



# State of Nordic PR & communication

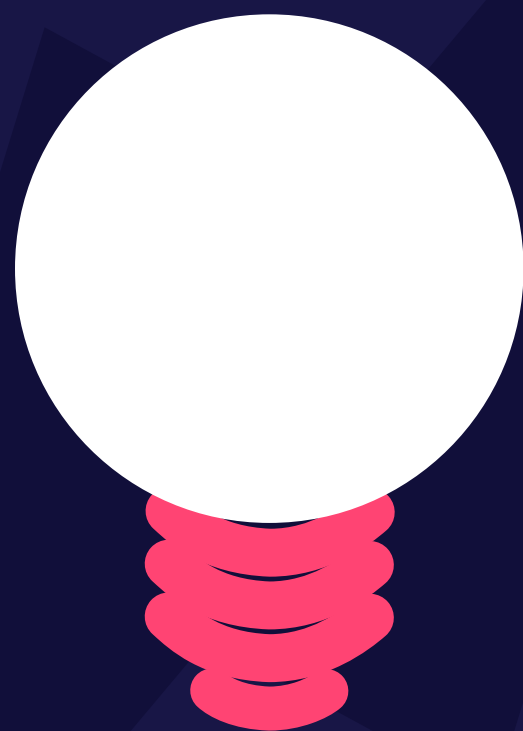
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Trends, challenges and opportunities  
A 2022 Mynewsdesk Report

mynewsdesk

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## A spark of inspiration

Working in the communication industry is becoming increasingly challenging and demanding. Nordic PR and communication professionals are faced with added responsibility and heavier workloads in combination with increased competition and a more complex media landscape. Add to that more critical consumers and burning societal challenges, and it's easy to see that staying on top of the professional game sometimes feels like a mission impossible.

As a PR and communication solution and all-in-one public relations platform, Mynewsdesk wants to offer a helping hand to PR and communication professionals, as well as be a driving force in the development of the communications industry. To do this, we need to understand what challenges Nordic PR and communication professionals face in their daily work life, as well as the trends shaping the current and future industry.

That's why we have created the report you're now reading. By doing a thorough trend analysis, expert interviews and a digital survey among Nordic PR and communication professionals, we have identified five key areas. These areas cover the most important trends impacting the current world of communication – which means they are critical to anyone in the business to understand, relate to, or act upon, to stay relevant in the industry.

### ➤ **Redefined Roles**

The changing responsibilities and roles of PR and communication professionals

### ➤ **Converging Comms**

The increased integration between departments

### ➤ **Content Chaos**

The importance of – and challenges with – producing engaging, trustworthy content

### ➤ **Measurement Matters**

The value of measuring and evaluating PR and communication efforts

### ➤ **Purpose Power**

The power of communication to drive societal change

In each chapter, we will describe the main trends and challenges, but also opportunities and visions for the future. Ultimately, our hope is that the report will work as a spark of inspiration and source of pride for us working with PR and communication. And if there is one thing that has become clear when working with this report, it is that the value and power of PR and communication is stronger than ever.

### **Happy reading!**

**Lotta Laurin**  
CMO Mynewsdesk



## Methodology:

### What is the report based on?

To make this report, Mynewsdesk together with the insight and analysis firm United Minds conducted a three-part study:

#### Trend analysis

A thorough trend analysis, covering global PR and communication trend reports, articles and research.

#### Quantitative study

On behalf of Mynewsdesk, United Minds conducted a quantitative survey amongst PR and communication professionals at small and medium sized companies in the Nordics. A total of 461 interviews were conducted. The data collection took place on October 11th to November 1st 2021. The survey was distributed through Mynewsdesk's database and web panels provided by CINT.

#### Expert interviews

To get a deeper understanding of current trends, as well as tips and visions for the future, we conducted expert interviews with six people with different expertise in the field of PR and communication:



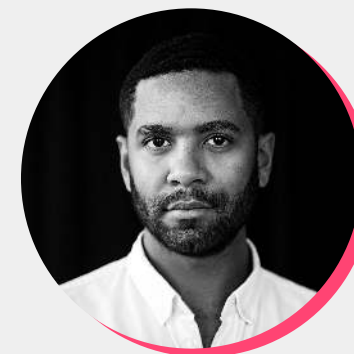
#### Alexander Buhmann

Associate Professor of Corporate Communication at BI Norwegian Business School and Director of #NORA – The Nordic Alliance for Communication & Management. Alexander serves on the editorial board of the International Journal of Strategic Communication (IJSC), is a member of the research team of the European Communication Monitor (ECM – the largest transnational study on strategic communication worldwide), a member of the academic advisory board of the International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC), and a member of the expert panel on artificial intelligence at the Royal Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR).



#### Hanna Brogren

Hanna Brogren is Chief Communications Officer at Region Stockholm and the former secretary general and CEO at The Swedish Communication Association. Hanna was previously Chief Communication Officer in large Swedish organizations for more than 20 years. She has been a brand and strategic communication advisor and consultant, with expertise in value-creating communication, crisis communication, change and development issues.



#### Moussa Mchangama

With a background as a strategic communicator and public speaker, Moussa Mchangama is now a Co-founder of Copenhagen based agency In futurum, where he guides companies, organizations and public institutions towards a just and sustainable future. He advises on sustainability and social justice, and creates strategies and communication tools rooted in a research-based approach, and has a deep understanding of strategic business processes and communication.





### **Robert Rose**

Chief Strategy Advisor at the Content Marketing Institute (CMI) and founder of the training and consulting group The Content Advisory. Robert is one of the world's most recognized experts in digital content strategy and marketing. For more than 10 years, Robert and his firm The Content Advisory have worked with more than 500 companies, including 15 of the Fortune 100.



### **Julia Kiefaber**

Director, Strategic Planning, Weber Shandwick Cologne office, where she works with businesses of all industries, sizes and countries, with a focus on public relations and strategic communication. Julia is also a Industry Fellow at USC Annenberg Center for Public Relations as well as lecturer at Westfälische Hochschule, where she teaches strategic communication.



### **Ana Adi**

Researcher. Speaker. Consultant. Professor of PR/ Corporate Communications at Quadriga University of Applied Sciences Berlin, where she teaches topics covering international and cross-cultural communication, social responsibility, history of public relations and theories of communication. Author of PR2025, a report identifying competences for communication practitioners for the near future. Host of the Women in PR podcast. Ana is also the Chair of the Digital Communication Awards in Berlin since 2015 and a member of the Institute for Public Relations Measurement Commission since 2018.



Chapter 1

Redefined Roles

In this chapter, we explore the changing nature of the professional role and capabilities. How do the Nordic PR and communication professionals experience their workload? Are their roles becoming more specialized or generalized? And, what skills and capabilities will become more important in the future?

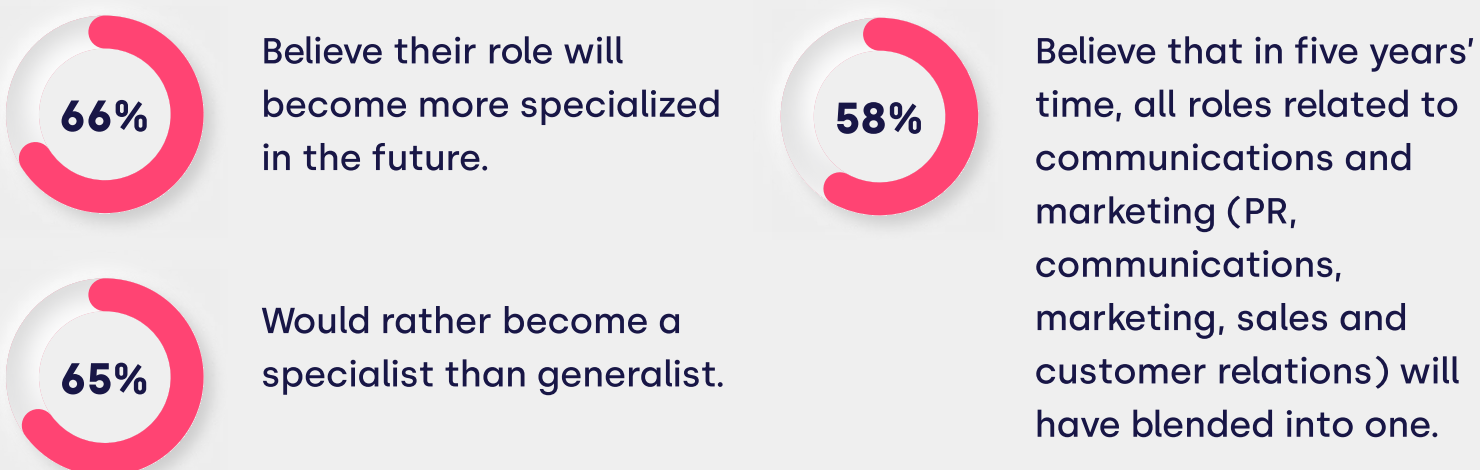
PR and communication professionals have their plates (too) full

To get a better understanding of the Nordic PR and communication professionals' work reality, we asked how they experience that their role and workload has changed in the last year. The results clearly show that work life is becoming more challenging: Four in ten say their professional role has become more demanding, and that both their workload and responsibilities have increased. Thus, it doesn't come as a surprise that almost two thirds also think they have too many responsibilities.



