ This way of thinking, “silos social media from other marketing communications tactics and other marketing disciplines.” Like Harte, we are advocates of a collaborative and integrated approach to communications and this survey was intended to understand the industry’s current state on integrated communications.

Survey demographics

A total of 966 respondents answered our survey and were primarily solicited through e-mail. Respondents were almost evenly divided between PR and marketing professionals in the discipline they most closely identified by a measure of 53% and 47% respectively (**Chart A**).

Respondents tended to have substantial experience with 68% identifying as senior level or above and 89% as mid-career or above (**Chart B**).

The majority of respondents currently work for corporations (46%). However, other survey takers also come from diverse work environments including non-profits (21%), PR agencies (13%) and educational or academic institutions (10%). Government employees and self-employed or freelance practitioners each made up 5% of the survey respondents.

Respondents currently working for corporations or agencies (N = 583) were asked one additional demographic question as to their organization’s focus. A majority (63%) reported as having a business-to-business (B2B) focus, while 36% reported serving business-to-consumer (B2C). Two percent cited business-to-government (B2G).

A matter of formality

At first glance, integrated communications seem to have substantial momentum since a majority of respondents say their organizations have formal structures to facilitate collaboration. However, as subsequent data demonstrated, despite formally integrated structure and organization, there are strong indicators of barriers in execution.

Nearly 80% of respondents said that marketing and PR both report to the same department head in their organizations (Chart C). This is slightly higher than a previous survey, conducted by *Forbes Insights* in late 2009, which found 73% of CMOs saying they were responsible for PR.⁴

Both disciplines said they work together formally to develop or execute a common communication strategy (**Chart D**). It’s interesting to point out that respondents believe this is the right approach – that they buy into the concept – as suggested in a follow up question (**Chart E**). We view this data as a positive indication, a step in the right direction, since historically, marketing and PR reported to separate channels and viewed their responsibilities as distinct.

When asked if their organizations were more focused on integrated communications this year, as compared to last year, 61% stated they were, while 32% reported little change. Only 4% said they were less focused, while 3% said integrated communications was not a focus in either 2009 or 2010.

The data shows that the majority of PR and marketing professionals no longer report to separate department heads. Instead they are being melded into a single team. As such, this survey supports the idea that, at least from a leadership standpoint, the lines between

