

# Here's How the Communications Industry is Reinventing Itself



*By Tiffany Guarnaccia, Founder & Executive Director at [Communications Week](#) and Founder & CEO at [Kite Hill PR](#)*

The communications industry is at time of reinvention, making the theme of “Reinventing the Industry” spot on for [Communications Week 2016](#). In years past, Communications Week has tackled issues stemming from industry disruption and driving change, to streaming platforms and social media. Change is here. We’re embracing it. There are many ways in which the PR industry is going through reinvention. Here are just a few.

## **Fostering a new age of the traditional PR approach.**

PR agencies have changed to no longer focus on traditional PR. Although traditional strategies continue to prove effective, many agencies are looking at other alternatives such as content marketing, social media and virtual reality to bolster campaign strategies and stay relevant in the digital age. However, technology is not always the answer. Tremendous value still remains in good ole’ traditional PR. Agencies must now foster their workforce to think outside of the box through critical thinking and tactical execution with the challenges of digital in mind. While new technologies like AI can offer benefits to PR strategies, they also have the potential to remove some of the more timely processes, but creative

thinking and messaging are aspects that fundamentally need human input. Therefore, traditional PR is still relevant in today's highly digitized world and will be able to encompass a wide range of components attached to a PR campaign.

### **PR professionals can not ignore digital transformation.**

While technology is not the be-all-end-all, we've made significant technological advancements in the PR world. PR professionals and agencies are increasing the focus on digital by looking at technology and how it can be incorporated into traditional PR campaigns.

One way public relations professionals are embracing technology is through the exploration of new forms of media. The media landscape has continued to evolve in recent years, with traditional media (e.g. newspapers and other print publications) experiencing a continued drop-off in readership and new forms of media (e.g. online-only publications and blogs) growing exponentially. In an effort to stay relevant in this evolving landscape, media outlets are looking to adopt new and successful formats to grow and engage their audience base. This is where the growth of podcasts and video come in. According to a Pew [study](#) from June 2016, 21 percent of Americans ages 12 or older say they have listened to a podcast in the past month, reflecting steady incremental growth since 2013 – when this share was just 12 percent.

Public relations professionals must not only know about these mediums for their own sake, but also be able to take advantage of the opportunities they provide for clients. Instead of securing a byline opportunity, look to pitch your client in for a relevant podcast or set up a Facebook Live Q&A.

Ultimately, the growth of technology allows us to rethink the status quo. After all, change is in the DNA of reinvention.

### **Paving the long road ahead for diversity in PR.**

While the PR industry is making exceptional progress in technology, we are not a perfect model. There are a couple of areas where our industry still has a lot of growing to do. The two that stick out the most to me are diversity and transparency.

Compared to other industries in the professional world, public relations and communications has a relatively **large number of women** in the field. In fact, some would argue that the field is dominated by women. The problem we're facing is not the number of women overall, but the number of women in leadership roles. While a majority of the entry and mid-level PR jobs are held by women, that number shrinks the higher up one goes in the corporate structure.

The second area for improvement is diversity. Corraling a homogenous mix of employees is not only bad business, but it's a hindrance to creativity and reinvention. While we can learn from anyone, regardless of race, religion or background, it takes a diverse mix of people, thoughts and ideas to reinvent established norms. This, of course, is not a new issue. Countless individuals, groups and organizations have called for increased diversity in PR. As we take a close look at reinvention, however, the issue of diversity in our industry becomes even more critical.

Event with all of the progress that has been made in our industry, there is no shortage of areas we can improve. This last point of reinvention is where we have the furthest to go.