Future professional role – specialised or all in one?

When it comes to the future of one's professional role, the perception differs: While almost two thirds believe their role will become more specialized, almost six in ten believe that in five years' time, all the roles of PR, communications, marketing, sales and customer relations will have merged into one. However, it seems like most would prefer the first development, as around two thirds say they would rather be a specialist than generalist.



## Upskilling – a must to stay relevant

As the world is becoming more complex and changes more rapidly, reskilling and upskilling will become vital in future work life – no matter what industry you're working in. For example, World Economic Forum recently launched "Reskilling Revolution", an initiative to provide one billion people with better education, skills and jobs by 2030<sup>1</sup> – an illustrative example of how we all need to prepare for lifelong learning. The need for upskilling is possibly even more crucial in the communication industry, considering the fast changes, increased complexities and fierce competition. It is therefore encouraging to see that as many as seven in ten of the Nordic PR and communication professionals not only believe developing skills will be crucial to stay relevant in the industry, but that the same share also want to develop their skills in one or several areas.



Believe constantly developing your skills will be crucial to stay relevant in the PR and communication industry.

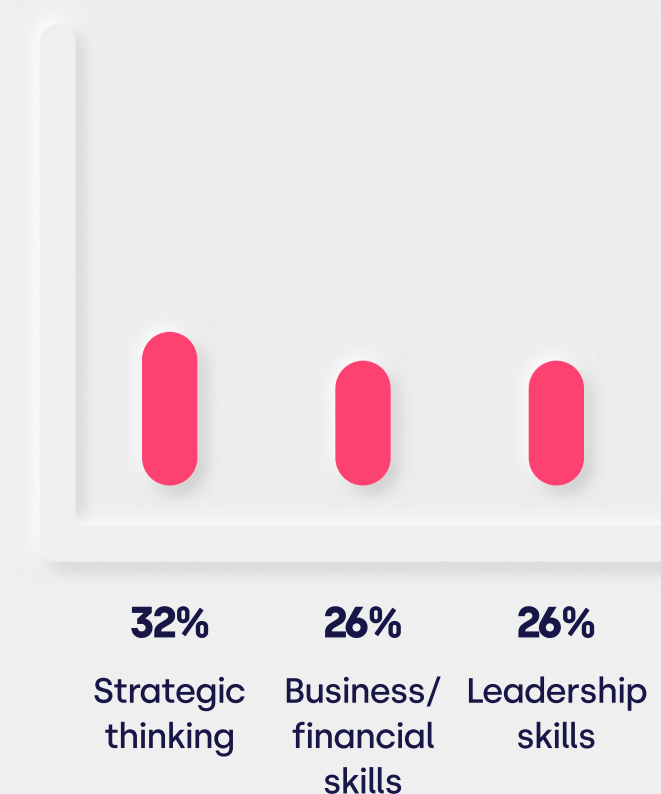


Would like to develop their skills in one or several areas.

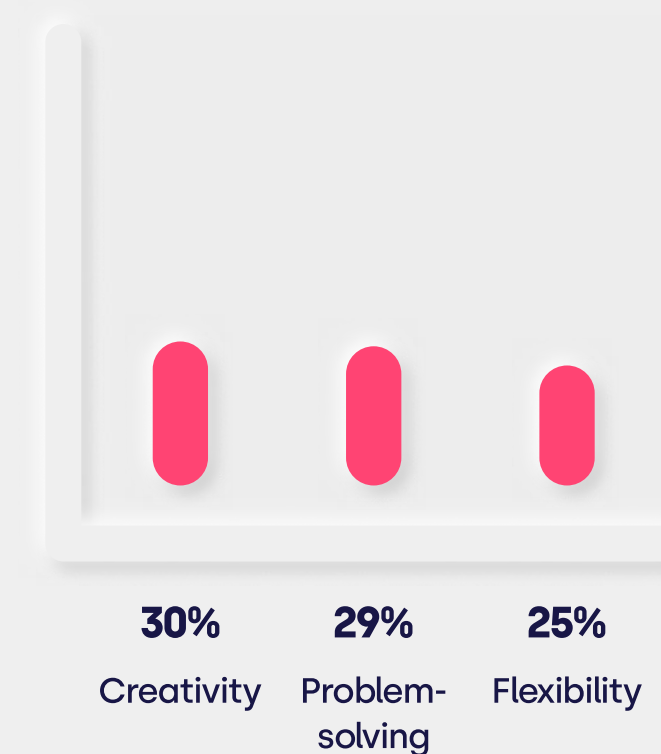
## Future PR and communication professionals: Strategic, creative leaders?

What type of skills and attributes will become important for future PR and communication professionals? According to the Nordic PR and communication professionals themselves, it seems like one needs to own both business and creative qualities, as strategic thinking, business skills and creativity top the lists of most important skills and attributes.

Top three most **important skills** in the future, according to Nordic PR and communication professionals:



Top three most **important attributes** in the future, according to Nordic PR and communication professionals:



To get the expert perspective of what competencies will become crucial in the future, and recommendations for both how to better handle the workload here and now, as well as to stay relevant in the future, we turned to two people with numerous years in the industry: strategic communications consultant **Hanna Brogren**, and PR expert **Julia Kiefaber**, director of strategic planning at global PR firm Weber Shandwick.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/press/2020/01/the-reskilling-revolution-better-skills-better-jobs-better-education-for-a-billion-people-by-2030/>



## Expert recommendation #1: "Prioritize and outsource"

According to **Hanna Brogren**, who has over two decades of experience in the industry, the most evident trend she's been witnessing in the last few years is that PR and communication is given a more important role – a development that means increased demands on professionals' competencies:



- As the role of owned and earned media is getting more important and more subjects need to be packaged communicatively, PR and communication is getting a more business critical function. Further, the communication

landscape is getting more unpredictable and complex, which increases the demands of people working with communication to be able to shift between – and combine – different skills and characteristics.

As communicators, we are expected to have both very wide and very specialized knowledge. Since these expectations are often difficult to live up to in the reality, Hanna stresses the importance of prioritizing:

- As we can see by the results, many professionals feel they have too many responsibilities. This is even more common in small companies, where one person is expected to do and know everything. So, to make your workdays more bearable and your work life more sustainable, you need to prioritize. Ask yourself: What functions are crucial that I manage myself, and what functions can I get external help with?

## Expert recommendation #2: "Ignite your inner student!"

**PR expert Julia Kiefaber**, who works with clients in various industries and markets, shares the view that communication is getting a more strategic role in organizations:



- As more businesses understand the importance of building reputation, communication is being elevated as a field and taking a more strategical role.

She identifies four key competencies for those who want to stay in the business that very much align with what the PR and communication professionals themselves believe will become more important:

- Given communication is getting a more strategic role in organizations, strategic thinking will become highly important. This in combination with problem solving will be needed to navigate the increased complexities businesses are facing both internally and externally. Further, flexibility – in the widest sense – will be important to handle different business projects as well as personality types. And lastly, an innovative and creative mind-set will become vital to break routines and habits and create communication that sets apart from the competitors.

For those who want to future proof one's career, Julia stresses the need for upskilling:

- We need to adjust to the idea that our knowledge is a constant work in progress. So, if I would give PR and communication professionals one recommendation it would be: Ignite your inner student!

## Redefined Roles

### Key Takeaways:

#### Increased importance means increased demands

As PR and communication is taking a more important and strategic role in organizations, professionals face increased demands, workload and responsibilities. There is an increased expectancy to own a wide variety of knowledge and competencies – for example specialist vs. generalist, strategic/business skills and creative attributes.

#### Prioritize and outsource today, upskill for the future

To handle the work life and workload here and now, PR and communication professionals might need to prioritize, focus on what they do best and take external help with the tasks they don't have either time or skills for. However, for those who want to make progress and stay relevant in the industry in the long run, upskilling in one or several areas will most certainly be needed.





Chapter 2

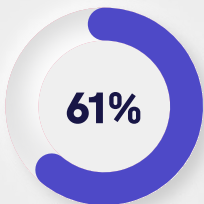
Converging Comms

Now that we’ve looked at changes in PR and communication professionals’ roles, we zoom out to look at the organizational level. To what extent do Nordic PR and communication professionals work with other departments? And, what are the effects of working more together?