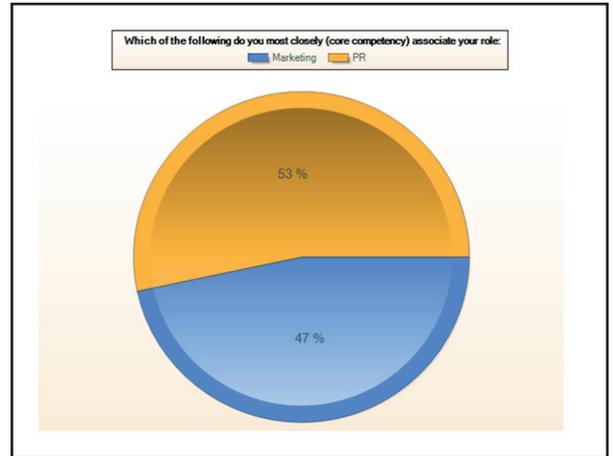


Chart A

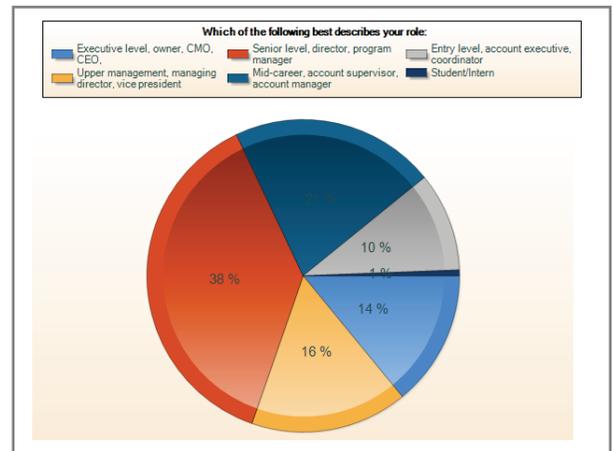


Chart B

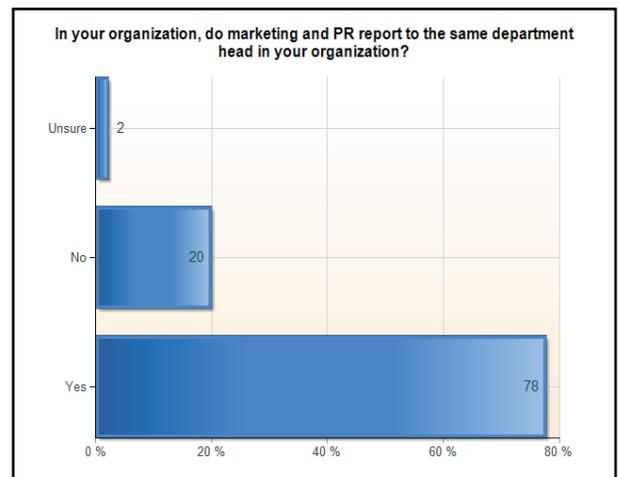


Chart C

marketing and PR are blurring – that it’s harder to discern where one discipline begins and ends. In fact, we’d go so far as to say the days of “silos” are waning.

As one respondent wrote in a representative open-ended response, “The gray line between marketing and PR is (rightfully) diminishing, especially considering there are new ways to promote your company (one could argue that social media is part of both marketing and PR). Overall, marketing and PR have the same goal, and while they have different tactics to obtain that goal, their strategies need to co-align.”

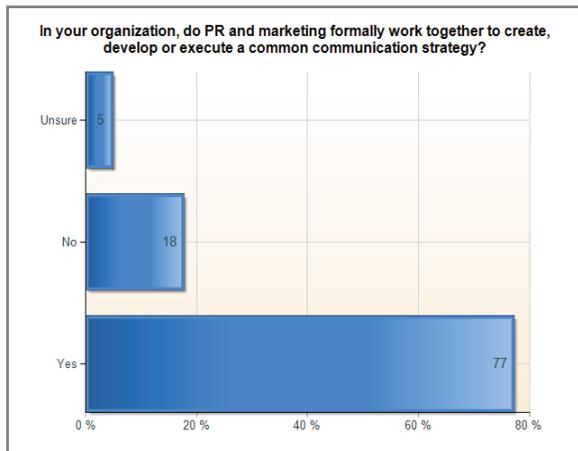


Chart D

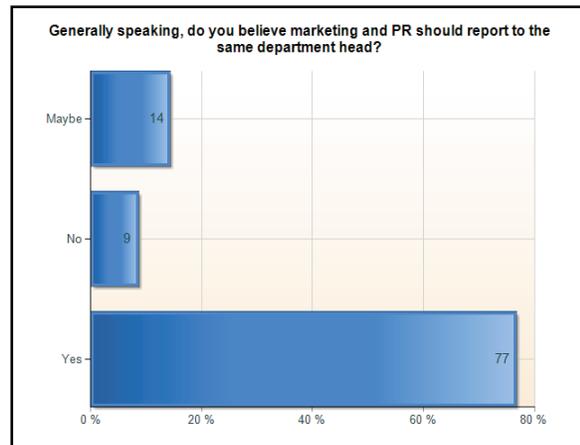


Chart E

A cautionary tale

There are some notes of caution in these results: some organizations – nearly 20% of respondents – do not have formal structures in place for either reporting or developing integrated communications programs. In addition, for those that do, it’s important to note that merely having a formal structure is not alone a measure of successful integration. There are challenges to ensuring collaboration actually happens in practice.

Recall that 53% of respondents self-identified as PR professionals, while 47% said they were marketing professionals. In segmenting these responses we found that sentiment against integrated communications was much stronger among PR professionals than among marketers.

For example, 14% of PR respondents said they do not believe PR and marketing should report to the same department head, while just 3% of marketers felt the same way. Eighteen percent of PR respondents and 10% of marketers said “maybe.”

Why? Open-ended answers to this question provide qualitative insight. Here is a representative sample of responses by both groups.

PR	Marketing
Why [Do you believe marketing and PR should have separate reporting channels]?	
In our organization, marketing has a more tactical focus, whereas PR has a more strategic focus – messaging and positioning.	Difference between longview (marketing) and near-future (PR) efforts make for difficulty in streamlining efforts.
PR and marketing are two separate roles. PR works with and engages with the media. Marketing thinks everything a company does is “newsworthy,” when it’s not.	Our PR group does PR for the entire company and not per business [units]. Marketing departments focus on business [units] and products.
Whereas I believe PR people understand how marketing works for the most part, I have found the opposite is rarely true.	The style of work and expertise required for marketing and PR is vastly different.

