



WHITE PAPER

Modern PR: the art & science of integrated media influence

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WHITE PAPER

Modern PR: the art & science of integrated media influence

Today, PR professionals must manage the integrated flow of influence among owned, social, traditional and hybrid media – and learn to trigger each in ways that set the others in motion.

New media, owned media, social media – each represents a giant step in modern public relations. In little more than a decade, they have reinvented the way information flows through business and society. Traditional media ceded audience share to upstart Web-based outlets for news and information. Brands began to produce content in their own right. And then social media emerged to rewire the way people find, consume and share information.

Now, consensus is emerging that only by coordinating communications in an integrated way across all four of these spheres of influence can today's communications professional maximize influence. The good news? An Edelman PR model shows how these traditional, new (which Edelman calls "hybrid"), owned and social spheres intersect, enabling you to leverage existing skills and content from one sphere in pursuit of influence in others.

This white paper focuses on today's fastest growing sphere of influence – social media – with an eye toward its role in integrated PR strategy. More specifically, the paper explores:

- Locating audiences and their influencers
- Using new influence analytics
- Engaging big and small influencers
- Turning owned media into earned media

The rise of social media

Americans now spend some 15% – and counting – of their time online using a social network, according to research firm comScore.¹ Companies have moved right along with them onto Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Groupon and the like. For example, 84% of Fortune Global 100 companies participate in at least one social media platform, and many have a growing number of accounts in multiple social venues, according to Burson-Marsteller research.²

This is the new decision landscape; it's where your customers and potential customers are considering purchases and making decisions. As they do, they are turning for advice not only to traditional media, but to their networks of friends, peers and favorite tastemakers, trendsetters and thought leaders. Think of them all – yourself included – as influencers. Today, influencers come in a growing number of shapes and sizes and – thanks to social media – their networked influence can be wielded far, fast and wide on the Web (whether fixed or mobile.)

“

Social media can get your pieces in front of millions of people in a matter of moments.

”

Andy Cutler
President/Founder,
Cutler & Company PR

“The only logical thing to do is to embrace the dialogue from the outset,” says David Kirkpatrick, a journalist and author of *The Facebook Effect*. “If you’re a brand, you have this opportunity for a dialogue, and if you choose not to avail yourself of it, it will happen anyway – probably to your detriment,” he told the Pivot 2010³ conference on social marketing strategies.

PR professionals who “embrace the dialogue” are seeing a wealth of benefits. “Social media gives extra life to your stories beyond a press release and a Web site. It gives you much more freedom and can get your pieces in front of millions of people in a matter of moments,” says Andy Cutler, President/Founder of the Cutler & Company PR firm.

Helping to fuel social media’s rise for PR professionals are emerging tools that can track some of the benefits Cutler describes. At the same time, search engine results and visits to companies’ Web sites increasingly reflect the impact of social conversations. The “networked influence” of social sharing is now generating more than 30% of Web site referral traffic, according to June 2011 research published jointly by Rubinson Partners Inc., ShareThis and StarcomMediaVest Group.⁴

1. The 2010 U.S. Digital Year in Review, comScore, 2/7/2011, http://www.comscore.com/Press_Events/Presentations_Whitepapers/2011/2010_US_Digital_Year_in_Review
2. *2011 Global Social Media Check-up*, Burson-Marsteller, 2/2011, <http://www.slideshare.net/BMGlobalNews/bursonmarsteller-2011-global-social-media-checkup>
3. Video: Pivot 2010 Day 1, “Media in the Social Age,” <http://testing.pivotcon.com/Video/pivotvideopage.html>
4. “Sharing: More than Just Fans, Friends, and Followers,” Rubinson Partners Inc., ShareThis, StarcomMediaVest Group, 6/2011, <http://www.slideshare.net/Missypoo/sharing-more-thanjustfansfriendsfollowersiwny-8224709>



Identifying influence in social media

The trick for PR professionals is to find the formula that unleashes that social networked influence for their brand.