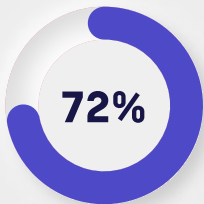
The convergence is a fact – and here to stay

Convergence of fields and roles is a trend we’ve seen in many industries, and our study shows it is highly present in the Nordic communication industry as well: More than six in ten of Nordic PR and communication professionals say collaboration between departments has increased in the last year, and more than seven in ten believe it will increase in the coming year too.

The results show that not only the collaboration between marketing, communication and PR professionals is widespread, but that a large share of these departments also work with other departments – ranging from internal communications and marketers, to product developers, key account managers and investor relations practitioners – to either a large or very large extent.

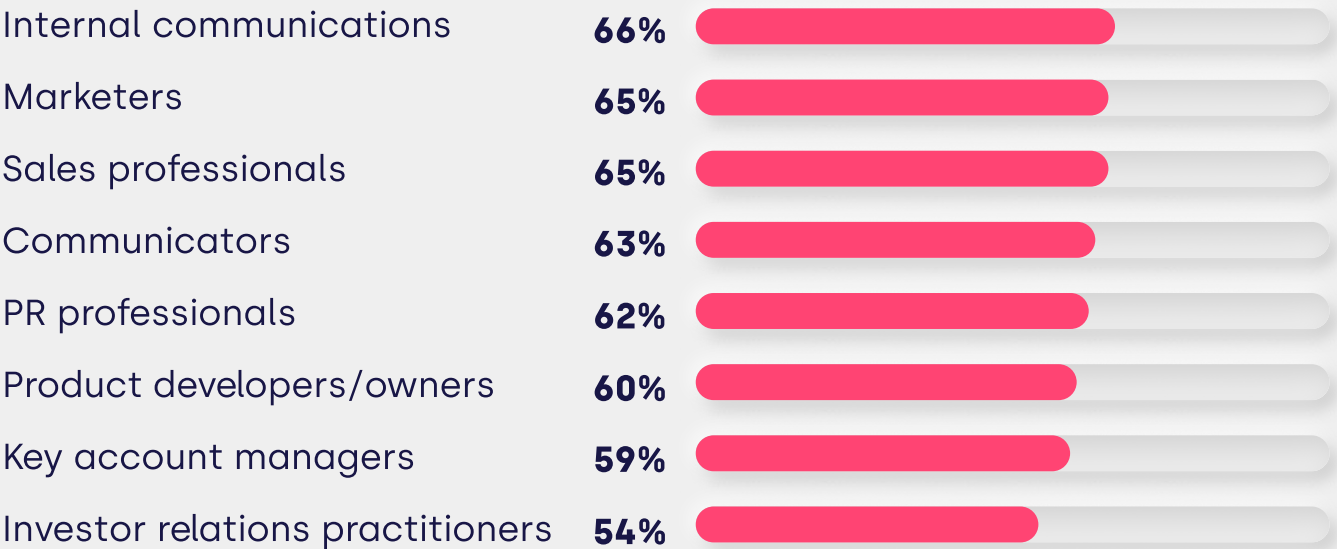


Say integration/collaboration between departments has increased in the last year.



Believe integration/collaboration between departments will continue in the coming year.

Share of Nordic PR & communication professionals who work with other departments to a large or very large extent



**The benefits of convergence are numerous...**

**Strategic communications consultant Hanna Brogren** is a strong advocate of increased collaboration between departments:

- A more integrated way of working is becoming more important for our industry to be able to deal with an increased complexity, and – perhaps most importantly – to increase brand consistency. In a time when consumers are more overwhelmed by messages and time is more limited than ever, making sure you have a condensed brand and cohesive consumer experience is absolutely crucial.

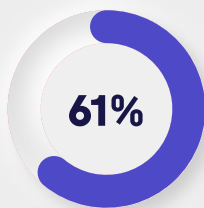
When asking the Nordic PR and communication professionals what impact they themselves believe the increased integration has had, it is clear that the positive effects are many – especially when it comes to areas such as productivity, efficiency and knowledge exchange. Further, more than seven out of ten believe increased collaboration is important for more efficient and innovative work.

**Top 3 effects of increased integration/collaboration**



**...but still, many want to keep their department separate**

At the same time as the majority of Nordic PR and communication professionals see the benefits of increased collaboration, there seems to be a limit to the degree of integration with other units, as more than six in ten believe their department works best as a separate function. An explanation for this double attitude might be that increased collaboration makes it more difficult to know one's role: More than a third say increased integration has led to decreased role clarity.



Believe their department works best as separate function.



Believe increased collaboration between departments has decreased their role clarity.

**Integration poses new demands on leadership and knowledge**

**PR expert Julia Kiefaber** confirms there are new challenges that come with cross-function collaboration:

- While collaborating has many positive effects, it can cause confusion if there is no clear role and accountability. To tackle this, leadership has to set the processes and help to establish a culture where collaboration is the way to work. On an operative level, there is an increased need for project management, so someone holding the strings together and keeping everyone honed on the goal. Like a scrum master almost. From an employee perspective, cross-function collaboration demands an appreciation and basic knowledge of experts in other fields than their own.

## Converging Comms

### Key Takeaways:

#### Convergence is here to stay

Integration between departments is already an established practice in the Nordic PR and communication industry, a development that is expected to continue. A large share of PR and communication professionals already work with other departments to a large or very large extent.

#### Stronger together

The positive effects for organisations working in a more integrated way are many – both when it comes to internal and external factors. Internally, it leads to better ways of working in the form of for example increased productivity, efficiency and knowledge exchange. Externally, it leads to increased brand consistency and cohesive consumer experience – factors that are more crucial than ever to cut through the noise.

#### Integrated work poses new demands on leadership and understanding

While the benefits with increased collaboration are many, it also leads to new challenges and poses new demands, for example when it comes to role clarity, leadership and knowledge. For integration to work as successfully as possible, clear leadership, increased project management and understanding of other department's expertise are key.

## Chapter 3

# Content Chaos

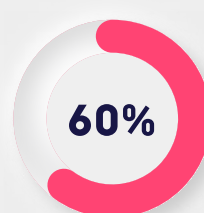
Content is taking a more central and strategical role in organizations. At the same time many Nordic PR and communication professionals experience difficulties when it comes to delivering engaging, trustworthy and high-quality content. So, what are the key factors to produce content that is credible and cuts through the noise?

## Content is getting strategic

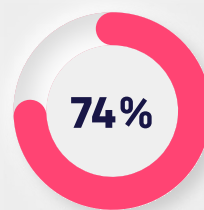
The results show that content is a highly prioritized field among Nordic businesses: Six out of ten of the Nordic PR and communication professionals say their organization views content as a core business strategy, and almost 75% of businesses have a content strategy.

This increased importance of content is seen in business globally, for example by the fact that a higher share of the marketing budget is spent on content. According to content expert **Robert Rose**, who's been in the business for over two decades, we are witnessing a fundamental shift in the way organizations look at content:

- Businesses are starting to not only see content assets as strategic – but also the process of creating, managing, activating and promoting them. They are starting to see content as a strategic function in the business – something that is formal, scalable and measurable. As a result, content is finally taking that central and strategical role it deserves.



Say their organization views content as a core business strategy.



Have a content strategy.

## Main content challenge: creating trustworthy content

While – and perhaps *because* – content is taking a more central, important role, Nordic PR and communication professionals experience several challenges when it comes to producing and distributing content. The main challenge is creating content that is trustworthy, which more than one in four state as a content challenge.

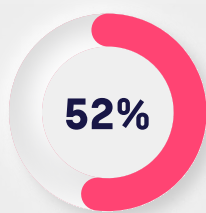
# No1

**Content challenge:**  
Creating credible/trustworthy content (26 %)

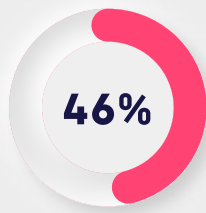


Too much content, too low quality

Another problem that Nordic PR and communication professionals see when it comes to content is the amount of it: More than half think there's too much content created today. And while many believe there is too much quantity, professionals believe the quality of the content is low – at least when it comes to their own: Almost half believe the quality of most of the content produced by their organization is poor. Research confirms that this perception is shared with consumers. For example, a global study by Havas Group showed that less than half of all content provided by brands is judged not to be meaningful<sup>2</sup>.



Believe there is too much content created today.



Say the quality of most of the content produced by their organization is poor.

