

DIGITAL PR

100 BEST PRACTICES



The digital revolution has had a profound effect on modern public relations, as the traditional press release, conventional media channels, and classic strategies for marketing a brand have all been turned on their heads.

The many challenges facing public relations today are new and sometimes unfamiliar. However, the digital revolution has also increased brands' abilities to better connect with their audiences. And since "social" came onto the scene, brand communications have become more dynamic and personal than was previously thought possible.

So what steps should brands take to get exposure and amplify their content? Below are 10 B2B digital PR practices and trends that marketers should be aware of in order to successfully get the word out to their audiences and position themselves as thought leaders. But first, let's clear up exactly what digital PR means for marketers.



Digital PR and Digital Marketing: Is There a Difference?

Thanks to the introduction of “digital” into the PR mix, the lines between traditional PR and digital marketing have been blurred. Traditional PR methods have been scrapped, and a vast number of digital marketing tools have been adopted instead.

Consistently reaching out to websites, building relationships with bloggers and influencers, and publishing materials externally are practices used within both digital PR and inbound marketing. For these reasons, it may be hard to tell one apart from the other.

The main difference between the two comes down to what each emphasizes. PR, which of course stands for “public relations,” focuses on building a brand’s recognition and reputation. As such, digital PR (sometimes called “strategic PR”) is an extension of content marketing that focuses specifically on putting a brand’s content in front of a larger audience, whether or not leads are generated.

Inbound marketing, on the other hand, places greater emphasis on generating leads with the right content for the right audience at the right time. The view that inbound marketing and digital PR serve the same purposes through the same approaches — [although somewhat differing in their focus](#) — is widely accepted, as is the idea that they should [work together in order to generate the best results](#).

With that said, here are 10 PR practices for the digital age that brand managers should adopt and develop.



Digital PR Practices for Successful B2B Marketing

1

Be a Thought Leader

The ability to position yourself effectively but authentically on the basis of real expertise and knowledge is one of the strongest PR assets to your brand. Strive to get the word out about your services, products, or innovative ideas in an authoritative voice.

Thought leadership establishes you as someone worth listening to in a noisy environment. It also places a responsibility upon you to protect and develop your brand so that you have something to show for your name. Your status as a thought leader can also be valuable in times of crisis: when your company receives criticism, it will be stabilized by the positive image you have worked to build for it.

2

Connect and Build Strong Relationships

In order to [get the word out about your brand](#), you need to build strong relationships with the right people and media channels. At this point in time, social media is one of the most important channels that brands use to connect with their target audiences, even in a B2B environment.

At the same time, journalists are constantly monitoring a variety of social platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, and following events in real-time as they occur. These channels support their work in a variety of ways, enabling them to find sources, research stories, or start discussions that inform their writing.

The combination of social platforms and traditional media holds a power that few traditional PR channels can offer. Social strengthens and amplifies mass media by offering more outlets and a wider scope for getting your story attention.

That's why [building strong relationships](#) with social influencers, famous bloggers, and others with an established media presence is another important way to enhance brand awareness. These affiliates will help you gain the greatest access to your target audience and extend your influence beyond your own followers.

3

Perfect Your Pitch

Establishing relationships takes place in a number of ways, one being writing a great pitch. How your pitch lands is crucial because it will determine whether or not your brand gains recognition based on your ability to establish rapport with media contacts.

There are a few key methods for creating a successful pitch. Unlike the traditional, more formal pitch, an online pitch is much less stringent. In fact, [being conversational and personal](#) is often preferred today.

Along with exuding a personal tone, make an effort to get to know the person you're approaching and become familiar with their own brand voice.

Furthermore, make sure you're prepared and know what you want and why you want it, but also what you're offering in return. While you may at times stumble upon people willing to feature you "pro bono," [a pitch usually proposes an exchange](#) — whether it be financial compensation or a free trial of your product or service.

4

Create Strong Content

Creating high quality content pays off in the long run, since it will continue to drive businesses to your brand. That said, two things should be noted about content creation in relation to digital PR.

First, craft an appealing story. "Storytelling" has become a PR buzzword over the last few years, and it's [one of the most potent forms of digital PR and marketing for brands](#) today. An interactive, engaging, and immediate brand experience is something users are looking for, and storytelling is the perfect way to offer it to them. The more "human" your brand appears, the easier your potential leads will be able to relate to it, even in a B2B context.