Influence is clearly in evidence whenever the social sphere sifts rapidly through its own cacophony of content to surface what is new, entertaining, appealing or even essential. Information flows or stops dead – a brand shines or tarnishes, action is taken or the moment simply passes – depending on whether influence is engaged in social media. Every day,

TEN REASONS PEOPLE RE-TWEET

What could motivate your audience to act upon your information? A recent survey by Microsoft highlights these reasons:

1. To amplify or spread tweets to new audiences
2. To entertain or inform a specific audience, or as an act of curation
3. To comment on someone's tweet by re-tweeting and adding new content, often to begin a conversation
4. To make one's presence as a listener visible
5. To publicly agree with someone
6. To validate others' thoughts
7. As an act of friendship, loyalty or homage by drawing attention, sometimes via a re-tweet request
8. To recognize or refer to less popular people or less visible content
9. For self-gain, either to gain followers or reciprocity from more visible participants
10. To save tweets for future personal access

Source: Microsoft

this happens over and over through 200 million daily tweets on Twitter,⁵ 750 million worldwide members posting on Facebook⁶ and growing conversations on dozens of other social networks.

And yet, “in a world where all information is crowdsourced, how is it that an agenda gets set? What bubbles to the top ... political issues, entertainment, products that people get excited about?” asks HP Labs Social Computing Lab Director Bernardo A. Huberman. “The very large scale of the networks underlying social media makes it hard for any of these topics to get enough attention in order to rise to the most trending ones.”⁷

Attempts to answer Huberman’s “agenda” question abound in the recent stream of introductions and upgradings of analytical tools that attempt to measure an individual’s “social score.” But some measurements, while tempting, can mislead. Is popularity, for instance, a measure of influence?

Not necessarily. “There is an enormous amount of passivity in the social network,”

5. As of June 2011: “Twitter Reaches 200 Million Tweets A Day, But How Many Come From Bots?” Techcrunch, Erick Schonfeld, 6/30/11, <http://techcrunch.com/2011/06/30/twitter-3200-million-tweets/>

6. As of June 2011: “Facebook says membership has grown to 750 million,” *USA Today*, Jon Swartz, 7/6/11, http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/2011-07-06-facebook-skype-growth_n.htm

7. Video: “What Makes a Tweet Influential?” HP Labs, Bernardo Huberman, 8/5/2010, <http://h30507.www3.hp.com/t5/Data-Central/What-makes-a-tweet-influential-New-HP-Labs-social-media-research/ba-p/81855>



according to a report by Huberman and a team of researchers.⁸ As he describes it: “Most people seem to attend to something – we don’t really know if they do – but very few pass it along.” His takeaway is that influence in social media is not simply about popularity, as defined by the number of people following any one individual or organization. The greatest impact is achieved in engaged networks of influence that share and act on information, passing it on, voting it up and adding their own information – actions that are increasingly being measured.

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Compounding the difficulty of measuring influence is the current state of flux in the social sphere. Consider just this one development: the June 2011 Google+ launch, which created a new social networking hierarchy of relationships, including circles and hangouts.⁹

“If Google+ and the ‘circles’ concept take off, companies could have a much harder time reaching people through social media,” Forrester Research Vice President Nate Elliott recently blogged. “If users spend more time posting content to and reading content from just their circles of friends, doesn’t that make it harder for marketers to get a message through?”¹⁰

Eli Pariser, author of *The Filter Bubble*, underscores this argument from a consumer’s point of view. With increasing personalization of search engines as well as social networks, “your filter bubble is this unique, personal universe of information ... and it’s becoming more and more difficult to escape,” he says.¹¹

The long and the short of it is that “any social media user could potentially be an influencer,” Neal Schaffer, President of the WindMill Marketing social media consultancy, recently blogged.¹² “That being said, some people or businesses use social networking sites more than others, some have more reach than others and some are considered to have more thought leadership in their industries or professions than others.”

Locating your audience and their influencers

Try answering these three questions about your audiences to begin to identify their networks of influence:

- Where are they most likely to hang out online?
- What do they care about?
- Who else cares about these things?