Content expert Robert Rose:  
“To cut through and build trust, you need to go that extra mile”

We live in what has been described as the “age of cynicism” time when consumers are getting both more critical and indifferent towards brands. For example, the same study mentioned above showed that less than half of brands are seen as trustworthy, and that as much as 75% of brands could disappear and easily be replaced. Given this, it is easy to see that communicators are struggling to produce content that is credible and engaging. And as the competition increases, **Robert Rose** stresses the need to be bold and think big:

- Today, more businesses are starting to create meaningful content. This means that with so much competition, it's so much more difficult to produce content that really differentiates and creates a level of trust compared to just a few years ago. If you want to differentiate yourself and build trust, you need to be ready to go that extra mile and not be afraid to think outside the box. Deliver something beyond your core business – whether it's by educating, helping, inspiring and/or entertaining.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.havasgroup.com/press\\_release/havas-meaningful-brands-report-2021-finds-we-are-entering-the-age-of-cynicism/](https://www.havasgroup.com/press_release/havas-meaningful-brands-report-2021-finds-we-are-entering-the-age-of-cynicism/)

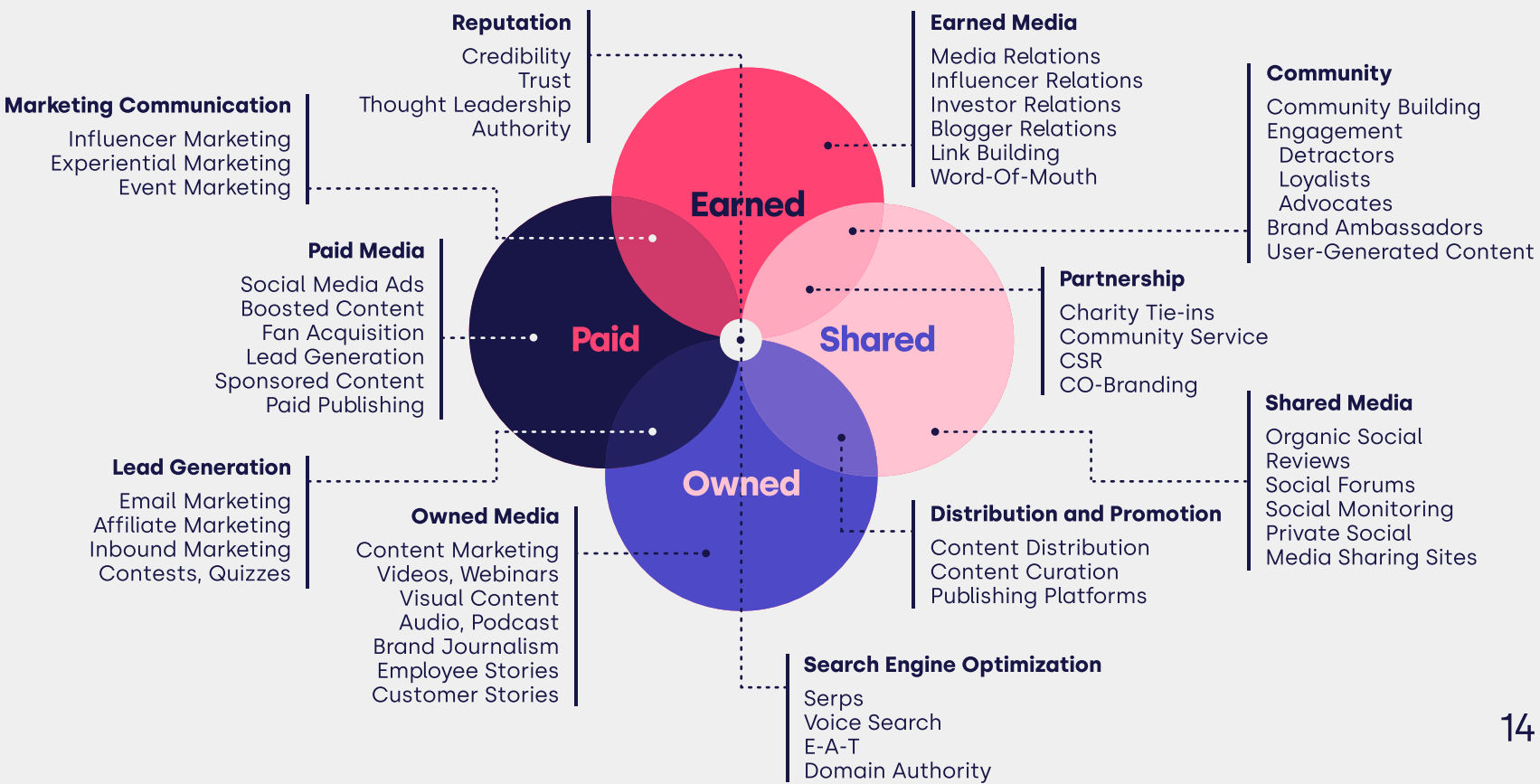
A holistic, integrated approach  
– key for qualitative, consistent content

When looking at what Nordic PR and communication professionals believe is the way forward when it comes to content, alignment and integration seem to be key ingredients: Better alignment between departments is ranked as the second most important factor (after larger budget) to create better content – 16 percent state this. Further, more than a half believe that in just one year, integration between shared, earned, owned and paid content will be the most common practice.

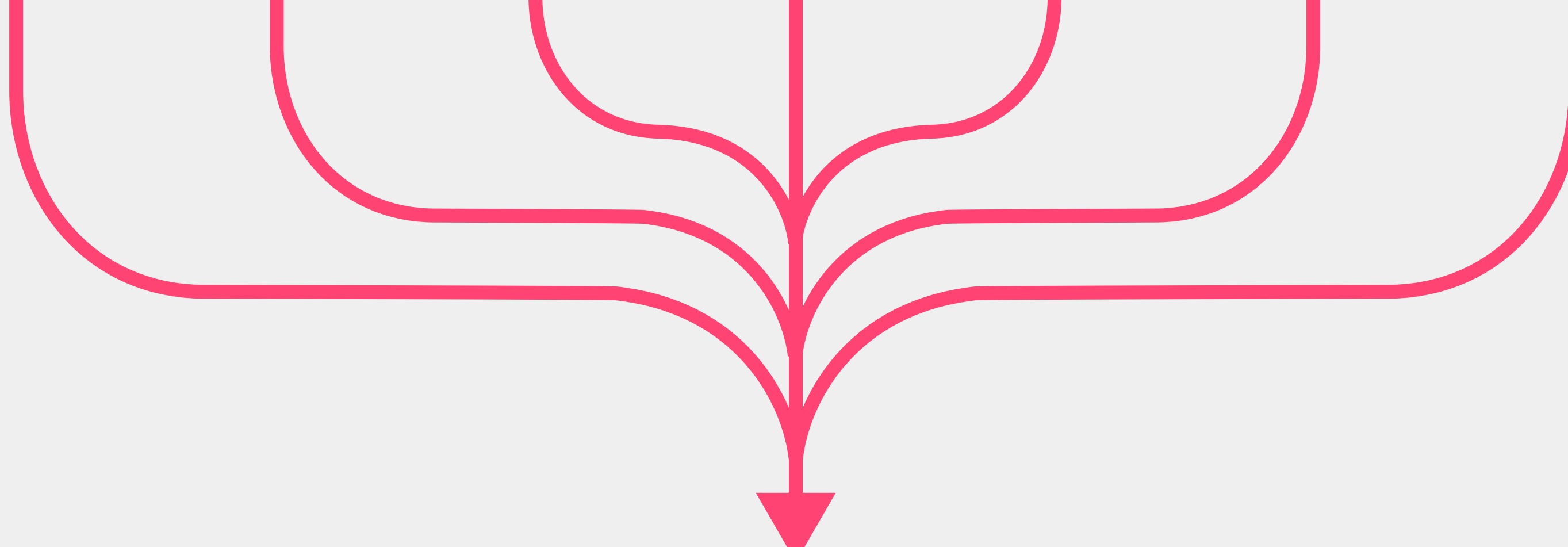


Believe that integration between shared, earned, owned and paid content will be the most common practice in the coming year.

The value of a more integrated and holistic approach to content has been advocated for a long time in the industry, conceptualised in the PESO model by marketing expert Gini Dietrich in the book Spin Sucks in 2014. The model is all about a holistic approach to marketing as it takes the four media types – paid, earned, shared, and owned – and merges them together. The diagram below gives a high-level look at how each channel works on its own and with each other – and where the “sweet spot” in the middle is what breeds reputation, credibility, trust, thought leadership and authority.







