

» **The farewell of the Press Room and the welcoming of the Web 2.0**

**From mass communication to network communication**

Madrid » 04 » 2013

**D**ear Communication Director, we are experiencing tough times. Just when we had a clear position in the field, they change the rules of the game.

Due to the economic crisis and the growth of the social networks we now find ourselves in a strange field, bigger and full of new players where we can almost find more journalists with (social) networks than media with journalists. In this new field journalism becomes controversial and moderators become agitators. The interest on confrontations and mixed feelings is bigger than ever; and it needs to be in real time and to the public.

What can we do with our traditional tools and techniques in this new complex stage? Some of these tools are still very useful... others are completely outdated. As an example we can mention the already traditional "online newsrooms".

A development of this communication tool is urgently needed. We need a new orientation going from the "mass" concept to the "networking" concept (regarding not only the kind of contents but specially the targets of the information). This is what we know as news/pressrooms 2.0 and what we could simply call "online communication rooms".



**FOUR MAIN CHANGES IN THE ONLINE NEWSROOMS**

What has changed? To help us with our performance in this scenario of personal interaction, opened and global (in time and space) which has become now the new field of corporative communication we can highlight four main elements.

**1 Not only Press:** what we need is to find a tool which will enable us to be in contact not only with journalists but also with citizens, professionals, important people, activists and consumers that also share information and boost opinions in the networks. We need a multi-stakeholder space which will be useful for the reputational strategy of the organization.

**2 Not only news:** Regarding this aspect we need now to publish contents beyond press releases. We need to offer useful information, curiosities, testimonies, comments and documents with great value not only in the present but also in the future. There is no doubt we are not only talking about text messages but also about multimedia materials (video, presentations, computer graphics...) which can be found on their own webpages as well as on social networks such as YouTube, Slideshare or Instagram.

**3 Not only broadcasting:** the aim of the abovementioned contents is not only to be broadcasted or played in other social networks. The goal is to encourage interactions with representatives of companies in the internet proposing connections of common interests and interacting and giving answers in conversations on an opened dialogue: invitations, questions, answers, transactions... In this point lies the sense of the connection between the press room and the personal social networks such as Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn.

**4 Not only a brand:** in this point it is very important that the organization has spokespersons with great and genuine personality who will represent the human aspect of the corporative brand regarding their interest groups. Organizations need both, real communicators able to talk to real journalists and others who will work on the virtual world with social networks. For this reason the press room has to offer safe and efficient solutions of digital identity.

## ONLINE NEWSROOM IN SPAIN

We have mentioned just four changes. It is not a big number but it is still difficult to find these changes on the corporative websites of the Spanish companies. This kind of communication usually belongs to other areas of the company normally with different professional units and almost as experimental projects.

There is sometimes a misunderstanding of terms due to the confusion between the concepts of press room 2.0 and a multimedia press room thinking that sharing a video on YouTube or a document on Slideshare is enough to fulfill the meaning of the concept.

Others only use the social networks to spread messages just by posting the headlines of press releases on Twitter or Facebook and not answering to questions or interacting with other social profiles.

None of these options achieve to take profit of all the advantages the online press room offers. Why? Some people think that changing the online press room is not necessary since it already works as an information repository for professional journalists. And they might be right.

However, more and more journalists are using social networks (specially Twitter) to be in contact with their information sources. Basic sources of documentation for media companies are now the internet, blogs, forums etc.

Not taking into account the interest of communicating with other spokespersons or journalists, the abovementioned aspects seem to be interesting enough to change the traditional press room into the new online press room.

## TWO GOOD EXAMPLES OF A 2.0 PRESS ROOM

The concept of 2.0 press rooms is starting to gain power. As it usually happens in communication, mentions of this term are found on the other side of the Atlantic, in North America. Two good examples are the financial company Mastercard (<http://newsroom.mastercard.com>) and the technology company Cisco (<http://newsroom.cisco.com>).

Both companies, under the domain "newsroom" offer two potential *multistakeholder* communication platforms in the internet.

