



News & Views

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A Digital Globe -- What it Means for PR Pros

By Henry Stimpson

The Boston Globe is Twittering.

That's just one of the ways *The Boston Globe* is reinventing itself by integrating print and digital operations, a panel of *Globe* executives said at a luncheon sponsored by BusinessWire. And the new multimedia *Globe* offers PR practitioners new challenges and opportunities.

Business Editor Shirley Leung said that despite tough times, it's an exciting "opportunity to reinvent journalism" with rich Web content, including photos, graphics, video and even chat links. Despite a smaller business staff, staff writer Chris Reidy continues to work as the sole business reporter for the *Globe's* Boston.com site, aggregating and rewriting wire stories and press releases. Business blogs on the site for real estate, personal finance and technology are written mostly by freelancers.

Samuel P. Martin, head advertising honcho for Boston Globe Media, said he's spurring his staff of 20 digital salespeople to "sell aggressively" without jeopardizing print ad sales. The *Globe* recently partnered with Yahoo! to increase its reach and expects to ink more deals.

Moderating the 120-person event, PRSA Chapter President Jack Jackson (at podium) poses questions to senior members of the Globe's digital team. From left to right on the panel are Shirley Leung, Sam Martin, Susan Hunt Stevens and David Beard.



Susan Hunt Smith, senior VP, digital and general manager of Boston.com, said the Web world is "wildly competitive," and extremely fast changing; for instance, the *Globe's* Twitter feed has attracted 35,000 followers in just four months. The most popular feed is "GlobeSox."

Twitter is even having an impact on newsgathering. Boston.com editor David Beard said that when the lights went out on T subway lines recently, the *Globe's* Twitter feed was able to use on-the-spot reports from those stuck underground to update readers until a reporter could file a story.

But Leung doesn't think the everyone-is-a-journalist phenomenon will wipe out traditional news media. "A flight to quality will occur," she predicted.

From the Editor

Though summer is upon us, we continue to deliver relevant, thoughtful content. This month, we get the opportunity to learn ways *The Boston Globe* is adapting to the digital era. We also look into client retention in the downturn and get to hear from a veteran practitioner and industry leader reflecting on nearly three decades in PR.

Lastly, we honor one of PRSA Boston's leaders, Kirk Hazlett, a distinguished area practitioner and mentor to many.

As always, happy reading!

Chris Ranjitkar
News & Views
Editor

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info.

She added she gets "lots of pitches" from PR people and due to a smaller staff, has to say "no" more often. But the good news is Boston.com has many news blogs, often written by freelancers -- and they're often looking for ideas. She advised pitching them.

[Henry Stimpson](#), APR, is owner of [Stimpson Communications](#).

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Keep Clients from Trading Down: Ways to Thrive in the Current Economy

By Curtis N. Bingham



Luxury and mid-brand retailers are posting huge declines in same-store sales, yet Wal-Mart and other discounters are seeing some of their strongest years yet. Businesses are jettisoning their high-end banks, law firms and PR firms, realizing that the big name or the premier Madison Avenue addresses are not worth the premium they were being charged. Consumers and businesses are trading down, moving downmarket to cheaper alternatives not because they want to, but because they have to. How can you protect your current customers and perhaps even acquire new and more profitable ones?

You can do four things:

1. Reduce value: Think "generic, store-brand." What aspects of your service can you remove without damaging the overall value proposition? Create a "lite" version of your service at a lower price that will prevent your clients from trading down.
2. Increase value: What else can you do for your clients to make your services even more valuable to them while keeping the prices the same?
3. Lower prices: This should always be the last resort; however, you may consider offering a "stimulus package," or a clearly defined and temporary discount.
4. Steal high-priced clients from competitors: If your clients are trading downward from you, then the same thing is happening to your upper-tier competitors. These prospects are used to paying more. Therefore, if you can effectively capture and serve them at a slightly lower price, they get huge value and you get a high-profit customer that will most likely stay with you beyond the recession's end.

By following these four guidelines, you can adapt your business, keep your clients from trading down and even acquire customers that are more profitable.