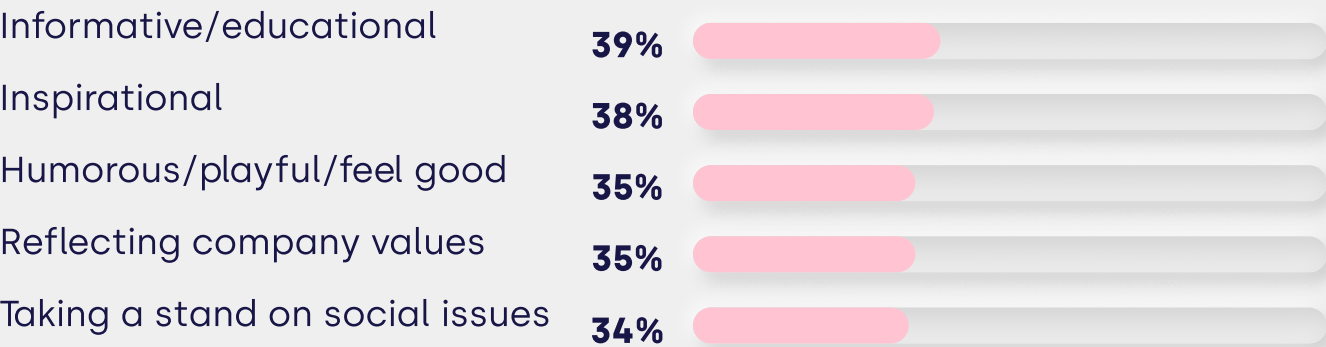
**Future of content production: A one stop shop?**

**Robert Rose** is a strong advocate for a more integrated work approach to produce content. When looking into the future, he envisions content creation as a one stop shop:  
The merging that is starting to happen will only continue. In a near future, I believe we will see how all functions – marketing copy, content marketing, video, graphics, PR and comms, internal communication etcetera – blend into one single strategic function, one or more core teams focusing on content full stop. I've seen some examples of businesses making this shift already, and they have great success as they can work more efficiently and create better consistency in their message."

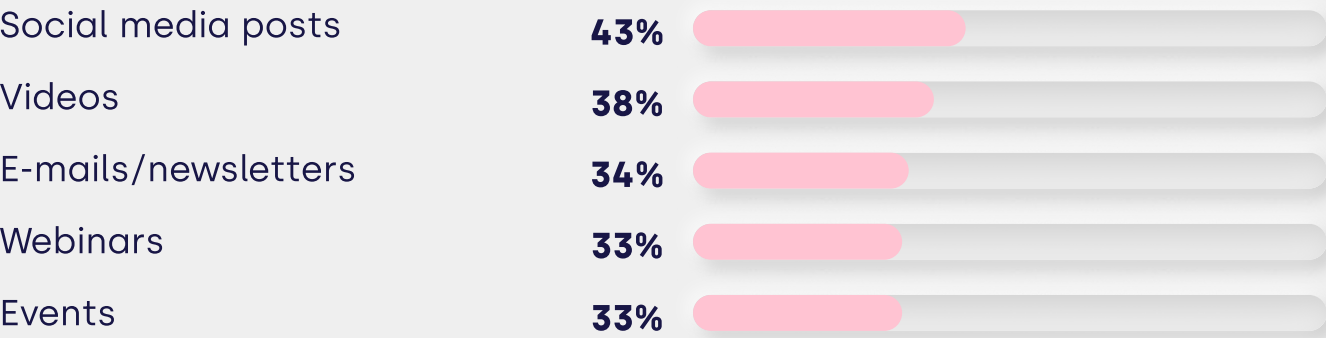
**Focus forward: Infotaining content**

When looking at what types of content Nordic PR and communication professionals will focus on in the future, a mix of seriousness and playfulness seems to be on the agenda, as many are planning to focus on content that is both educational and taking a stand on social issues, as well as inspirational and humorous. And when it comes to channels for distributing the content, social media, videos and e-mails/newsletters will be the main ones.

**Top five content types that Nordic PR & communication professionals will focus more on in the coming year**



**Most prioritized channels for the coming year**



# Inspiring examples:

Brands that entertain and educate beyond their core business



## Jyske Bank

**Teaching financial literacy with its own web TV station**

Starting its own financial web TV station in 2008, Danish Jyske Bank was a pioneer in TV content production. Teaching financial literacy in both Danish and English, Jyske Bank TV is a great example of how to use thought leadership and reach your audience without being dependent on traditional media channels.



## Statistics Sweden

**Making statistics accessible and fun**

Statistics Sweden (statistiska\_centralbyran\_scb) manages to make a topic – statistics – that at first glance can be perceived as complicated and dry, easy to read and fun. On Instagram, they post nicely packaged statistics, based on things that affect the followers.



## Umara

**Delivering heavy research in bite size format through podcasting**

Prester Mera ("Perform More") is a podcast run by Tommy Ivarsson and Simon Gustavsson, founders of nutrition and energy company Umara. In addition to interviewing researchers and athletes, they pick out the practical parts from mile-long nutrition research dissertations and deliver practical solid tips to athletes. The podcasts manages to both captivate an audience with useful knowledge and entertainment value, and provides real reasons to trust Umara as a nutrition brand.



## The Royal Armoury

**Making history engaging for all ages**

With humoristic memes and posts with historical profiles put in current situations, Swedish museum The Royal Armoury (Livrustkammaren) accomplishes to engage people of all ages and levels of history interest on their social media channels.



## Canva

**Edutaining design school**

Canva is an online graphic design platform that allows anyone to craft professional images and animations for social media and blogs. Canva has created its own design school, appealing to people who want to improve their graphic design skills, without having to pay for a degree – making it a good example of educational and interactive content marketing.



## ALDI SÜD

**Transforming print to a digital, inspiring experience**

With its new augmented reality platform, ALDI SÜD transforms analogue product brochures into a digital experience. With special background stories, additional product details, cooking ideas, videos and competitions – the platform offers information, inspiration and entertainment. The direct link to the shop simplifies the customer journey making all communication take place in a single brand universe, and the brochure becomes the starting point of a holistic customer journey.

## Six tips from the content expert: How to produce differentiating, trustworthy content

Want to take your content to the next level, but don't know where to begin? Here's six pieces of guiding advice from content expert **Robert Rose**.



1

### **Treat your content as a product or service.**

Look at whatever content you're creating through the same lens as you look at your products and services, as this helps you to focus on how to deliver value.

2

### **Think consumer experience.**

Think about where in the consumer journey your content experience is going to appear. Make sure to create a seamless content experience between platforms. For example, a person who registers when signing up for a newsletter shouldn't have to register again on another platform.

3

### **Owned media first.**

This is where you create and build your audience, where you create connection and loyalty.

4

### **One platform at a time.**

Focus on one platform at a time and make sure to get really good at it, before moving on to another. Think quality over quantity, always.

5

### **Measure.**

Establish a measurement program in the organization so different teams in the organizations don't compete with each other for the same metrics or you duplicate content internally. Make sure you know your audiences and how they interact with you on different platforms.

6

### **Experiment and have fun!**

Even if it might be hard to find time and resources, it's so important to experiment and be innovative, as it's the only way to differentiate yourself and deliver meaningful content. Dare to go beyond your core business offer!

## Content Chaos

### Key Takeaways:

#### Content takes a strategical role

As more businesses are starting to see content as something that is formal, scalable and measurable, content is taking a more central and strategical role in organizations.

#### A holistic, integrated approach to content – key for consistency and credibility

Both PR and communication professionals and experts agree that a more holistic and integrated approach to work with content is the future. Working more holistically and with higher integration will be key factors to work more efficiently and create better consistency in messages, as well as breed credibility, thought leadership and authority.

#### Go the extra mile

In an era characterized by cynicism, indifference and increased competition, there's no space for mediocracy. Communicators who want to create content that differentiates and builds credibility need to be ready to go that extra mile, be bold and think big. Credibility and creativity will be the guiding C's for content going forward.





## Chapter 4

# Measurement Matters

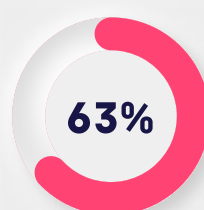
The importance and value of measuring and evaluating PR and communication initiatives is increasingly highlighted. While Nordic PR and communication professionals are feeling the pressure to measure, it's also evident that it's still a subject that is approached with both scepticism and fear. How can this be counteracted?

## Increased pressure to measure

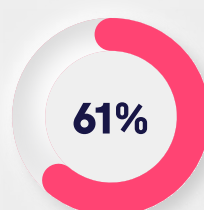
The communication industry is becoming more result oriented, and according to experts, the trend will only intensify. For example, Neil Hoyne, chief measurement strategist at Google, recently stated that "The companies that are going to win are the ones who are using data, not guessing"<sup>3</sup>. Measurement expert **Alexander Buhmann** holds the same view:

- Pressure to perform evidence-based practice in any management function in organizations is just going to increase.

