

5 Steps To Becoming An Expert Communicator

The great news: It's not that hard.

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Everywhere you look there is something competing for your attention. We are [plugged in](#) always--our phones never too far away--multitasking at every turn. There's a good chance you're reading this while on your phone and watching something on Netflix.

There is no off button anymore. Half of my work in communications is done on a treadmill, after my fiance falls asleep halfway through every movie we watch or in line for groceries. You know, those trips where you spend 10 minutes grabbing the groceries and 20 minutes in line.

So how do you create a [communications strategy](#) that works in 2017? You start by unlearning the things you have been told about research and preparation and replace them with these five things:

1. Be in the moment

Study any successful, self-made social influencer today and you will notice a common thread. They can't stop posting, creating, connecting.

They don't spend weeks creating a strategy. At some point it becomes second nature to always be on and react to trends in the moment.

"I wake up every morning and read 25 outlets, research the latest trends so they're fresh and I can leverage them with our clients," said Courtney Lukitsch, CEO and founder of Gotham PR. "You have to live in the moment in a 24 hour news cycle."

Planning a full campaign is the first thing you have to unlearn. Instead of that, create pre-made content. One of the things I do personally is create a library of photos, videos, blog posts and other content that I can then plug in to any trend when the exact moment strikes.

It helps you be faster, more agile with your content. If you identify a trend, gather to create a strategy, plan it out and execute you are already too late.

2. Create influence

I've written many times on the value of influence, that every marketing or communications effort boils down to attempting to create or recreate the experience of a friend recommending something to a friend. That's the most powerful sales experience there is.

Marian Salzman, CEO of Havas PR North America, agrees. "About 15 years ago we identified 'prosumers'--proactive consumers--leading edge consumers that could influence other consumers," said Salzman, who recently wrote [a book](#) on how both individuals and businesses can stand out in this new digital world.

She continued: "I felt that people who were truly influencers would be given products because they are human billboards. We seed products with individuals but haven't turned it in to what it could be with agents representing the 5,000 greatest influencers."

In other words: We buy from friends. And if people view influencers as friends then it's no surprise why using influence will explode in 2017.

3. Create a natural network

We have a tendency to look at everyone as 0s and 1s. As data points. As groups based on similarities.

But that's not how human nature works. Are you exactly the same as all of your friends? Do you assemble in the same room because you are all 18-35, Midwesterners that binge watch The Walking Dead and drink the same craft beer? Of course not.

Data is great, but it's what you do with it that matters. Salzman recommends using "natural networks" in communications creates stronger bonds. If you want to reach someone once, view them as data. If you want to stop having to reach out entirely, view them as human.

4. Take care of yourself

Don't buy in to the wake up at 4 a.m., get no sleep, and hustle harder than everyone philosophy. It doesn't work. If you're going to be good at communications, you have to be physically and mentality prepared.

The human body needs sleep and relaxation. So find new times to take it. Embrace afternoon naps when possible they're not just for kindergartners.

Immerse yourself in other things, other interests, find other perspectives. "I signed up for a Master Class with [Frank Gehry](#)," said Lukitsch. "It's my opportunity to work with an icon. If you don't take advantage of living in New York, its culture, museums, it's not worth it."

5. Own your own channels

The most obvious example of someone successfully owning their own channels is Donald Trump. "I don't like listening to him, but I see his dramatic impact," said Salzman. "If you have something to say, get it out on your own channels. Don't correct as much. Don't use a filter. Just send. Let the facts evolve."

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