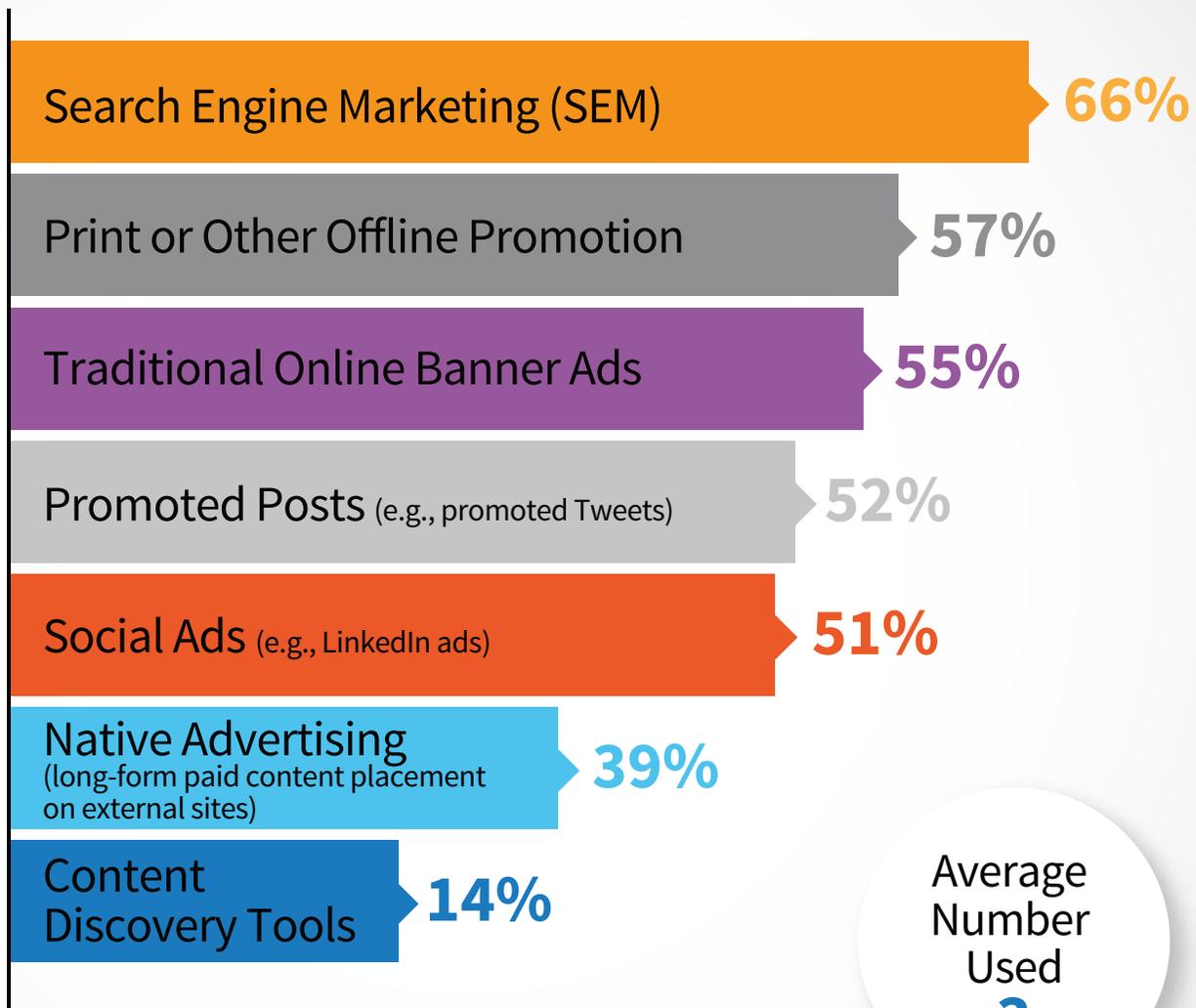
The second—and arguably most significant—feature of successful content marketing for public relations is making sure your content is useful. Whether it's content that tells a story or simply informs, the usefulness (or lack thereof) of a piece of content is often what makes (or breaks) it.

So how can you be sure your content is useful? Consider this [in-depth document](#) released by Google that specifies its search quality guidelines in great detail, explaining how website content is rated by Google according to page quality (PQ) and needs met (NM), among other criteria. While this is particularly relevant for the content on your own website, this information provides insight into what Google deems important and the direction it's taking with regards to the exposure of online content.

