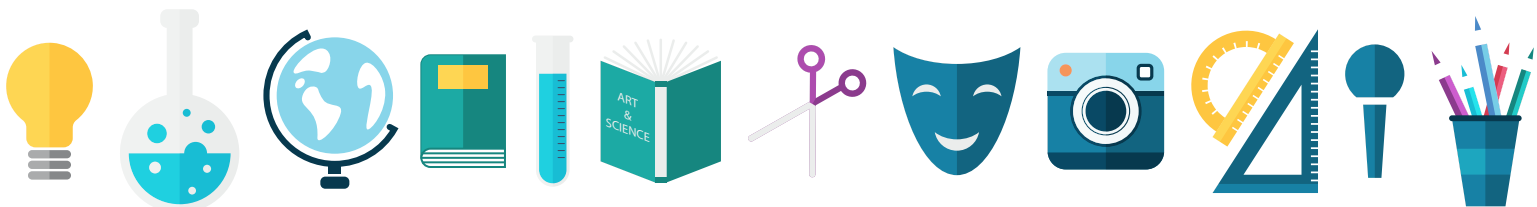


COMBINING ART AND SCIENCE IN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

How PR and comms can make the most of a balance between creativity and data



SUMMARY

The comms industry has traditionally talked about the craft of communications, messaging and the power of creativity. Great storytelling, rather than a systematic process, has been the prerequisite to getting your message across.

But the right message needs to hit the right audience. In addition, the digitisation of the industry has changed the way in which communicators operate. You now have more access to data on who is engaging with your campaigns, where they are engaging from and when they are most engaged than ever before.

This white paper will evaluate to what extent communicators will need to combine the traditional strength of the more creative and more in data - driven approaches to comms. In effect, how do use the strengths of both scientists and artists to be effective in the future. And, with the programme of technology, does the traditional use of data stifle rather than promote creativity?

Industry experts will give their view on how to combine data and instinct, while you will see how the Cision Communications Cloud can help you use the science to power your art.

CONTENTS

- 03** Introduction
- 05** How does data change the role of communicators?
- 06** Case study: Using research to gather actionable data - Arlington Research
- 08** Arguments for and against data
- 10** How can creatives stand out in an increasingly data-driven world?
- 12** What is relevant data?
- 14** Case study: combining data and storytelling
- 16** The Cision Comms Cloud
- 17** Conclusion

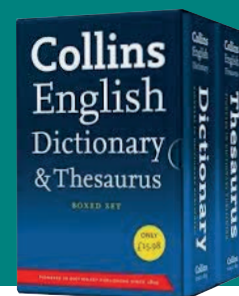
INTRODUCTION

Art: “the exercise of human skill” and “the system of rules or principles governing a particular human activity”.

Science: “any body of knowledge organised in a systematic manner” and a “skill or technique”.

Collins dictionary

Source: Collins English Dictionary



While science and art often are seen as diametric opposites, there are clear similarities between the two disciplines.

As far back as the 1930s, Edward Bernays, one of the first chroniclers of PR, believed that communications was an applied social science, citing the fact the PR activities are “planned and executed by trained practitioners in accordance with scientific principles, based on the findings of social scientists”. He maintained that communicators alter public opinion by using sociology, mass psychology and other similar disciplines.

While Bernays’ theories came long before the data revolution, his theories illustrate that there has always been a scientific aspect to PR and comms, and it is the industry’s desire to embrace and use data which has led to debate over whether it now more scientific than artistic.

Compared with counterparts in marketing and advertising, comms professionals have been slower to use data. Keyana Corliss, director of PR at Tableau, tells *Forbes* that it is about time that the industry started becoming more analytical in its approach, describing data as being an “afterthought” for most public relations professionals.

She cites the previous difficulty in measuring campaigns, especially compared with marketing and advertising professionals, as a reason why the industry has been slow to incorporate data into day-to-day work. However, the growing ability for you to measure the value of your campaigns and illustrate ROI will require communicators to adopt a more scientific approach or risk falling behind their competitors.

There are some people, however, who argue that the rush to embrace data could pose a threat to the industry’s creative ability.