8. “Influence and Passivity in Social Media,” HP Labs, Bernardo A. Huberman and co-authors, 8/2010, <http://www.hpl.hp.com/research/scl/papers/influence/influence.pdf>

9. Google, 6/11, <http://www.google.com/+demo/>

10. “Is Google+ Going To Kill Facebook?” *Forrester Blogs*, Nate Elliott, 6/30/11, http://blogs.forrester.com/nate_elliott/11-06-30-is_google_going_to_kill_facebook?cm_mmc=RSS-_-MS-_-913-_-blog_2307

11. Author Q&A with Eli Pariser, Amazon.com, 5/11, http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1594203008/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_il_t?ie=UTF8&tag=thefilbub-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1594203008

12. “There’s No Such Thing as Social Media ROI,” *WindMill Networking Blog*, Neal Schaffer, 7/14/2011, <http://windmillnetworking.com/2011/07/14/why-no-social-media-roi/>

Think of the ocean of information available, and think of your audiences as schools of fish swimming around in that ocean. You're not sure where they are.

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There's **one person**
out of a hundred who
is really active, who
is really pushing the
agenda.”

John Salak
The Salak Group

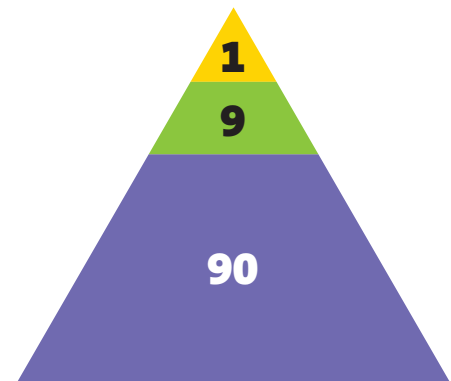
So the first rule of influence is this: listen.

Figure out which platform your audience is most likely to frequent. “If you are focusing on teens, for instance, you can cross LinkedIn and Twitter off of your list, and double down on Facebook and YouTube,” advises PR Newswire Vice President of Social Media Sarah Skerik. “Do you have a B2B focus? LinkedIn and Twitter will be key, but don't discount YouTube and Facebook.”

Then, ask what your audience cares about. Schools of fish on Twitter are often organized by people into lists they follow (think @chriskidster/tech-tech-and-tech.) People also employ hashtags (think #fairtrade) to aggregate related subject matter from across Twitter into a single feed, providing a

font of tweets on topics you might care about as well.

At this point, many PR professionals begin looking for the biggest fish, subscribing to the 1-9-90 rule of influence. “There's one person out of a hundred who is really active, who is really pushing the agenda,” explains John Salak of The Salak Group, a communications consultancy. “Another nine might respond to the agenda, though it's more reactive. And then there are the 90 who are only reading this social conversation.” While there is value in each group – “they all may buy or grab your message,” as Salak says – “you are going to concentrate on the 1s and the 9s because they're the ones moving the message.”



The many sizes of influence

Like any rule of thumb, the 1-9-90 approach should be applied with care. The dynamics of influence, like so much else in social media, “vary by topic, by client, by circumstance, and it's a topic that has a lot of gray area,” says Edelman PR's Steve Rubel, Executive Vice President for Global Strategy and Insights.

Some in the field are passionate about the need to address the small fish in their small ponds. “Technically, we are missing out on a thousand times more efficient word of mouth than we have right now,” according to Bostjan Spetic, CEO of Zemanta, provider of an online content production platform. “The mom and pop bloggers, the local gurus who help their 20-30 friends with actual advice – these are the ones we should be targeting,” he told the Pivot 2010 conference.¹³

13. Video: Pivot 2010 Day 2, “Mixed Media, Consumer Profiling...” <http://testing.pivotcon.com/Video/pivotvideopage.html>



TACTICS TO ENGAGE YOUR AUDIENCE

1. Follow the influencers your audience follows
2. Use hashtags to reach communities of interest
3. Create and follow lists
4. Acknowledge your own followers and reciprocate by engaging in their conversations
5. Use available tools to measure influence, but use your judgement, too
6. Post thought pieces that will engage others
7. Pose questions
8. Integrate images and video
9. Reach out to influencers directly with targeted personal messages
10. Create social events

Similarly, Facebook Product Manager Paul Adams has posted research online¹⁴ showing that “strong ties often wield the most influence over people’s decisions. For example, they are often the biggest factor in purchase decisions.” More evidence comes from a Facebook poll asking, “What makes you want to follow a page?” The overwhelmingly winning answer was “your friends have liked it.”¹⁵

Not all friends are equal, though. “Almost everyone on Facebook connects with people they don’t actually know in the real world, despite the intent of Facebook to the contrary,” says *The Facebook Effect* author Kirkpatrick.¹⁶

It’s not so unlike the real world. “I’ll listen to you about certain subjects but not about other subjects. It’s not just a blanket endorsement because we’re ‘friends,’” says DIGO Brands Managing Director Jeff Pundyk.

