

## POWER TO THE PEOPLE

*The internet has empowered consumers, giving them the chance to shape brands to fit their own personalities and tastes. Now it is up to companies to listen to them.*

by Elliot S. Schreiber

**T**he internet, although still in its infancy, has fundamentally altered our social, economic and political lives. The impact of the internet is equal to that of the printing press, which shifted the means of information from central authorities to the masses, helping to destroy feudal society, principalities, and undermining the church's authority over publishing. Until the internet, news gathering, editing and distribution were still owned by large corporations. Anyone can now gather and distribute news, and the mass media is finding it difficult to keep pace. Consider that the 2008 Mumbai massacre was tweeted and emailed around the world by those caught in the carnage to other individuals before the news media was covering the situation. The internet has transformed the market environment for

virtually every company, empowering consumers, increasing the threat of new entrants, and creating new competitive opportunities or risks for existing companies. The economist Ronald Coase had found in his Nobel Prize winning article *The Nature of the Firm* (1937) that the primary economic rationale for integrated corporations was the lowering of search and transaction costs. The internet has stripped these advantages from many companies, changing industries as diverse as automobile, travel and entertainment.

The nature of what we term a market and the value of the market also has been changed. The Cluetrain Manifesto (1999) noted that "markets are conversations already taking place" in cyberspace. Christopher Anderson noted in his 2004 *Wired Magazine* article that a "long tail" had developed, allowing businesses to use the internet to realise significant profit from selling to niche rather than mass markets in ways not previously possible. from recipient to producer The term social media relates to those web-based activities that allow individuals to publish, share or network with others. The consumer is no longer simply a recipient, but now also a producer of content. We have moved from communicating one to many to a new environment in which many communicate with many. It is in these social media where people increasingly form their opinions of brands and reputations. A 2009 study by the Razorfish agency found more than 97 per cent of consumers said that social media conversations influenced their purchase decisions. This confirms the ...

[READ MORE ↗](#)



Advertisement



### QUADRIGA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

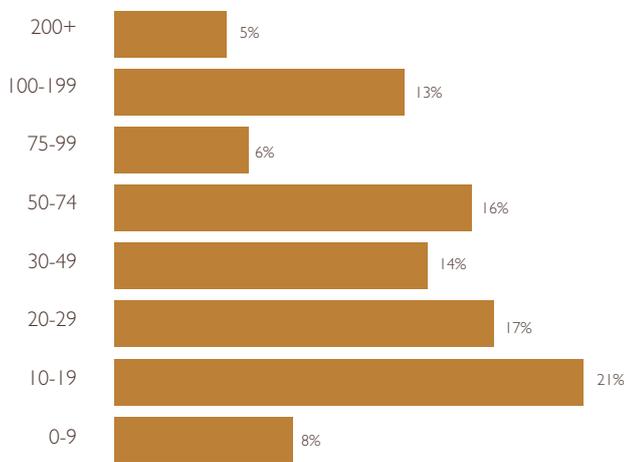
A collage of various black and white photographs showing people in professional settings: meetings, presentations, people working at computers, and social interactions. A prominent white box in the center contains the text "Internal Communication" and "Steering Dialogue through Change, Crisis and the Everyday Workflow". To the right, another white box contains the date "22/23 April 2010" and the location "Berlin". A Twitter logo is visible in the top left, and a URL "http://www" is partially visible in the bottom right.

## FACTS & FIGURES

Irrelevant and untargeted PR releases are considerable sources of pollution and undermine the overall standing of the PR industry; so claims the introduction to a survey by *An Inconvenient PR Truth*, a movement that describes itself as “a passionate plea to the PR Industry to take action to tackle the issue of pollution caused by the sending of press releases to journalists, editors, bloggers and publishers for whom they are irrelevant.” Behind the movement is RealWire (formerly Webitpr), a global news release distribution service specialising in online media. Conversations about PR