Both of them take care of the journalists' needs by providing them with a completed and updated file with press releases and multimedia dossiers. They also offer a space for personal and interactive communication with other spokespersons from different interest groups.

Among all the elements that can be found in these spaces we are highlighting those that are usually missing on the online press rooms (or newsrooms):

1. Regarding Mastercard, we can mention the direct interaction with users through their blog *Cashless Conversations*; regarding Cisco, we must highlight their powerful virtual community called *Collaboration* (which works through blogs, Twitter and Facebook).

"With regard to the communication departments on the Spanish companies, both the interaction on social networks and the virtual and professional identity on the internet still remain as outstanding issues"

2. Another remarkable point is the virtual identity of those professionals working in both companies (from the top level management to the communication managers). They all have profiles on corporative blogs as well as an official Twitter account (mostly).

## COOMUNICATION IN SOCIAL NETWORKS...OUTSTANDING ISSUE

With regard to the communication departments on the Spanish companies, both the interaction on social networks and the virtual and professional identity on the internet still remain as outstanding issues. The slow implementation of the 2.0 press rooms in Spain can be explained by the difficulties companies face to improve these aspects.

That is because these new concepts go against the traditional way of communication between the communicator and the journalist where the communicator remained in the shadows and tried to interact with the journalist in a private sphere and frequently under the "off the record" concept.

With the social networks everything is different and we are playing in a different field. Rules are now flexible, more public and global (not as they used to be; strict, private and local). Communicators are now more exposed than before and it seems that this exposure is only growing.

In these circumstances, we should not see the change of the press rooms to the online newsrooms as a problem but as a great chance that some are already taking and that we cannot miss.

## BRAND JOURNALISM: COCA-COLA JOURNEY

If we were to mention a tendency on online communication, that would be the so called brand journalism. This term was used last February the 24th by the newspaper *El País* in order to name the concept of the development of the traditional communication of the companies with their stakeholders. One of the most famous examples is the reorganization of Coca-Cola and the launch of *Coca-Cola Journey*.

*The New York Times* announced in November 2012 that Coca-Cola was giving to its website a makeover in order to "tell their story". The new company's website has become a magazine for consumers and citizens with articles and opinion columns about key issues for the company such as innovation, entertainment, the environment, health, sports...

Four people working full time and around 40 *freelancers* (columnists and photographers) work on the web's contents. Articles usually require collaboration of other members of the company since the recipe for good storytellers is time, dedication and a lot of effort.

As *the New York Times* highlighted, the example of Coca-Cola shows the interest of companies to move forward a better relationship with consumers not based on advertising but on their capacity to tell stories. Ashley Brown, director of communications and social media at the Coca-Cola Company in Atlanta said to *the New York Times*: "my team, the digital communications and social media team, has been re-formed in the last year to look more like an editorial team at a long-lead magazine". The current challenge of companies regarding their communication on the networks is to be able to tell the story behind the scenes, behind the company.

#### FROM PRESS RELEASES TO POSTS: MASMOVIL CASE

Over a year ago, Vodafone Company announced that they would stop financing new phones in order to attract

clients (a practice that MasMovil, a Spanish virtual mobile operator has been defending for a long time).

Just a few months before, MasMovil had re-launched its corporative blog aiming to make it the reference of the company on the internet and to be able to establish a fluent communication with clients as well as to represent the company's spirit.

Vodafone's announcement was the perfect opportunity to change the way of communication we knew so far. MasMovil had a lot to say about this new and Vodafone's decision meant that they had followed the correct strategy and that the big time for small phone operators had arrived.

This is the reason why MasMovil CEO Maini Spenger, posted on that same day an article on the corporative blog called "Good news for everyone! Mobile financing is over!" With this post that was later sent to journalists specialized on this area and leading communication operators, MasMovil became the spokesperson of all operators. Miani's declarations were published in newspapers, blogs and in the digital press, and during those days everybody talked about MasMovil.



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