The small but powerful influencers in their own circles are hard to identify, locate and reach. And audiences may atomize in yet another way with the growth of mobile social networks. The number of mobile social network users will reach some 79.1 million in the U.S. alone by 2015, according to eMarketer,¹⁷ with the adoption of location-based services, such as Foursquare and Gowalla, rising with it. With the growth of on-the-spot decision making, powered by smartphones, influence could again be on the move.

The ten tactics listed in the accompanying box can help keep you in your audience’s decision loop.

The new tools of influence building

Whether in search of big fish or little, PR professionals are diving into analytics. They are using new tools to help them rethink the kinds of people to develop relationships with, and to stay in the loop as key audiences increasingly consult their own networks, talk to advocates and enthusiasts – not just their favorite journalists or bloggers – and come to their decisions in entirely new ways.

14. “The Real Life Social Network,” *Think Outside In*, Facebook Product Manager Paul Adams, 7/12/11, <http://www.thinkoutsidein.com/blog/2011/07/why-i-left-google-what-happened-to-my-book-what-i-work-on-at-facebook/>

15. Facebook poll, <https://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=question&id=10150288915486729&q= ref=ssp>

16. Video: Pivot 2010 Day 1, “Media in the Social Age,” <http://testing.pivotcon.com/Video/pivotvideopage.html>

17. “Beyond the Check-In: Best Practices for Location-Based Marketing,” eMarketer, Noah Elkin, 1/2011, http://www.emarketer.com/Report.aspx?code=emarketer_2000746



HOW KLOUT RATES INFLUENCERS

- How many people do you reach?
- How many people respond to your messages and spread them further?
- How often do top influencers share and respond to your content?

Increasingly, influencers are rated with such social scores as Klout¹⁸ and on the Empire Avenue “social stock market.” Influence is measured in terms such as number of followers, number of individuals one is following (and the relationship between the two) and whether either advances the content received to other influencers and/or otherwise votes it up such indexes as Twitter’s Trending Topics.

Tools like Twellow.com can help identify who is talking about what, in combination with how influential they are. Real-time search engines show popular topics. There are

even tools for the most influential time of day to tweet.

But, as in all human endeavors, there is no substitute for applying your own common sense. By some measures, a hipster with a parody Twitter feed can have the same social score as a dedicated social advocate. As communications and content strategist Mark Evans puts it: “Professionals can use their experience and expertise to layer intelligence, perspective and insight on top of the social media data.”¹⁹

Traditional media through the social lens

PR professionals have spent their careers working with influencers in traditional media. The good news is that you can leverage those relationships in social media, too, as more and more mainstream media outlets and journalists continue to set up shop in the social layer.

In fact, as proof of the need for an integrated PR strategy, traditional media has become one of the top influencers in social media – and vice versa. According to another study by HP Labs’ Social Computing Research Group, “mainstream media play a role in most trending topics and actually act as feeders of these trends.”²⁰ Think of all of the TV segments you’ve seen about viral videos, top tweeters and social media *faux pas*.

This is blurring the lines between mainstream media and the newer hybrids, such as Huffington Post, TechCrunch and Politico. Edelman’s Rubel describes these as “digitally born and bred with extremely strong amplification in social media.” Leading PR professionals are now approaching both traditional and hybrid media using similar tactics, and social media is a key and growing part of the mix. Illustrating this approach, an Arketi Group survey of B2B journalists showed 64% spending more than 20 hours a week online, of which 69% are using social networking in their work.²¹

18. Klout, <http://klout.com/corp/kscore>

19. “Social Media Monitoring: A Beautiful Marriage Between Man & Machine,” SocialMediaToday, Mark Evans, 4/5/10, <http://socialmediatoday.com/index.php?q=SMC/186623>

20. “Influence and Passivity in Social Media,” HP Labs’ Social Computing Lab, Bernardo Huberman, 9/20/11

21. “2011 Arketi Web Watch Media Survey: Inside BtoB Media Usage of Social Media,” Arketi Group, 2011, http://www.arketi.com/pdfs/Arketi_Web_Watch_2011.pdf

“It’s happening on two fronts: inside out and outside in,” Cutler says.

