

# Tapping into the potential of influence is how PR will matter most

By [Dustin Chick](#)

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Agencies need to be structured to lead clients in their journey to understand the insights behind conversations, especially as we push for a greater level of investment in the research backing up effective strategic, PR and social media lead communications efforts.

The continuous evolution of technology is accelerating the efforts of brands to rethink and adapt how they earn influence over the conversations of those they want (and need) to influence most.



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The progress of this dialogue is at the core of the evolution of integrated public relations and social media work. This creates the greatest impact in closing the credibility divide for those brands attempting to earn the right to matter (and matter the most) in the conversations of the consumers they want to engage (and influence to actually DO something).

Indeed, this earned credibility premium is where public relations provides the most strategic value - key to this is the level of understanding we have about those conversations we want to participate in. It is the ultimate 'knowing and doing' gap – we cannot begin to believe that we will sway a conversation if we do not deeply understand its nature, its protagonists and its reason for influence itself. This is all founded on how we listen (create data) and understand (provide the right degree of analytics and interpretation) for PR or social media communications efforts that lack this at their core and are doomed to be relegated to the corridors of simple tactical-only communications forever.

Gone are the days of broadcasting information in the hope that something will stick. The greatest challenges we face with clients regarding data analytics is based on the fear of the unknown, the lack of understanding on what data analytics is and how it benefits them most.

So while data analytics enables us to effectively manage our clients as it gives us something to benchmark against and build from, it does not stop there. Instead, it should be placed at the heart of how brands are earning the right degree of influence and the right to simply matter to consumers. More critically, it is the responsibility for agencies to structure this seamlessly into the work being undertaken for clients as we lead them on this journey and as we push for a greater level of investment in the research backing up effective strategic and PR-led communications efforts.

This change is amplified by the evolution of the internet. Indeed, the progression in the industry means that the science has also evolved, and that the emergence of a number of different types of analytics offerings deepen the potential value (insight that lets us be credible in consumer conversations) that can be created. It is worthwhile to note that the most relevant offerings to the industry at this point in time include:

- **Descriptive** (used to gain insights from historical data and reporting);
- **Predictive** (encompassing predictive modelling); as well as
- **Prescriptive** (that highlights recommendations using optimisations or simulations).

The gap in this is how agencies work with clients to extract these insights to make brands matter at the core of consumer conversations. It is this strategic model that will trigger the right types of content, the right types of engagement and outreach and the right type of influence. Only then does public relations emerge from behind the press release to earning influence.

The industry and the world at large is on the cusp of the next great technological revolution. The field of opportunity is becoming increasingly fertile, the onus now lies with industry experts to hone in on their strategies and craft opportunities to drive earned influence and advocacy for brands. This is possible to achieve, through relationship, content and a clear understanding of how audiences want to engage. It is in this space that data analytics plays a pivotal role.

Added to this, the instant nature of social media makes everyone a publisher and it is the right level of listening and insight that will allow brands to be nimble and real time enough to move online and offline with consumers.

PR has indeed entered the era of data analytics and the use thereof should never be taken for granted. Clients and agencies need to walk this road together if we are to meaningfully earn the right for brands to matter.

## ABOUT DUSTIN CHICK

Dustin is Managing Partner of Razor, the PR, reputation and culture and communications agency in the M&C Saatchi Group. Dustin is recognised as one of the top reputation managers and communicators in Europe, Africa and the Middle East - having being named by the Holmes Report / PROvoke Media as one of its top 25 innovators in public relations across Europe, the Middle East and Africa in 2019.

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