5

Promote Your Content

B2B Paid Advertising Usage



2016 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

Source: [2016 B2B Content Marketing benchmark report](#) (p. 19)

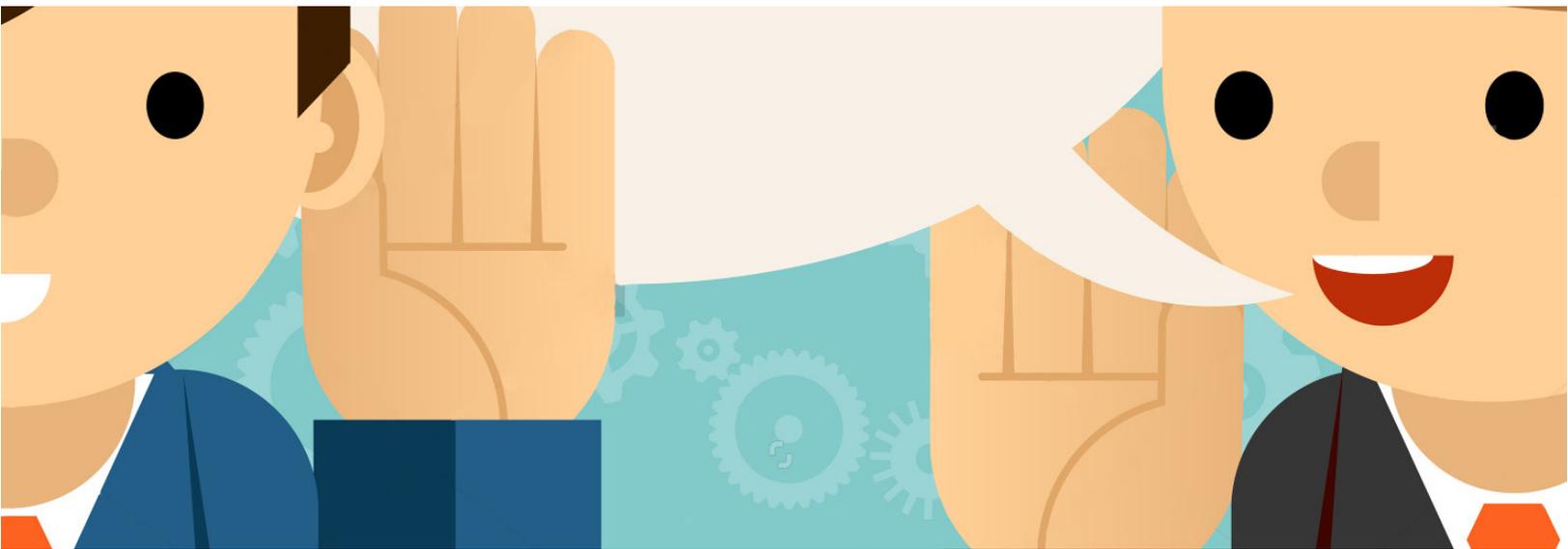
Paid promotion and social ads continue to rise in popularity as efficient ways to blast out your content through various channels. Search engine marketing (SEM) holds the top spot, as shown in this [2016 B2B Content Marketing benchmark report](#) from the Content Marketing Institute (CMI):

At the same time, more than 50 percent of B2B marketers use social ads as a tool to build awareness and generate leads, and even more take advantage of promoted posts. According to CMI's report, the use of promoted posts on channels like Twitter has grown by 10 percent over the last year. Furthermore, promoted posts are considered by B2B marketers to be a marketing method second only to SEM in terms of effectiveness for promoting and distributing content.

With that in mind, promoting your company's content through these means seems like a no-brainer. The challenge, though, is for digital PR specialists to find effective new ways to promote content across social channels, as well as to optimize existing forms of promotion to better target the right audience.

6

Listen and Respond



Online reputation management (ORM) is one of the [key aspects of digital PR](#) and marketing. The previously mentioned report by CMI also reveals that brand awareness, engagement, customer retention, and loyalty are outranked by lead generation, nurturing, and sales as organizational goals. Yet this remains valid only to the extent that one is concerned with marketing—digital PR has a different emphasis altogether.

In other words, in the world of digital PR, sales and leads are almost always as important as what people say about you. As news travels fast, people respond in real-time and content goes viral in unexpected ways. What someone says in relation to your brand can make a huge difference.

Monitoring what is being said and [devising a strategy about how to respond](#) are both important PR practices. This includes clarifying questions about company transparency, attitudes toward criticism and praise, dealing with reputation management failures, and more.

B2B digital PR specialists must take control of online conversations by answering questions, offering support, and expressing gratitude to ensure the brand outshines its competitors – this is ORM at its fullest.