On the one hand, company information that once made it onto a media outlet’s news pages or Web sites now “earns” greater visibility via social media outlets used by publishers and individual journalists. Traditional media outlets troll social media for trends and stories. Individual journalists use Twitter feeds as a latter-day “man in the street” interview.

On the other hand, following a journalist or mailing directly via social networks are new ways for PR to make contact. Early adopters in the media “are almost more likely to respond to somebody if they see something on Twitter than if something is sent to them randomly in an e-mail box,” Cutler says. “You might want to track those people. Watch what they write about. Make your contact relevant to what they have written about – almost like a pitch. Only now you can do that directly. And with smartphones, they’re going to see that before they even get back to their desks.”

Exercise caution, though. Directly contacting some journalists and bloggers via social media can, at times, be viewed as noisy – interviewees warned. Personalizing the message can help.

Turning “owned” media into “earned” media

Great content, strategically communicated, creates influence. Content is the “currency” of social media,²² with companies today increasingly publishing “owned content” in the form of white papers, videos, blogs and other online media.

“

People need to hear something **three to five times** before it sinks in.

”

Steve Rubel
Executive Vice President of
Global Strategy and Insights,
Edelman PR

With a strategy integrating owned media and social media, a brand’s own content can readily be found, consumed and shared by online audiences, creating the type of credibility associated with earned media and triggering additional visibility across social networks and search engines as a result.

However, to make inroads, the content must be of intrinsic value to your audience – whether it’s actionable, entertaining or otherwise compelling, depending on your brand and its goals.

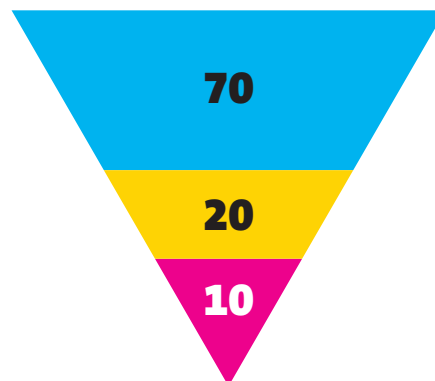
Atomizing and re-distributing owned content in tweetable increments over time is a new best practice that can extend content life and ensure wider uptake. “What we’ve seen is that people need to hear something three to five times before it sinks in,” Rubel says.

Be open to using various kinds of content on the social internet. Videos and infographics are considered by many in PR to be particularly effective. Specialized social networks, such as Quora, offer additional opportunities – in Quora’s case, to post informed answers to socialized questions, thus establishing yourself or your brand as a subject-matter

22. [Content: marketing’s ‘currency’ in social media that accelerates performance](#), PR Newswire, 2011

expert. And entirely new forms of output are being incorporated into the PR social toolkit, including sharable Twitter-based newspapers enabled by such startups as Paper.li and The Tweeted Times, which aggregate news in an individual’s Twitter stream and rank it by popularity in that person’s network.

Take care that all of your social interactions are not just about your brand or ideas, though. Interaction is another watchword in social media. Burson-Marsteller reports that 67% of companies use the @ sign to reference or direct tweets at other Twitter accounts, which “suggests a much higher level of engagement by corporations, as they use Twitter to converse with others and not just push out their own messages.”²³ A popular rule-of-thumb is the 70-20-10 rule: 70% of a brand’s social media should involve content of general interest to the community or industry, 20% should simply be conversation – responding to others – and then the community will accept 10% direct promotion.²⁴



FIVE TIPS FOR SOCIALIZING CONTENT

ONE

Tweet all of the angles of your content to maximize interest in your message. Press releases, white papers, blog posts and case studies often contain multiple angles. Find and tweet them all. Additionally, if the content includes infographics, photos or video, you can tweet those separate elements.

TWO

Spread multiple tweets out over time to expose the content to the broadest possible audience. Remember that Twitter is a real-time news service for many people. Timing matters.

THREE

Use correct and effective hashtags to make your content easy to find. Take the time to research and identify (and then use!) the hashtags used by others. (Hashtags aggregate related subject matter in a single feed.)