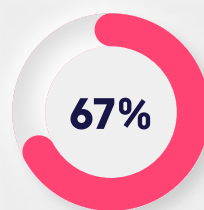
Given the increased importance of measuring, it's positive to see that more than six in ten of Nordic PR and communication professionals already today see measuring as crucial. Further, more than six in ten also believe measuring is important to improve both the status of one's profession and the quality of communication efforts.



Believe measuring impact (e.g. on brand awareness, engagement, retention, sales) of PR/communication efforts is crucial in today's PR & communication landscape.



Believe measuring impact is key to increase the status of one's profession in the organization.



Believe measurement and evaluation are crucial to ensure continuous improvement of PR & communication efforts.

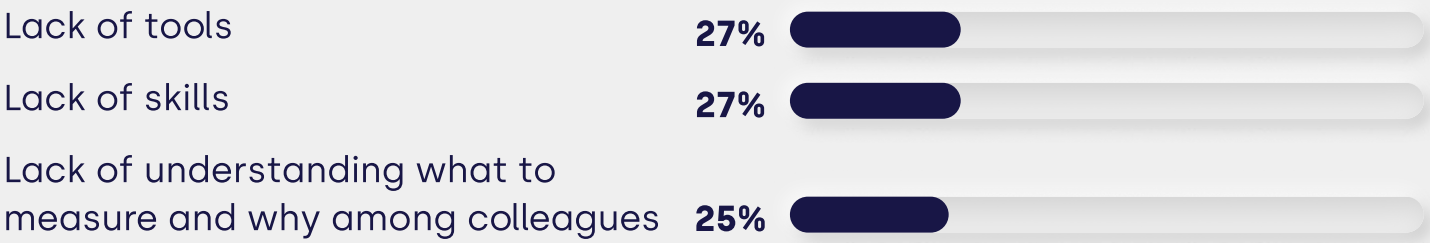
<sup>3</sup> <https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/marketing-future-data-analytics-changing/>



Many lack the knowledge and tools to measure

While PR and communication professionals see measuring and evaluating communication efforts as highly important, many feel they don't have the right tools nor knowledge to do it properly: Around one in four say lack of tools and knowledge are obstacles, both when it comes to personal skills and understanding among colleagues.

Obstacles for measuring communication efforts



Widespread measurement scepticism and fear

Lack of tools and knowledge are not the only barriers for measuring and evaluating. Our study reveals a widespread fear as well as scepticism towards the subject. More than half are worried that if they start using metrics, it will become evident that their work doesn't have enough impact. Further, more than half believe measuring impact doesn't give a deeper meaning or say anything about engagement, and almost two thirds believe focusing on the vision is more important than being fixated by metrics.



Measurement expert:  
“Misconceptions hinder measurement potential”

According to **Alexander**, the results reflect widespread misconceptions about measuring communication, hindering it being used in the valuable way it could:



“Most still see measurement as a rather costly element of reporting, without really understanding why and how to use it for learning, and therefore don't use data to its full potential. To make sense and be useful, measurement needs to be seen as a core practice to manage

communications, and a way to create value for the organization. That many professionals believe it's more important to focus on vision rather than metrics is just one of the misconceptions, proving the need for a better understanding of the value of measuring:

- Metrics versus vision is a false dichotomy. Measuring is just a way to break down and operationalize a vision and make it applicable, a way to better align the bigger picture with everyday practice.”

## Expert advise:

### How to establish a measurement culture

When it comes to recommendations on what to measure and how, **Alexander** explains it's difficult to give general advice, since each organization has its own prerequisites and goals there's no one size fits all. Instead, businesses should focus on establishing a measurement culture in the whole organization, to create a shared understanding of the value of measuring, for both accountability and learning. To make this happen, he recommends gathering representatives from all departments in the organization, to have a common discussion around three questions:

- Rather than having metrics as the starting point, focus on meaning and value: Start with discussing how each department or function contributes to the creation of organizational-level value. Then, discuss how communication, as one of these functions, contributes to this value. And lastly, discuss how you can measure this contribution.

By establishing a measurement culture in the organization and starting to see measurement as a core practice to manage communications, he sees a potential to reposition and elevate the status of the PR and communication department:

- By using a discussion on measurement to also create a clearer picture of how communication contributes to organizational value creation, the PR and communication department may even reposition and realign itself, for instance further away from just a conveyor of messages, and closer to a strategic insight hub that can feed important stakeholder insight into the strategic process of the organization. This is a widely untapped potential and an exciting vision for the future!

## Tips and inspiration:

### Principles for measuring and evaluating communication

Want to start or develop your measurement game, but don't know where to begin? Here are some sources of inspiration and information.

#### The Effectiveness Principles

The Swedish Association of Communication Agencies' report *The Effectiveness Principles*, covers eight principles for communicators to follow in order to create and demonstrate effect.

#### Barcelona Principles 3.0

The International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communications – AMECs – set of principles for evaluating the effectiveness of communications is one of the most widespread frameworks.

## Measurement Matters

### Key Takeaways:

#### The pressure to measure is real

The communication industry is becoming more result oriented, which means pressure to perform evidence-based practice is just going to increase. Today, a majority of Nordic PR and communication professionals see this as crucial, and an important factor to increase both one's professional status and quality of work.

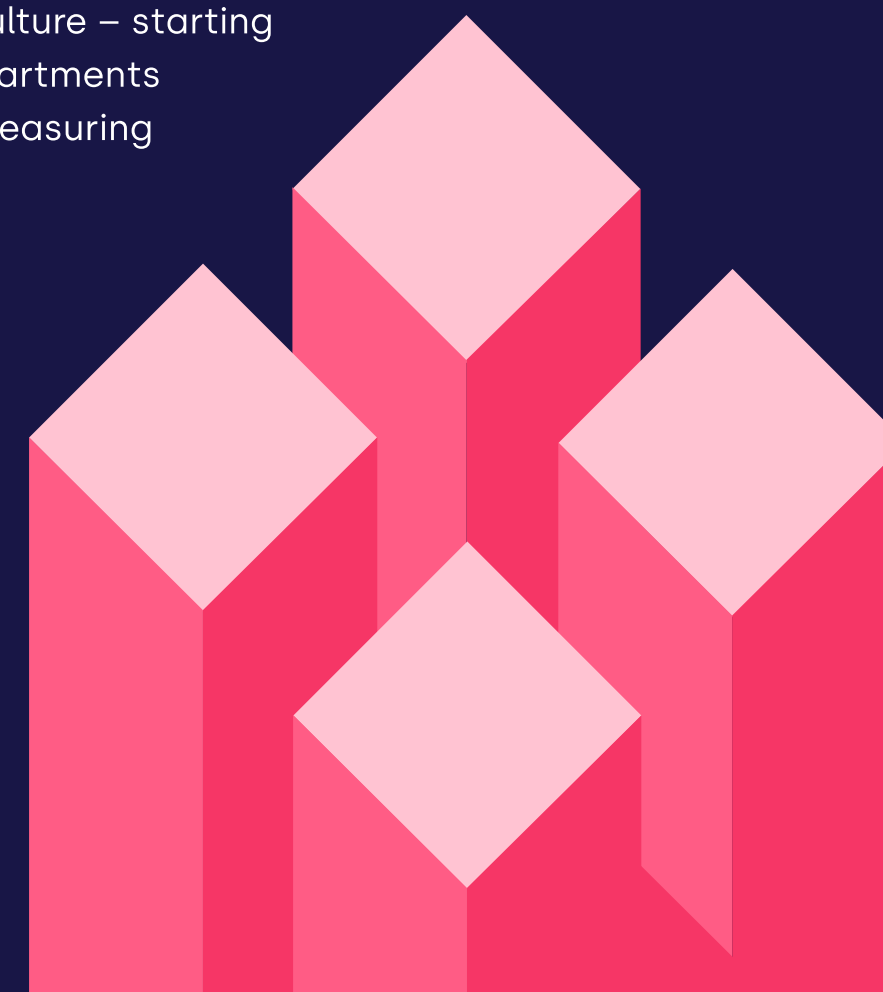
#### Lack of knowledge, tools and misconceptions hinders measurement potential

While measuring and evaluating PR and communication is seen as important, many believe they lack the knowledge and tools to do it properly. In addition, there are also widespread misunderstandings and fears around the subject, reflecting a lack of understanding of the meaning and value of measurement.

#### The need to and value of establishing a measurement culture

To make sense and be useful, measurement needs to be seen as a core practice to manage communications, and a way to create value for the organization. These act as prerequisites to a shared understanding of the value of measuring

in the whole organization, which can be created by establishing a measurement culture – starting with a gathering where all departments meet to discuss the value of measuring for their specific organization.





