

Is the press release over?

TECHNOLOGY HAS changed the playing field for the media industry, not just drastically but completely. *Daniel Scheffler* (@danielscheffler) asks a few prominent and opinionated industry players for their views on press releases, their validity and if something will surpass them



INFORMATION HAS had to find new ways to meander itself through spam filters and through the complete overload of information that an industry so busy with content and messaging can simply just bin or forever ignore. PR agencies have needed to keep up with the times, not lose sight of its ethos of content being king, and use said technology available to balance between the fine line of bombarding and carefully disseminating information to relevant parties.

Social media has altered sharing and anything you want to know and so much you don't want to know is now available, immediately. Saying all this the age-old release is still the operational way of sharing information, whether in the media or the PR industry it still holds merit.

Pnina Fenster, editor Glamour Magazine

Press releases don't seem to be over to me – an emailed document is useful since the recipient can work with it, forward it or store it.

Sometimes I get a couriered packet in which someone has popped a printed press release and something peculiar like an apple or a paper daisy and that's a shocking waste of time, resources and the environment, plus it is inefficient since most of us would rather toss a piece of paper away than store it somewhere. This of course is

not a problem with emails (thank you Dropbox). If something is going to be couriered or hand delivered, it needs to be worth the trouble and the cost. Or, there's the option of making a big song and dance about the press release being delivered – literally, since we have had all manner of people in all manner of fancy dress doing all manner of thing arrive in office reception and that certainly attracts attention.

Ultimately, though, it's about the information and an emailed document is the most efficient way to communicate that.

Dan Pinch, creative director / founder of Society Cape Town – part of King James Group (@danpinch)

I don't think the press release is over just yet – it's basically a toolkit for a journalist or blogger to create a story, so as long as they're still creating stories its probably still relevant. It just needs to be added to by other forms of communication (digital resources, social media channels, video etc.). There is a danger that human contact goes out the window, as there are more digital things to send out – the best PR professionals still know how to tell a story themselves this includes in person or over the phone.

That said we're using Twitter quite a bit as a very

quick way to share news – but this is still typically linking somewhere such as a blog post or news article from the brand. This is complimentary rather, instead of media relations. In a fast moving story this allows us to react quickly while more formal communications are still being drafted.

Real time marketing is a big trend for the PR industry and of course social media will drive this trend further when there is no time to first draft a press release, Twitter can communicate information at the best speed.

Marcus Brewster, CEO at Marcus Brewster (@Marcus_Brewster)

For as long as there is still traditional media, there will still be press releases and publicists will continue to pitch them. As we know, press releases are not the correct collateral to use in the social media space – you cannot push one on a blogger.

I think ultimately the press release will no longer be found as an attachment to sent emails and will be warehoused online. PR people will be pushing journalists to click through to media centres where briefings and fact sheets can be found.

Nicola Nel, owner/founder of Atmosphere Communications

I think the term press release is 'out' and social media release is 'in'. This means short releases with hyperlinks to multimedia content; an opportunity to have a conversation on the topic and a sharing button to release the content on social media networks are 'in'. Popular on sites like Twitter, Facebook and more.

Michelle Rolfe, MD at go4word PR (@michelle_rolfe)

Press releases aren't over but they are shifting from 'pushing' information to media to rather engaging and directing conversations to relevant influencers – forging and managing relationships are now key. The tone and style will change depending on the media type and one-on-one pitching is still very relevant. Just spamming or sending a press release out to ALL media, is unprofessional and of course won't even be noticed!