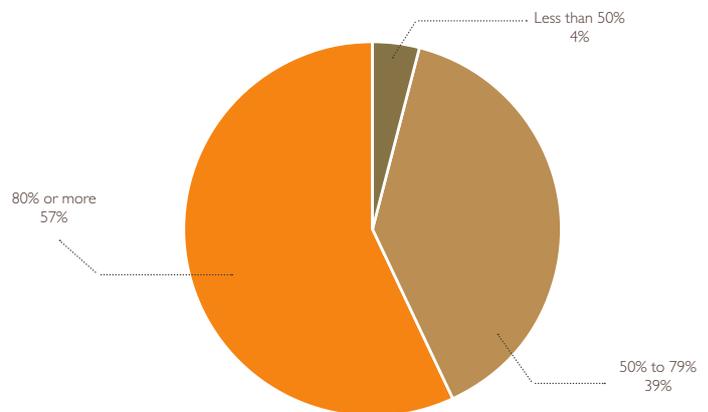
spam are as old as PR itself, yet this new campaign claims that, despite the progress made by evolving social media tools, PR spam is currently now at a level which is deemed unacceptable by journalists, bloggers, editors and publishers. The survey, which was carried out between November and December 2009 found that the average number of press releases received each day was 54 (below left). Furthermore, 57 per cent of recipients suffer a level of irrelevant press releases of 80 per cent or more (below right). *Taken from An Inconvenient PR Truth/RealWire*

### Number of Press Releases Received Per Day



Average number of releases across sample was 54 per day

### Press Release Irrelevance Levels by Proportion of Recipients



Irrelevant press releases constitute over 80% of those received by the majority of Recipients.

[READ MORE ↗](#)

## COMMENTARY

### Remembering the Armenians

Turkey has withdrawn its ambassador to Sweden after the parliament voted by 131 votes to 130 to describe as genocide the killing of Armenians in World War I. This comes less than a week after a similar situation in Washington, when, despite strong oppositional Turkish lobbying, a similar resolution was passed by 23 votes to 22. In both instances, the narrowness of the vote reflected official nervousness around the controversy: the Swedish government opposed the resolution, with foreign minister, Carl Bildt, condemning the parliament’s vote. And in the States, advisors to Barack Obama have said that while he personally acknowledges a genocide, he unsuccessfully urged that official interpretation be left to the parties involved. Is this nervousness based on a fear of reaction? The Swedish ambassador to Turkey, Christer Asp, has said protests are underway in some Turkish cities, following large demonstrations outside the Swedish consulate in Istanbul, all reminiscent of the protests and boycott of Danish goods in the Middle East following the publication of certain cartoons in a Danish newspaper. Or does official hesitancy stem from a



less tangible recognition of the interaction of awkward variables at play here? The precariousness of a retroactive reassessment of past historical events, the influence of lobbying by wealthy interest groups (on both sides of the debate), resentment at western interference in another region and culture, and above all hostility at the idea of one country placing a moral judgment on the past actions of another, while being seen to not address its own historical sins. It is this latter point that repeats itself most vehemently in popular reactions, the defensiveness further polarising public opinion. For many, Faulkner’s words ring true: “The past is never dead. It’s not even past.”

Image: flickr

#### Imprint

Editor in Chief  
Marc-Oliver Voigt

Newsletter Editors  
Richard Morgan,  
Dafydd Phillips

Publishers  
Rudolf Hetzel,  
Torben Werner

Send your Personnel News updates to  
[personnel@communication-director.eu](mailto:personnel@communication-director.eu)

twitter

Follow Communication  
Director: Now On Twitter!

## PERSONNEL



**Herbert Heitmann**  
(VP, External Communications)  
Institution: Royal Dutch Shell  
Start: June 01



### **Netherlands: Heitmann to lead global communications at Shell**

EACD president HERBERT HEITMANN is leaving his role as chief communications officer at multinational software corporation SAP AG to become executive vice president external communications at Royal Dutch Shell. Heitmann has lead global communications at SAP for 12 years. Until his replacement is announced, Jen Roach, who leads the market unit communications department, will temporarily assume Heitmann's tasks.

Alcatel-Lucent 



**Stephan A. Carter**  
(Chief Marketing, Strategy  
& Communication Officer)  
Institution: Alcatel-Lucent Start: April 01



### **France: Newly created position for former UK minister**

Alcatel-Lucent has appointed STEPHEN A. CARTER to the newly created position of chief marketing, strategy and communication officer. He will sit on the Alcatel-Lucent management committee and will have global responsibility for marketing, strategy and communications. He will be based in the company's headquarters in Paris. Carter's most recent role was as UK government minister for the communications, technology and broadcasting sector.