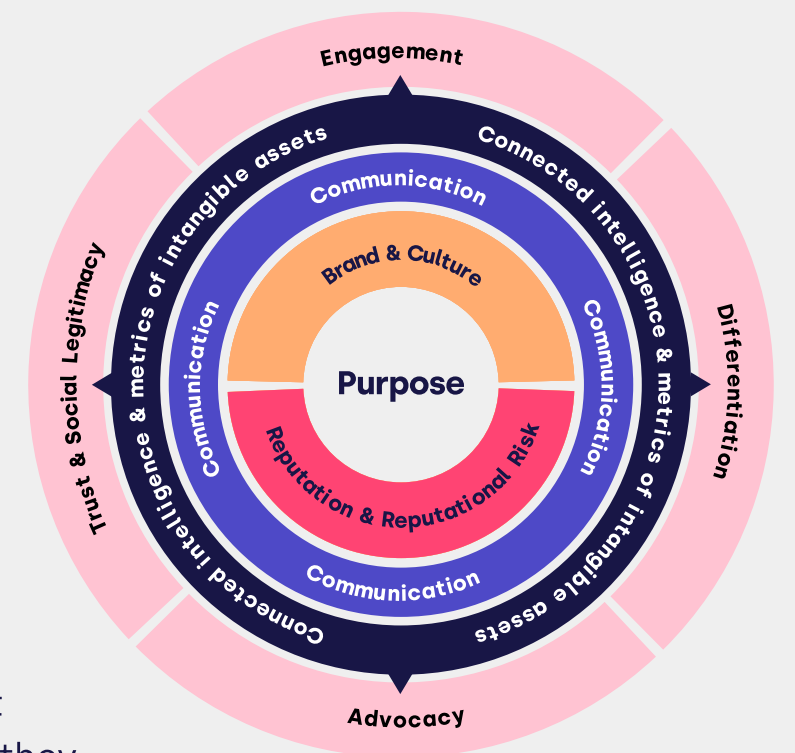
## Chapter 5

# Purpose Power

That PR and communications play a central role in both worsening and improving societal issues is becoming more obvious. As Sir David Attenborough declared when deciding to start an Instagram account: "Saving our planet is now a communications challenge"<sup>4</sup>. But in a time when trust declines and businesses are accused of woke washing, how can PR and communication professionals navigate communicating around sustainability in an effective and credible way?

## Purpose as starting point for communication

Purpose is taking a more central role in PR and communications. An illustrative example is the recently launched Global PR & Communication Model by The Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management in partnership with Corporate Excellence – Centre for Reputation Leadership<sup>5</sup>. The model is described as a new global consensus model for the future of the PR and communication professions that defines the roadmap and building blocks of PR and communication functions<sup>6</sup>.



## The imperative of walking the talk

As purpose is becoming a more important factor in decision making for consumers<sup>7</sup>, they are also becoming highly sceptical towards sustainability communication. For example, Edelman's global trust barometer showed that more more than half of consumers believe too many brands are using societal issues as a marketing ploy<sup>8</sup>. The importance of walking the talk will only increase as external scrutiny increases, such as the Tortoise Responsibility100 Index ranking that measures the difference between corporate "talk" and "walk", or EY's Global Climate Risk Disclosure Barometer that examines how organizations report on various climate issues. The latter showed that the quality of reporting is stagnant, and meaningful climate strategies remain unimplemented<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/p/CFg3LHIHGug/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.prcommsmodel.com/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.globalalliancepr.org/2021-the-global-pr-and-communication-model>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ibm.com/downloads/cas/EXK4XKX8>

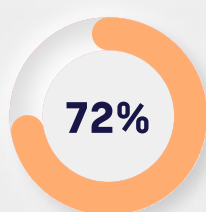
<sup>8</sup> [https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2019-06/2019\\_edelman\\_trust\\_barometer\\_special\\_report\\_in\\_brands\\_we\\_trust\\_executive\\_summary.pdf](https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2019-06/2019_edelman_trust_barometer_special_report_in_brands_we_trust_executive_summary.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.ey.com/en\\_us/climate-change-sustainability-services/risk-barometer-survey-2021](https://www.ey.com/en_us/climate-change-sustainability-services/risk-barometer-survey-2021)



## Main priority – and challenge – for Nordic PR and communication professionals

The importance of sustainability communication is being acknowledged among Nordic PR and communication professionals: More than seven out of ten say that communication connected to corporate social responsibility is highly prioritized in their organization today. At the same time, it's evident that sustainability communication is a complex subject, as one in five rank dealing with social and environmental issues as one of the main externally related challenges.



Say that communication connected to corporate social responsibility (CSR) is highly prioritized in their organization today.



Report dealing with sustainable development and social responsibility issues as one of the main externally related challenges.

## Widespread existence of misleading and false sustainability communication

Despite stronger directions and regulations, more and more reports show that misleading<sup>10</sup> and false sustainability communication is still widespread in the industry. In the UK, a study by Changing Markets Foundation revealed that almost six in ten of environmental claims made by UK and European fashion brands were classed as unsubstantiated or potentially misleading. Further, in Sweden, a mapping of Swedish companies' climate arguments made by The Swedish Consumer Agency showed that many of the arguments used in marketing were vague and lacked detailed information, making it difficult or even impossible for the consumers to understand why a product is for example "climate friendly"<sup>11</sup>.

## Addressing the knowledge gap

When asking Nordic PR and communication professionals what the challenges with communicating social and environmental issues are more specifically, it's evident that there is a knowledge gap – both on the issues in general and when it comes to understanding rules and laws. According to **Moussa Mchangama**, co-founder of In futurum, this knowledge gap and its consequences challenges the trust of the PR and communication industry as a whole. To counteract this, he stresses the need for education:

- There is a huge knowledge gap in the industry. We need to understand that issues around sustainability are not a matter for the sustainability department, but something that all departments will have to understand. If communicators want to build and remain trust for professions and the industry, education on these issues is key.

## Hitting the right level of complexity and tonality

Another challenge Nordic PR and communication professionals face when it comes to communicating social and environmental issues, is knowing what level of complexity and tonality is the most effective and understandable. This is a topic that is being debated in the industry, where some experts argue that sustainability communication is too simplified, whereas others think the arguments and information are too complex for a general consumer to understand. No wonder many are confused. So how can one think about these issues? **Moussa** gives some guidance:

- There's not a one size fits all way to communicate around these issues, as it's highly dependent on your general brand identity and target audience. But as guidance, focus on an end message that is precise and simple, but then build levels of communication – a sort of pyramid of argument – in different channels for those who want to know more. And when it comes to tonality, I believe focusing on positive messages based on a serious background: Show how your business wants to be part of the change, based on the societal challenges that we face, and address specifically how you work to be part of it.

<sup>10</sup> <http://changingmarkets.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/SYNTHETICS-ANONYMOUS-PRESS-RELEASE-UK.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.konsumentverket.se/aktuellt/nyheter-och-pressmeddelanden/pressmeddelanden/2021/kraftig-okning-av-miljoargument-i-marknadsforing/>

Progress over perfection

Two other challenges when it comes to communicating social and environmental issues are the worries of being caught in or accused of greenwashing, and that the organization doesn't take enough action on the issues to be able to communicate it in a trustworthy way. Given the increased scrutiny and consumers' scepticism towards sustainability arguments it's understandable that companies hesitate to communicate what they actually do. **Moussa**, who on a daily basis helps clients with sustainability strategy and communication, recognises the fear. He explains that communicating around sustainability demands a radical shift in the way businesses communicate:

- Previously, most of companies' communication centred around how great their products and services were, or telling the world when you had achieved something. With sustainability communication, we need to talk about challenges, processes and aspirations. This demands a completely new approach for PR and communication pros, which can feel both unknown and frightening.

**PR expert Julia Kiefaber** too recognises the fear as she meets many clients who hesitate to communicate about their sustainability efforts out of fear of greenwashing. However, not saying anything isn't the way forward:

- Even if consumers are critical and want brands to take action, they don't expect brands to be perfect and many value progress over perfection. What they do expect is relentless transparency. Demonstrating a commitment to progress and being totally transparent about your journey are key factors for credibility. I also believe businesses need to become better at sharing their fears and mistakes with other companies, so that we can learn from each other.



Main challenges for Nordic PR & communication professionals when it comes to communicating social and environmental sustainability issues



Future role of PR and communication professionals: Advocates for social good?

