

# How to extract value in 2022

 By [Claudia Smith](#)

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The market size of the global public relations agencies industry has grown 1.6% per year on average between 2016 and 2021 but much like every other industry, public relations has had to change. It is a change that has been building up long before Covid - but accelerated more recently as the notions of investment and value have changed considerably.



Claudia Smith, Business Director at Orange Ink

Over the years, PR has moved from a traditional one-way approach to brand amplification and communication and finally to encompass a multifaceted brand engagement strategy, but the pandemic has not only forced a further re-evaluation for brands - especially those who have not moved with the times – but has demanded a more considered and human approach to marketing and engagement overall.

While the very nature of impactful PR is one aligned to business strategy and core brand values, in all honesty, unfortunately, it is often not the norm we see when it comes to PR. And I am not just talking small local businesses, I'm talking big global companies with big marketing teams and budgets.

The reality we face is that many brands today still just use PR to fulfil a gap in the marketing mix or as a 'band aid' for when issues and crises arise. A way to 'save face' or shamelessly punt their products and services. However, if the pandemic has taught us anything over the last two years – it is that the market will not tolerate those businesses that have cruised along with the old view of PR and marketing anymore. The market is looking for value and it is only through strategic PR, done right, that real impact and real value can be demonstrated.

Of course, PR and communication specialists have always known this and have championed this in many a boardroom, but it's taken real changes and months of upheaval for some brands to realise this. Some have embraced this change while others continue to fight the tide. But the tide is not done yet.

The world is changing, businesses and people are changing and there are inevitably more changes coming in the PR and marketing industry. If your agency isn't thinking about them, prepping you and consulting correctly on how the marketing channel is shifting, perhaps you should be reconsidering your partners as it's going to be a bumpy ride and having someone who will be able to guide you through will be invaluable.

So, what then are we likely to see in the PR and communications space in 2022 and beyond?

- **Mending a disjointed eco-system**

Consumers expect brands to be omnipresent. They also expect a seamless approach to channels, yet the marketing eco-system remains fragmented – with many divisions still operating in silos. Now is the time to demonstrate how collaboration and a cohesive approach can bring about the best in marketing and communication. From channel insights, ideas, best practices and an approach grounded in business strategy and vision – creating a unified approach have never been as important - and agencies and brands need to work more closely together to achieve this.

- **Shifting priorities**

Think ESG. There are major societal shifts happening driven not only by the pandemic but by technology, global events, climate change as well as social movements. Establishing core values as a brand, and an agency (if you haven't already) will be essential moving forward. And it's more than just a stance on issues – it needs to be an authentic one – one that connects back to the business and extends to the real world. Today it needs to be more than just about the bottom line.

- **Data will fuel the PR engine**

As public relations and marketing become increasingly intertwined, the role of data in communication efforts will continue to grow. Strong narratives will continue to drive brand value, resonance and ultimately conversions but PR campaigns will need to utilise data more. We are moving to personalised, creative experiences and to deliver this, means understanding the market. Data provides this insight and agility and a means to move quickly and adapt. Merging communication and marketing data, with business data, will be invaluable if filtered and utilised correctly.

- **Those that are authentically consistent will win**

As a brand, you cannot dip in and out of conversations and social causes because you think it will make your more 'relevant'. What makes you relevant is understanding your brand essence, the core of what you stand for and authentically standing by that across all your marketing, social media and advertising - consistently. We cannot be swayed by clicks and views anymore. Those that find their voice and understand their brand DNA rather than pushing for once-off relevancy will stand out.

- **Growth of the hybrid brand experience**

The way in which we interact with the world has changed and as the lines continue to blur between paid, earned and

owned - as well as online and offline – so will we see the integration of other marketing disciplines and the rise of the hybrid brand experience. We are already seeing this in the workspace and so it is natural that this hybrid model will extend further, making mixed media campaigns and seamless brand engagement both in the physical and virtual world critical to the value mix.

PR and marketing are evolving, and quickly. Brands and agencies, therefore, need to be more open-minded in how they approach the communication mix, how they gather data and how they approach a changing landscape and target audience. Spend time investing in critical decisions and actions, at a boardroom level, that will change your game – enhance your relationships, your approach and your purpose. Understand where the brand success will lie – make sure it's authentic and the communication opportunities and value will always follow.

## ABOUT CLAUDIA SMITH

Claudia Smith has an impressive consulting career and her fair share of industry stories to tell. And she does exactly that - tell brand stories, backed by strategy and high-level consulting - all focussed on impact. She believes in the power of the African continent, the value of insight and experience and the importance of relationships on the continent and beyond its borders. She thrives on challenge and as a Business Director at communications agency, Orange Ink.

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