7

Watch and Learn

Don't forget to follow your competitors closely. Some of the best sources of new information and media connections are the places where your competitors are getting mentioned in the press.

Sticking to a particular niche of your online space, or to the connections you're already familiar with, greatly limits your outreach and how many businesses (i.e. potential leads) will hear about you. You can be sure your competitors are also working on increasing their brand awareness, so you'll need to do the same, but only better.

Along with your direct competition, make it a regular practice to track other high-performance brands in similar industries. This will allow you to garner more ideas from observing others' strategies that you can apply to your own digital PR strategy. Analyze what types of content they promote and how, before considering whether it could work for your brand, as well.



8

Track and Measure

Once you've created and implemented a digital PR strategy, it's time to begin measuring its effectiveness. Measuring is vitally important because it provides you with hard facts and data about the impact of your strategy on your audience.

There are several tools you can use to assess your marketing endeavors. For example, you can utilize a simple [four-criteria measuring approach](#), where you determine:

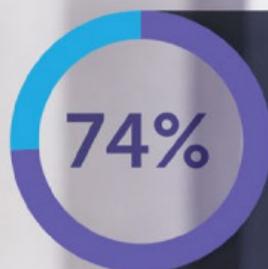
- How many times your content was shared
- What the quality of the engagement was
- Whether you gained any links
- Whether your campaign or content influenced sales



Beyond these four factors, there are a variety of other performance indicators you can track for further feedback on how you should adapt your approaches for better results. If you'd like to check out more advanced methods of measuring and tracking, consider the models highlighted in [this piece](#) by PRWeek, or in this [whitepaper](#) on "The Principles of PR Measurement" by Ketchum Global Research & Analytics. Both offer in-depth information about other analytics tools, along with step-by-step guides on how to implement them.

Optimize for Mobile

According to a 2015 study conducted by the Content Marketing Institute and Marketing Profs:



of B2C marketers are looking to create a better mobile strategy.



of B2B marketers already have a better mobile strategy in their plans

Source: [The Definitive Guide to Mobile Marketing](#) (page 12)

As the desire for instantaneous content (such as live video coverage on social media) picks up, brands need to react by responding in real-time themselves. This requires catering to an increasingly mobile audience, since more and more real-time interactions are happening via mobile. In other words, focusing on mobile optimization even more in 2016 should be a priority, since users have come to expect that all the content they access will be mobile-friendly.

Mobile-optimized websites should be accessible and easy to use—this is an area where marketing and PR coincide in their approaches and goals. Along with an optimized site, you may also want to develop apps that offer even more benefits to your customers while also aligning with your overall PR strategy. Finally, consider what time of day your buyer personas are using their smartphones so you can distribute your content during these periods.

With only [58 percent of B2B marketers currently planning to create a better mobile marketing strategy](#), you're not too late to the party – but if you haven't done much about it yet, it's time you did.

10

Don't Forget the Tools

Finally, little-to-none of the above tactics can be implemented without the proper tools and someone who knows how to use them. From workflows for planning, creation, distribution, and amplification of content, to triggering and tracking engagements, there are plenty of tools to track how well you're accomplishing your PR goals.

Here are two helpful resources for finding the best tools out there:

- Stephen Waddington at Ketchum [offers a great sample of various tools](#) used by contributors to his eBook, along with their insights and tips.
- Prezly's excellent guide featuring [140 digital PR tools](#) provides a broad spectrum of tips that are not to be missed.



Finding and implementing the right tools will simplify your digital PR efforts and free up more time for you to sharpen your skills in other areas.

Digital Is Here to Stay

With the rise of digital, there's no going back to the old days of traditional PR. As challenging as that may seem to some PR professionals, digital is advancing at a relentless pace, so the best thing to do is to use it to your advantage.

Looking at any of the leading practitioners in digital marketing and PR, what stands out is how many of these practices have been around for some time. But as the market evolves along with new technologies, so do those practices.

What's unique about the latest PR trends is the way industry experts continue to creatively develop, implement, and measure them. So it's never too late to start using any of these practices, nor is it too early to work on the ones that you're already using to capitalize on them even more. With all this information in hand, your PR efforts in 2016 should run more smoothly than ever.



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Alexander Kesler is a visionary B2B digital marketer and has been practicing in the fields of technology, software, education and digital security, among others, for over 15 years. As the Founder and President of inSegment, Alexander leads a team of digital marketing experts and specializes in the areas of B2B Lead Generation, Content Marketing & Syndication, SEO & Paid Search, Conversion Oriented Web Development, Programmatic Media Buying and Direct Response Marketing.

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