These remarks illustrate that some professionals have strong and paradoxical viewpoints. For example, the first two remarks are telling: **The PR professional says marketing is tactical and PR is strategic, meanwhile the marketing professional says PR is tactical and marketing is strategic.**

When asked if they conduct cross-functional meetings to coordinate PR and marketing efforts, the vast majority, 67%, said “sometimes” (**Chart F**) leaving us with a dichotomy.

Some formal working relationships are indeed formal, but if cross-functional teams “rarely” or only “sometimes” meet (81%), they can’t be called *functional*. This is suggestive of lip-service – reporting to the same boss means integration happens at a planning level but breaks down during execution. This finding mirrors anecdotal evidence we observe daily in client feedback, discussions with practitioners and commentary throughout the industry.

Barriers and turf battles

Barriers and turf battles are perhaps the single most interesting finding in the study. Despite a significant step forward in aligning organizational structures – turf battles still exist. In fact, the battle over turf was by far cited as the largest barrier to integrated communications, cited by 34%. Budget shortcomings were next, with 20%, and organizational culture and time both followed next with 13% respectively.

These results underscore the point made previously: that reporting to the same department head does not necessarily constitute integrated communications. Even though a majority of respondents report to the same department head and have formal mechanisms in place for an integrated approach, the fact remains ‘turf’ is still a very real challenge (**Chart G**).

A question of ownership

Turf battles became even more apparent when “ownership” of social media and blogs was introduced in the survey. We asked survey participants which discipline “owns” 11 different functions including analyst relations, media relations, search engine optimization (SEO), and speaking engagements. Sales, customer support and product management were also offered as answer options, though by far and large, marketing or PR were named more often. Finally, we preformed a cross-tab analysis over two functions for which marketing and PR professionals seemed to be most competitive: corporate blogging and social media.

Both PR and marketing professionals feel a strong sense of ownership for blogging and social media. For social media, 43% of PR professionals feel they should own it, while 34% of marketers make the same claim. Few cede ground; just 8% of PR pro say social media is a marketing responsibility, while 11% of marketers say PR should own it. Forty-one percent of marketers and 39% of PR professionals view social media as a shared responsibility (**Chart H**).

With regard to blogging, 37% of PR professionals think PR should own the corporate blog versus 23% of marketing professionals expressing the same sense. However, it’s important to note only 6% of PR professionals said marketing should own blogging, while 13% of marketers said PR should maintain control. Nineteen percent of PR professionals and 25% of marketing professionals said both disciplines should share the responsibility (**Chart I**).

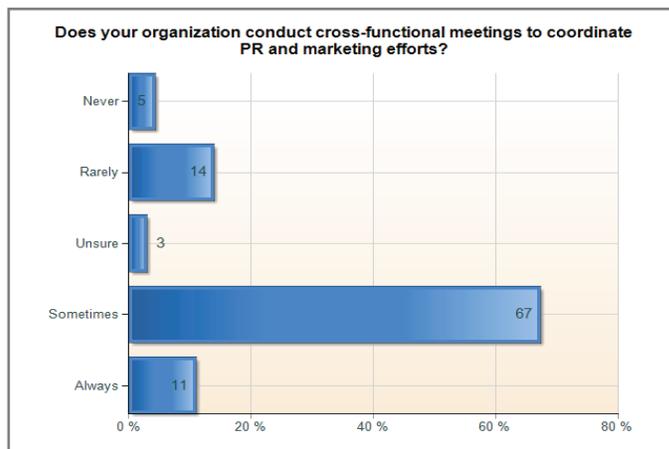


Chart F

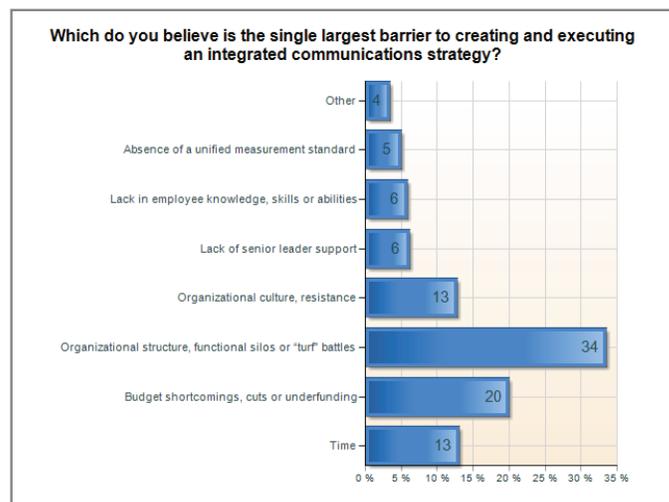


Chart G

Admittedly, this could be a question of taxonomy. For example, from a marketing perspective, social media could mean running the Facebook fan page or a Twitter handle, but to a PR person, it may mean multimedia press releases, or online reputation and social media monitoring.