FOUR

Structure the content to be Twitter-friendly. Encourage others to tweet your messages by offering plenty of “tweetable tidbits” like bullet points and well-edited headings.

FIVE

Encourage re-tweets (RTs) by keeping tweets short. Pithy tweets are catchy and leave plenty of room to accommodate others re-tweeting the message.

Source: “Five Tips For Tweeting Press Releases & Other Content,” [Beyond PR blog](#)

23. 2011 *Global Social Media Check-up*, Burson-Marsteller, 2/2011
<http://www.slideshare.net/BMGlobalNews/bursonmarsteller-2011-global-social-media-checkup>
24. *Mastering Public Relations in Social Media*, PR Newswire, 2011

Integrated PR-and-social-media in real life

To understand how an integrated PR strategy emphasizing social media actually works, we've closely examined a specific instance at Brown University. Researchers with the Costs of War project at the university's Watson Institute for International Studies released findings in June, in advance of the tenth anniversary of 9/11. In the interest of immediacy, and to engage a broader audience, they decided they could not rely only on the conventional and lengthy academic publishing route.

They instead built a highly accessible costsofwar.org Web site summarizing findings in plain English with dramatic infographics, videos and social media hooks (and, yes, PDFs of nearly two dozen academic papers.)

Implementation of media outreach and social media strategies began weeks before the release, with a media alert and invitations to a Facebook event on related Facebook pages. Also building anticipation were an @costsofwar Twitter feed as well as other Brown University and Watson Institute Twitter and Facebook feeds, a Tumblr blog and a blog on Brown's own globalconversation.org site. Relevant news stories from around the world were curated and shared via these social network feeds.

Advance work with Reuters on a global rollout preceded a targeted press release distribution. Hybrid media was key. Huffington Post was offered an exclusive Costs of War video and ran it with the Reuters wire report in its coveted lead story spot. Journalists, bloggers and analysts were followed on Twitter and Facebook, with some contacted directly via Twitter.

Following the launch, integrated outreach has been continuing through 9/11 and beyond. Among the features:

- Staged roll out of five videos
- Tweets and Facebook posts of "facts of the day," infographics, videos and other information "atomized" from the academic papers
- Curated posts of others' articles, blogs and commentary on the findings – including some with deep links to related project research
- A Reddit interview with researchers
- Hashtags, including #AfghanistanTuesday to widen the audience beyond @costsofwar
- A second Facebook event featuring radio station KPFA's 3-1/2 hour live program with many of the project researchers
- A second media advisory offering interviews to journalists working on 9/11 features
- An alert on PR Newswire's ProfNet Connect expert community
- Tools including a HootSuite dashboard for managing messages, TweetDeck monitoring and Google analytics



So far, this integrated approach has helped deliver hundreds of resulting traditional and hybrid media placements in print and on air, and earned tens of thousands of visits to the Costs of War Web site – levels that are far beyond what’s typical for the institute. According to Google Analytics, Facebook (both Web-bound and mobile) was the second largest source of referrals, following Yahoo! News.

Conclusion: integrated influence has changed PR forever

Integrated PR strategies require investment – in time, money and creativity – but experience shows that the returns can be worth it. Owned media, social media, traditional media, hybrid media – the modern PR professional not only engages in all of these spheres of influence, but also triggers them in ways that set the others in motion.

Is it too much to say that the Twitter list has become the new rolodex? Perhaps – or perhaps not. Either way, what’s clear is that the prototypical well-connected PR agent of today must possess more and more social media panache. And the business of influence will never be the same.

About PR Newswire

PR Newswire (www.prnewswire.com) is the premier global provider of multimedia platforms and solutions that enable marketers, corporate communicators, sustainability officers, public affairs and investor relations officers to leverage content to engage with all their key audiences. Having pioneered the commercial news distribution industry 56 years ago, PR Newswire today provides end-to-end solutions to produce, optimize and target content – from rich media to online video to multimedia – and then distribute content and measure results across traditional, digital, social, search and mobile channels. Combining the world’s largest multi-channel, multi-cultural content distribution and optimization network with comprehensive workflow tools and platforms, PR Newswire enables the world’s enterprises to engage opportunity everywhere it exists. PR Newswire serves tens of thousands of clients from offices in the Americas, Europe, Middle East, Africa and the Asia-Pacific region, and is a UBM plc company.

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