Curtis N. Bingham is president of [The Predictive Consulting Group](#).

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President's Letter

A PR Practitioner's Guide to CEOs

Dear Colleagues:

The worst economic decline in 100 years coupled with the traditional media's financial meltdown has many CEOs questioning the role PR might play in future sales and marketing efforts. It will be up to practitioners like us to educate them on how to survive and capitalize on the transition.

Looking forward on any realistic time-line, executives will need to master a whole new range of skills if PR is to continue delivering value. Some predict that puts pressure on CEOs to become comfortable with tasks that used to be exclusively for people in the PR trenches: like blogger relations or social media tools.



But as anyone working in an executive's entourage will tell you, the pressure's on *us* -- to find ways of adapting these activities to an individual CEO's management routine. What I tell colleagues is to search for an exec's alphabetical "tell" -- that is, an extra letter hiding in the C-E-O thicket of their title. It telegraphs their management style and signals what special workarounds PR people need to develop to collaborate effectively with them.

For instance, the CELO, or Chief Excessively Luddite Officer, refuses to embrace technology. I empathize with the top exec who finds the firm's 6th-generation wireless 3-D virtual Web publishing protocol too complicated to master. But email? Or the *Track Changes* feature in Microsoft Word? It's hard to stick to time-lines when a copy review entails documents with light gray pencil edits sent via fax.

The CEO, or Chief Extraordinary Expectations Officer, is the "I want our news about hiring a new Montana department manager on the front page of the Wall Street Journal" executive. They also want it covered by Wired.com and CNBC. Their standard declaration that "the Boston Globe never writes anything good about us" finds its way into their discussion with Globe reporters only about 50 percent of the time.

The CEO, or Chief Exceedingly Busy Officer, is a mass of shifting priorities and a jammed calendar, yet promises to be available to speak with the press. Full-

blown, nine-day media tours have gone the way of VHS videotapes. Still, sometimes, a two- or three-day block of press interviews makes sense. Eight weeks before the first booking call is made, CEOs want to know when the appointments will be, and with whom, so they can decide whether each meeting is worth it.

The CEO, or Chief Extreme Delegation Officer, never acts, only reacts. While a major role requirement of a world-class CEO is to be great delegator, you can't delegate your thought process. CEOs won't stoop to reading early drafts of a press release, yet disparage a later, near-final version because "I would never say what's attributed to me in this quote."

Behaviors like these always challenged PR practitioners, but in the current environment it's critical that we educate one another on the best ways to anticipate, manage or prevent them. What types of CEOs have you encountered? How have you addressed the issues? Share your comments and observations with colleagues on PRSA Boston's [LinkedIn](#) group; we'd really like to know.



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Five Questions with Joan Schneider, President, Schneider Associates

*This month, we spoke with [Joan Schneider](#), President of [Schneider Associates](#), one of the region's leading agencies. An alum of Boston University's College of Communications, Joan has worked with some of the most esteemed consumer brands, including Baskin-Robbins and Woolite, as well as NECCO, the agency's longest-standing client. Joan is also the author of *New Product Launch: 10 Proven Strategies (2004)* and is writing a second, *The New Launch Plan: 101 Tips, Tactics and Trends from the Most Memorable New Products*.*



What has kept you in the public relations field all these years?

What I love about public relations is that every day I get paid to learn something new. Not only does the client work change every day, but the technologies and methodologies we are using as practitioners are also changing. And in our profession, we must either adapt to the latest ways to communicate or become extinct.

Schneider Associates has been honored for its growth amidst the downturn by publications including *The Boston Business Journal* and *Inc. Magazine*. What has been the key to your success when several other agencies have been forced to shut down?
We have been in business for 29 years and this is our fourth recession. I have learned to focus on both the top line (sales) and the bottom line (profits). All of us at Schneider are very focused on developing creative ideas that bring measurable results. We work hard at understanding our clients' businesses so we can provide a return on their marketing communications dollars that keeps them profitable, even in challenging economic times. I come from a family of entrepreneurs and my parents taught me to never give up or take no for an answer -- two good business tenants to continually have in mind during tough times.