However, what’s striking about the data is the fact that it’s nearly split down the middle on who should own social media: less than half of respondents on either side think it should be shared, and more importantly, a sizable percentage hold on tightly to the idea of ownership. Ergo turf battles.

To date, it seems that ownership of social media falls to whoever steps up to the plate to actually do it, while everyone else is relegated to the ongoing debate. We expect this to change as social media becomes more pervasive in professional marketing and communications.

The results for “who owns blogging” were also surprising. First, nearly a third (28%) of respondents said blogging was not applicable – which lends the question: Are blogs coming or going? Second, there was a limited sense of ownership for corporate blogs among marketers, which was surprising given the SEO value and lead generation results that blogs are proven to produce. PR professionals appear more inclined to claim the blogging stake, which reflects the trend for blogs to be increasingly viewed as an “owned media placement” (as opposed to an “earned media placement” or “paid media placement”).

Measurement finds common ground

The benefits of integrated communications begin to bridge the gap between PR and marketing. Both sides say the most prominent justifications for “integrated communications” are consistency in messaging (56%), increased overall effectiveness (49%), and simply being more strategic in overall effort (45%) (Chart J). These views make sense – from receptionist to CEO – organizations are more effective if they speak with one consistent voice.

We were surprised that customer satisfaction ranked so low as a benefit with just 23%. If the numerous case studies on Zappos – a company routinely lauded for excellence in customer service, social media engagement and speaking in a single, consistent voice – provide any insight, it’s that making customers happy pays dividends.

Despite turf battles over ownership, and the challenges of executing an integrated communications program, one area where marketing and PR are aligned is on measuring results. A clear majority, (48%) cited sales and ROI as the single most important factor in measuring the results of an integrated communications strategy (Chart K). A cross-tab analysis confirms that 54% of marketers and 42% of PR professionals cite sales and ROI as the most critical measurement factor (Chart L).