Thus, transparency is a key factor for building trust when it comes to sustainability communication. But when it comes to trust for the professional role and the industry as a whole, **PR professor Ana Adi** argues that if PR and communication professionals want to be seen as bringing value in society, they need to reflect on their role – both in relation to the organization and to the world as a whole:

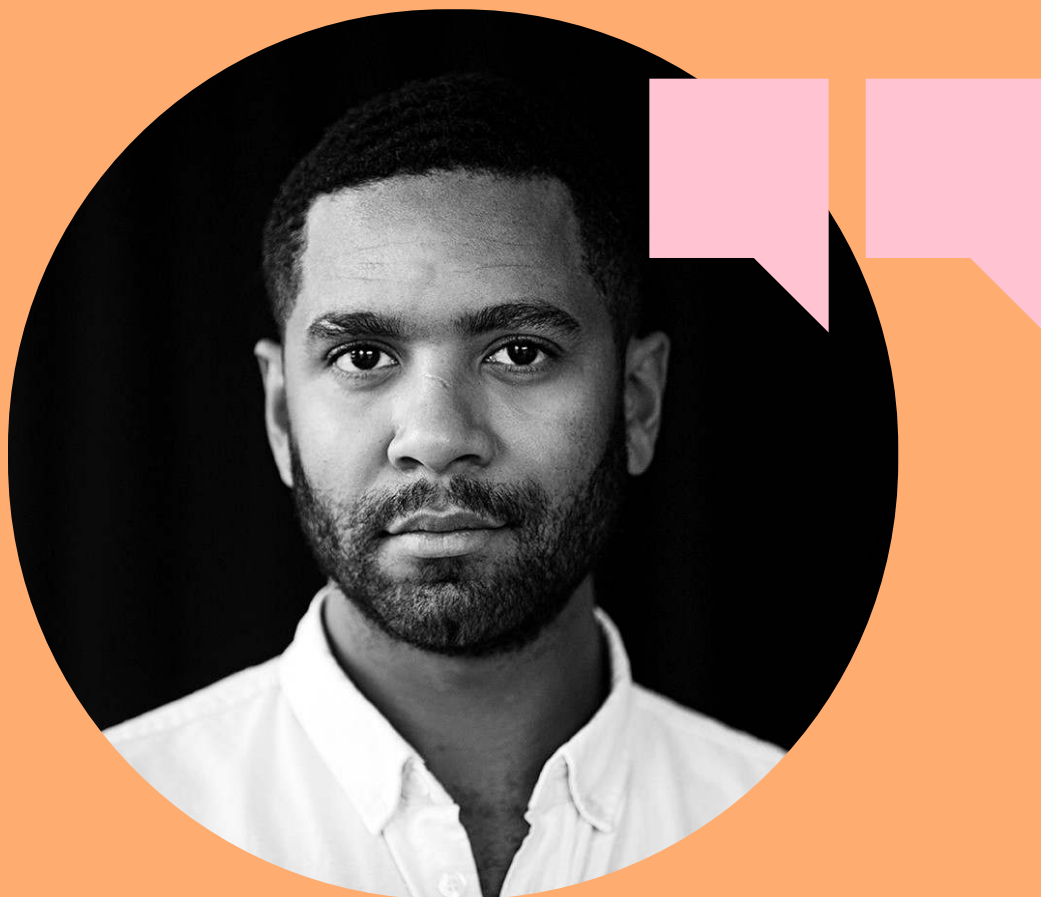
- A major problem today is that PR and communicators are seen as too promotional and subservient to the organization they work for to say anything meaningful and credible. If we want to build the value and credibility of our profession, we need to ask ourselves what we want the role of communication and thus of communicators to be. Should it be to sell more things, or to make sure our children can breathe in the future? If we want to elevate our profession and bring real, long-term value, I would like to see communicators taking a more independent role. They should be expected to challenge the organization and make social issues the starting point of the conversation, rather than focus on praising the organization and getting it portrayed in its best light no matter what.





## Five tips from the expert: How to build credible sustainability communication

Want to create credible sustainability communication but finding it difficult to know where to start? Here are some tips from co-founder of In futurum **Moussa** to use as a guide.



### 1 Do it properly.

Sustainability communication is dependent on a sustainable business model and practices. This means you need to go back to the main issue, take a step back and ask yourself: why are we doing this, how can we justify our existence in the world? If you want to future proof your business, there's really no choice, you need to be able to address this question.

### 2 Focus and prioritize.

There are many different subjects, agendas and trends around sustainability, which might cause confusion and make it difficult to navigate. The strategy is going back to your core and the way you address sustainability. Ask yourself: Is this something that actually matters to our business? If a topic isn't close to your main business offer, it shouldn't be your prioritized topic. Deal with you – not everything else.

### 3 Brutal honesty.

Sustainability communication is about communicating vision, process and progress. You don't have to be perfect today, but you do have to be brutally honest.

### 4 Knowledge and facts.

Educate yourself around sustainability issues to avoid false statements. And make sure to stand on something solid and research based – proper frameworks for strategy and efforts, established third parties that can verify your work, or known experts as advisors.

### 5 Have fun!

Moving towards a more sustainable business takes thorough and slow work. However, rather than seeing it as just a massive problem, look at it as a stimulating journey that – besides the positive effects on people and planet – will add so many benefits both internally and externally. More engagement and creativity among employees, and increased engagement, loyalty and stronger connection to your consumers.

# Tips and inspiration for a sustainable communication

Want to know more about sustainability communication, and be part of the positive change? Here are some tips for you:



## Futerra's Ten rules of greenwash avoidance<sup>12</sup>

Sustainability consultancy Futerra's rules of greenwash avoidance give you an easy guide on how to avoid the main pitfalls.



## Planet Pledge<sup>13</sup>

Planet Pledge is a CMO-led framework designed to stimulate action from marketers to promote and reinforce attitudes and behaviours needed to meet the SDGs.



## Science-based targets<sup>14</sup>

Science-based targets is a partnership between CDP, the United Nations Global Compact, World Resources Institute (WRI) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) that provides companies with a clearly-defined path to reduce emissions in line with the Paris Agreement goals. Today, more than 2,000 businesses around the world are already working with the Science Based Targets.

# Purpose Power: Key Takeaways

## Communication has the power to drive real change

PR and communication play a pivotal role in addressing societal issues. Purpose is taking a central role in PR and communication – making the industry a driving force for positive change.

## Closing the knowledge gap

The importance of and complexity around sustainability matters will only increase, and sustainability is no longer a matter for the sustainability department, but for the whole organization. To avoid false and misleading sustainability communication – and thereby putting the trust of the whole industry at risk – there is a need for PR and communication experts to develop their knowledge in the field.

## Brutal honesty wins in the long run

Communicating sustainability means a shift in narrative, where communicators need to learn to feel comfortable in communicating progress over perfection. Telling the world about your ambitions and inviting them on the journey is better than not saying anything out of fear of greenwashing. The key is to be totally transparent about both ambition and weaknesses. Putting brutal honesty first is also applicable in relation to the organization: daring to take a more independent and challenging role and make social issues the starting point.

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.wearefuterra.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/FuterraBSR\\_SellingSustainability2015.pdf](https://www.wearefuterra.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/FuterraBSR_SellingSustainability2015.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <https://wfanet.org/leadership/planet-pledge>

<sup>14</sup> <https://sciencebasedtargets.org/>

# Summary & visions for the future

**What have we learned, and what actions can we take on the insights?**

## **With increased importance comes increased demands and responsibilities**

The PR and communicator role is becoming more important than ever, and with that comes increased demands and responsibilities – for each individual and for the industry as a whole.

## **The need to focus and prioritize**

To be able to handle the workload and to be successful, PR and communication professionals need to become better at prioritizing and focusing on what is important – whether it's about work responsibilities, content channels, measurement methods or sustainability topics.

## **Lack of knowledge, misconceptions and fears as hindering factors**

Lack of knowledge as well as widespread misconceptions and fears connected to matters such as measurement and sustainability communications are hindering factors for development and creating value. To elevate the impact and value of our industry, there is a need for both closing knowledge gaps and changing attitudes.

## **Endless opportunities ahead – for those who dare**

Challenges aside, if there is one thing that this report shows is that the opportunities for PR and communication to make real impact is bigger and more needed than ever. By going the extra mile, by being bold and by daring to ask the difficult questions, PR and communicators have more power than ever to move the needle – both within and beyond the organization.

## **Stronger together**

A common theme in the report is the need for and value of increased integration and collaboration – within as well as between organizations. Working with higher integration – between departments or when it comes to communication matters such as content, measurement or sustainability – shows to be key for increased efficiency and alignment as well as understanding, knowledge sharing and value creation. After all, the root of the word “communication” is communicare, which means to share, or to make common. Let's make this message from our roots an inspiring beacon for our future work.

# mynewsdesk

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## About Mynewsdesk

Mynewsdesk helps companies create awareness, find the right audience and build strong relationships. By providing a user-friendly online platform, Mynewsdesk simplifies the publishing, distribution and measuring of all your PR and communication efforts.

Find out more at [\*\*www.mynewsdesk.com\*\*](http://www.mynewsdesk.com)