I also am fortunate to have two partners who are incredibly smart, executive vice presidents: Phil Pennellatore, with Schneider for nine years, heads up the Corporate and Public Affairs Group; and Julie Hall, with Schneider for seven years, leads our Consumer and Social Media Group. With their help, and that of our amazing staff, I feel confident Schneider Associates will be a factor in public relations and marketing for years to come.

What industries, in your opinion, provide for the most interesting campaigns?

The most interesting campaigns we create are for products that are revolutionary and for clients who are willing to invest in a launch that brings attention to these products. Over the years we've learned it takes more than a new product to capture the imagination of the media and consumers. Now you need research to prove why the product is effective, consumers who have tested the product and are willing to go on record saying the product has merit, experts who are willing to corroborate the science is real or the technology is effective, and trained corporate or professional spokespeople who can tell the company story in an interesting and credible way.

For me, it's not the industry that makes the product or campaign interesting. It's the creative strategy behind the campaign and the flawless execution that makes our campaigns successful. We've launched many interesting campaigns for relatively ho hum products that we made interesting by wrapping something "big" around the product to make it special and newsworthy.

As the head of one of the region's leading agencies, how do you envision the business model of the typical PR agency changing?

The public relations business is changing rapidly and dramatically. With

newspapers literally going out of business, one major channel for distributing news is disappearing while many other new channels are appearing. Whether it's Facebook, Twitter, mommy blogs, YouTube, vlogs, online news services or "the next big thing," the agencies who are going to survive have to be able to transform themselves to accommodate new media distribution channels.

We've been offering integrated marketing for several years now and have our own graphic design department, social media department, and video production, web, advertising, promotion and media training partners so we can develop campaigns that draw on these many different disciplines.

What new (or existing) industries do you think will provide the biggest growth opportunities for PR practitioners in Boston over the next few years?

Looking ahead, there's no doubt that technology, health care, consumer products, real estate, financial services and general business will all recover from today's economic downturn. We need to be ready, willing and able to provide the kind of strategic advice for which people count on public relations counselors to deliver.

In my 29 years in business, the same axioms continue to hold true; it's just the way we deliver the messages that change. Smart, savvy, aggressive, well-educated and personable practitioners will always be in demand. We need to remember that public relations is the cornerstone of communications and no matter how we deliver the messages, the tenants of sound communications theory hold true.

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Kirk Hazlett Honored for Life of Service

PRSA Boston congratulates Kirk Hazlett, APR, former president of PRSA Boston and longtime member, on receiving the John J. Molloy Crystal Bell Award from the Publicity Club of New England at the 2009 Bell Ringer Awards on June 1.

The organization honored Kirk with the award for his extensive career in and devotion to enhancing the public relations profession and giving his time and energy to the industry at the local, district and national levels.

He served concurrently as president of PRSA's Boston chapter and as chair of the Northeast District board of directors in 2005. He now serves as a director-at-large of the Educators Academy.

For more than three decades, Kirk has served as a public relations counsel to chief executives of highly respected organizations and professional associations. He has served on many nonprofit boards as a volunteer and board member, currently including Boston Harborfest, Inc., where he has served for 25 years, and as chair of the town of Belmont's Vision 21 Implementation Committee.



Kirk has taught public relations at Stonehill, Bridgewater State and Emerson colleges. He is now an assistant professor of communication, the coordinator of the public relations program and a faculty advisor at Curry College, as well as an adjunct professor of communication at Regis College, where he has taught for several years. Kirk continues to mentor hundreds of future practitioners and has been instrumental in starting PRSSA chapters at Simmons, Stonehill, Bentley and Curry colleges in the Boston area.

Barbara Wellnitz, APR, Fellow PRSA, Ann Getman, APR, and Julie Dennehy, APR, contributed this article.

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News & Views is a monthly newsletter by and for members of New England's largest association of PR professionals.

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To contribute articles, news or information on upcoming events, please contact *News & Views* at info@PRSABoston.org.

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