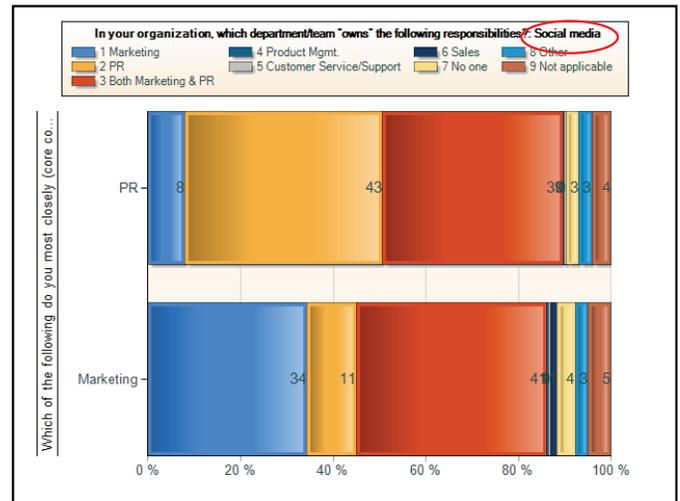


Chart H

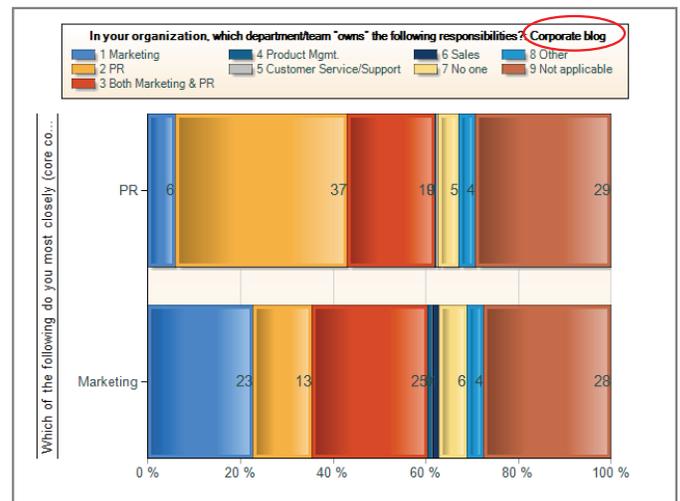


Chart I

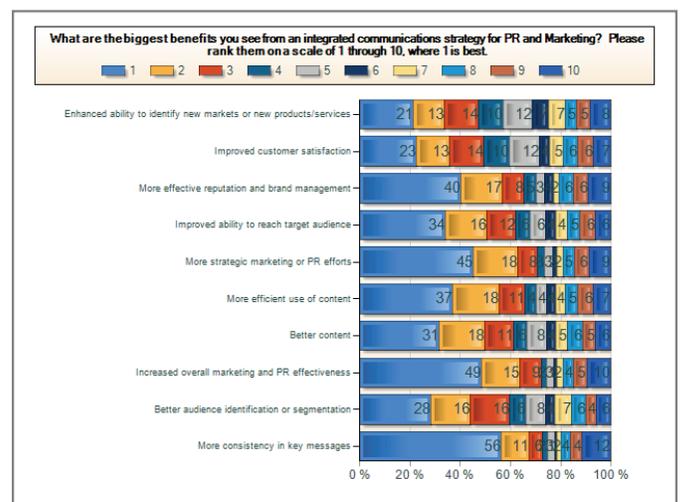


Chart J

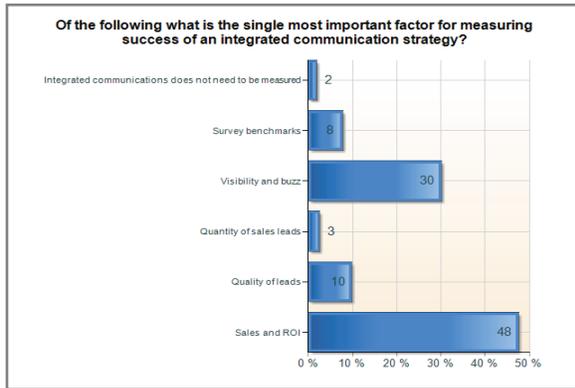


Chart K

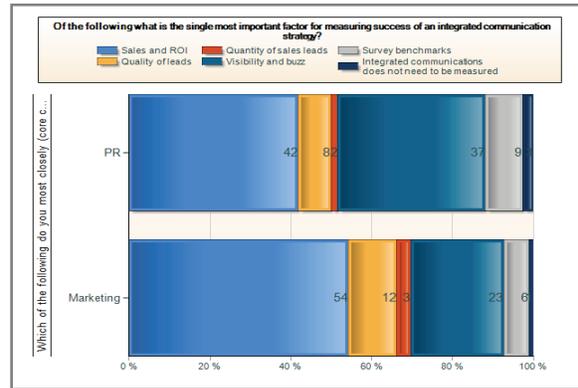


Chart L

Again we see another note of caution: Given 37% of PR professionals cite visibility and buzz – a 14% lead over marketers that share this view. While these disciplines may work together formally, there’s danger of disconnection in execution because they appear to be evaluating different measures of success.

It’s arguable that professionals focused on PR efforts should measure different metrics than those focused on marketing. Ultimately, both disciplines are more likely to best serve their organizations by aligning function-specific goals with organizational goals – such as sales, perhaps fundraising (in the case of a non-profit), or membership (in the case of an association). An integrated communications strategy should move the needle for an organization, and provide some tangible indication that the activities conducted are producing measurable results.

In your own words: defining integrated communications

We asked several open-ended questions in this survey, and it seems fitting to conclude this paper by sharing the responses, because they also highlight another common denominator between marketing and PR: word choice. We received 663 responses to the question – how do you define integrated communications in your own words – and we’ve displayed the data in two ways.

First we used the tag cloud tool Wordle (www.wordle.net), to analyze the word choice both marketing and PR professionals used to define integrated communications in their own words. It’s important to note that we removed obvious phrases such as “marketing” and “PR” since respondents with backgrounds in both disciplines used these words liberally – as might be expected (**Chart M**). You’ll notice a similar vernacular: ‘message,’ ‘together,’ ‘brand,’ and ‘consistent,’ among others.

Secondly, we offer a side by side comparison of some selected responses that are representative of the entire sample. Ten responses from both marketing and PR professionals are included below.