**Sean Garrett**  
(VP, Communications)  
Institution: Twitter  
Start: March 01



### **US: Sean Garrett new VP communications for Twitter**

Twitter has hired a new vice president of communications: SEAN GARRETT, co-founder in 2004 of San Francisco and Washington DC-based consultancy 463 Communications (who have consulted for Twitter in the past). Before 463, Garrett, a 20-year public relations veteran, was at Applied Communications, which was acquired by Bite Communications.

## EVENTS

[READ MORE ↗](#)



### **18.03.2010 The Changing Media Summit**

The Changing Media Summit has established itself as the must-attend event for anyone concerned with creative and commercial success in the digital age. Over 350 senior executives are expected to attend to discuss, debate and disseminate the latest media strategies.

► Guardian Media Group, 90 York Way, London

[READ MORE ↗](#)



### **23.03.2010 PR Measurement Conference**

Measuring your PR activities has never been more critical for communicators. This conference features measurement experts who will discuss cost-effective and proven strategies and tactics for measuring your communications efforts.

► PR News, The National Press Club, Washington DC

[READ MORE ↗](#)



### **22.04.2010 – 23.04.2010 Internal Communication Conference**

New and experienced speechwriters will meet and exchange tips, experiences, ideas and contact details at this annual event that attracts attendees from executive, freelance, corporate and governmental backgrounds.

► Quadriga University, The Westin Grand, Berlin

[READ MORE ↗](#)

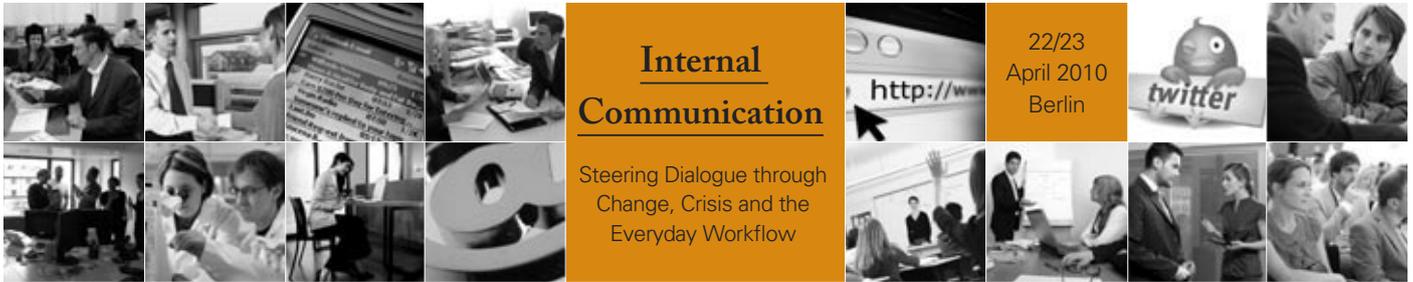


### **28.04.2010 – 29.04.2010 3rd Annual Employee Engagement Conference**

This conference will explore all the latest thinking on the subject of employee engagement, new trends and case studies, with speakers from companies including Rio Tinto, Unilever, Credit Suisse, Nokia and more.

► TENEQ Events, Hotel Arts, Barcelona

[READ MORE ↗](#)



## Internal Communication

22/23  
April 2010  
Berlin

Steering Dialogue through  
Change, Crisis and the  
Everyday Workflow

[www.internal-communication.eu](http://www.internal-communication.eu)

### Registration Fax: +49 (0) 30/44 72 93 00

I would like to attend the Internal Communication conference on the 22nd and 23rd of April in Berlin.

- I am not a member of the European Association of Communication Directors and do not wish to apply for membership this time.

Conference Fee: 1160 Euro\*

- I am a full member of the European Association of Communication Directors OR I am an inhouse communication professional and would like to become a full member of the European Association of Communication Directors (annual membership fee: 140 Euro\*\*) and hereby officially apply for membership.

Conference Fee: 840 Euro\*

\_\_\_\_\_  
**company**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**name/surname**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**position**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**address**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**city**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**telephone/fax**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**e-mail**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**signature**

**Alternative Billing Address**  Yes  No

\_\_\_\_\_  
**company**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**name/surname**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**vat number (if applicable)**

\* Included in the participant's fee is access to all parts of the programme, as well as meals and coffee breaks. Prices do not include VAT.

\*\*excl. VAT; please see conditions of membership on [www.eacd-online.eu](http://www.eacd-online.eu)