Chart M

PR	Marketing
In your own words, how would you define integrated communications?	
Integrated communications involves having consistently concise, exciting/pleasing, unique, useful messages about different interesting pertinent events/services/products coming across in an identifiable brand without appearing overly aggressive or stale/repetitive.	Branding messaging and strategy integrated throughout the product line, ecommunications, PR messaging and marketing materials.
Integrated communications is the strategic use of relevant communications methods (i.e. PR, marketing, advertising, etc.) to achieve one common goal.	Integrated communications is product development, sales, marketing, and communications centralized.
Advertising and PR groups working hand in hand so that the target audience hears about your product or services in both paid and unpaid media outlets.	Strategically designed programs using a wide variety of tactics from all disciplines to put forth a consistent and positive message.
Communicating the vision and goals of an organization using news, accomplishments, activities, traditions and legacies to influence support of potential customers, etc.	Integrated communications is the key to success in an organization. Messages between sales, marketing and PR to provide ROI and increase sales.
Marketing, PR, advertising, sales all working together with a common voice and messaging that reflects the brand.	Kumbayah!!!
Where the marketing, public relations and communications teams work together to generate press, materials, buzz and more. They consistently work with each other.	A process of creating/publishing content that goes to the edges of your industry in terms of value, sets you apart from your competition and results in sales because it demonstrates how your business solves the problem better than anyone else.
Bringing all disciplines of marketing and PR together to form a cohesive strategy, executed on different fronts but with a consistent message and in pursuit of the same goal.	An overall communications program that is measured against a unified set of goals, and that is built on consistent messaging.
A holistic approach to communications that brings together inbound and outbound programs, online and offline channels under consistent strategy and messages.	The use of the most efficient marketing tactics together to promote brand identity, sell product/service and develop consumer relationships.
Using marketing, public relations and advertising to clearly tell an organization's story as a way to generate awareness, motivate action in consumers and change consumer perceptions.	Using all professional tools of communication in order to boost a brand or business and achieve individual results that live under the umbrella of one overall goal.
A unified effort by all players involved in external (and internal) communications around a common set of goals, executed according to each group's area of focus, and coordinated to best achieve the common goals.	Integrated communication is a tapestry. Each type of communication offers its own color and texture, but for the best effect they need to be woven together to create the finished product.

About this survey

The results of this survey were presented to an audience during a live Webinar on April 29, 2010 titled, "Integrating Marketing and PR," (<http://bit.ly/bOEvet>) featuring guest speakers Jeremy Porter and Jennifer Kane. Those speakers, along with Kary Delaria, contributed to the analysis of the survey results and the composition of this report. All respondents to this survey and Webinar registrants were provided with a copy of the results in the form of this white paper.

About the authors

Kary Delaria has more than ten years of experience in public relations, media relations, marketing and internal/external communication, and is a skilled writer and emerging voice in the field of "PR 2.0." As Kane Consulting's CLO (chief listening officer), Kary also proactively monitors and manages clients' existing online reputations by identifying benchmarks, analyzing ROI and tracking trends using a range of qualitative and quantitative data analysis tools. Follow her on Twitter @KaryD (www.twitter.com/KaryD).

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About Vocus

Vocus, Inc. (NASDAQ: VOCS) is a leading provider of on-demand software for public relations management. Our web-based software suite helps organizations of all sizes to fundamentally change the way they communicate with both the media and the public, optimizing their public relations and increasing their ability to measure its impact. Our on-demand software addresses the critical functions of public relations including media relations, news distribution and news monitoring. We deliver our solutions over the Internet using a secure, scalable application and system architecture, which allows our customers to eliminate expensive up-front hardware and software costs and to quickly deploy and adopt our on-demand software. Vocus is used by more than 4,400 organizations worldwide and is available in seven languages. Vocus is based in Lanham, MD with offices in North America and Europe. For more information please visit <http://www.vocus.com> or call 800.345.5572.

¹ *Advertising Age*, How PR Chiefs Have Shifted Toward Center of Marketing Departments, September 21, 2009: http://adage.com/cmstrategy/article?article_id=139140

² *Financial Times*, Warning over 'lost generation' of marketers, April 5, 2010 <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/14a1d65c-40cd-11df-94c2-00144feabdc0.html>

³ *Harte of Marketing*, The Dichotomy Issue: "Social Media Marketing" vs. Classic Marketing, March 15, 2010: <http://www.theharteofmarketing.com/2010/03/social-media-vs-classical-marketing.html>

⁴ *Forbes | Insights*, The role of the CMO: Marketing Strategies for 2010, November 2009: <http://www.slideshare.net/anatinge/cmo-survey-results-forbes-insights>