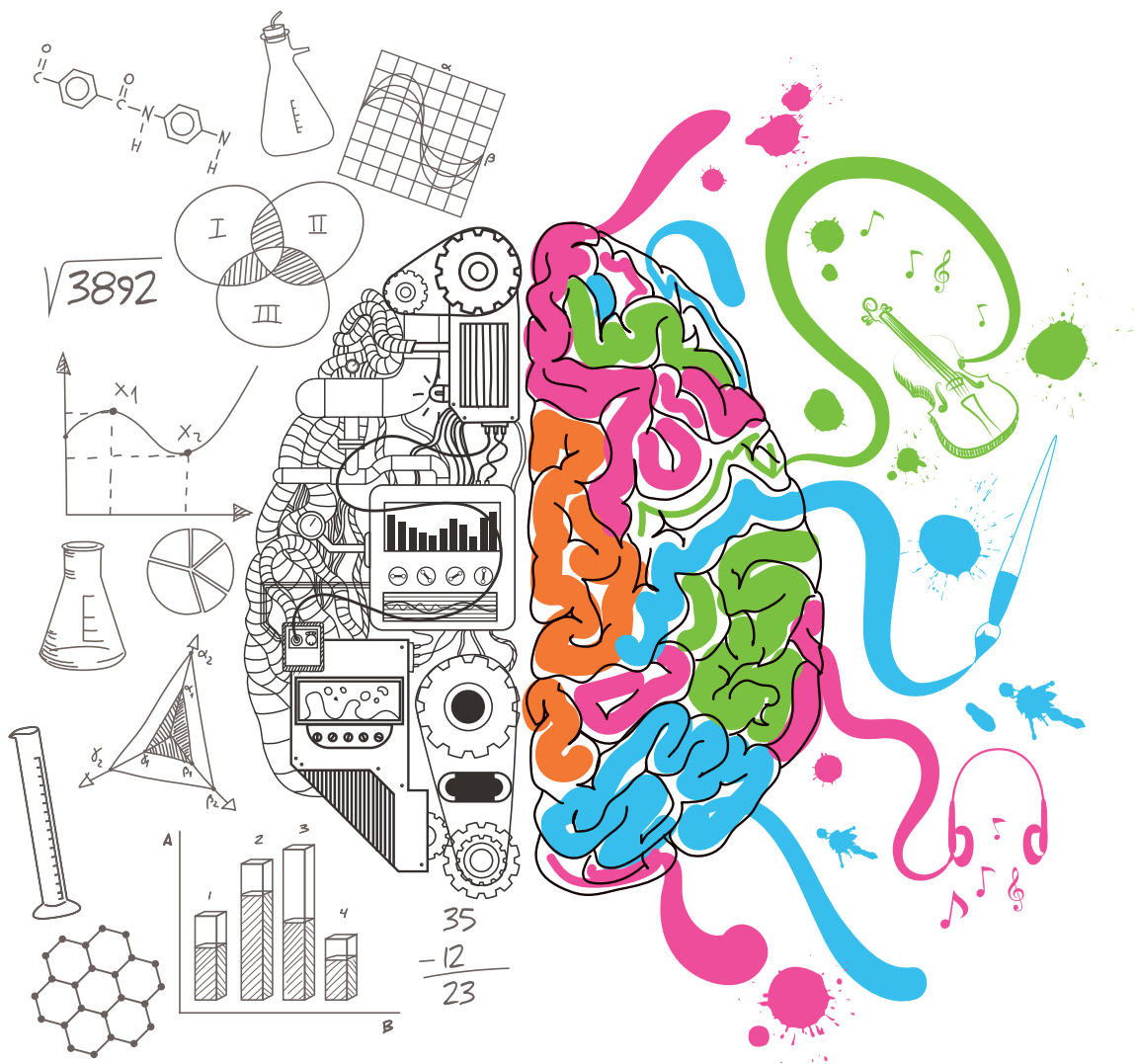
In recent years, Unilever, for example, has looked to move away from relying too much on its quantitative research and has instead encouraged its staff to bring back “magic” to its

advertising and media campaigns. Communicators are encouraged not to fear experimenting with new storytelling techniques, on the condition that they learn from the campaign's results.

The company's creative excellence director, Dan Izbicki, argues that most creative work in advertising is "terrible". He blamed this on the ubiquity of video, meaning that "suddenly everyone is a creative director".

Izbicki also told *Marketing Week* the importance of creativity in campaigns for the consumer goods giant, stating that the company needed "great creativity and great work" to overcome the fact that Unilever's products were not in high interest categories.

Given that some in advertising and marketing are looking to reverse the trend of using data, should comms professionals be wary of focusing too much on data and not enough on creativity?



HOW DOES DATA CHANGE THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATORS?

Traditionally, PR people have always seemed to have come from an arts background, but the increasing use of data in PR means that communicators are increasingly required to analyse data to perfect their campaigns. Does this mean that people with scientific - not artistic - backgrounds will be best placed to produce successful campaigns in future?



David Walker, senior account executive at Beattie Group, believes that the influx of data means that communicators will need to become savvier at handling it.

“Better data-driven insights and outcomes will fundamentally become a heightened client expectation - they will rightfully be able to demand that PRs can clearly demonstrate the value of their work, and thus ROI will be framed in very black and white terms. Does the result clearly align with the investment? Has the campaign been optimised effectively?”

“That’s not to say that communicators will have to become statisticians overnight, capable of untangling complex algorithms. But they will have to leverage data in meaningful ways to identify new audiences and then report on how effectively those audiences are interacting with messaging.”

A survey of 749 PR professionals by AMEC/Cision found that 78% thought that it is very important that there is more education to get the most benefit from measurement, illustrating that many communicators are uncertain about what to measure.

Paul Hender, head of insights at Cision, argues that the onset of data does not have to distract you from your goal of creating imaginative campaigns, as there are people and services out there which can manage the data side of the industry:



“What I would say to communicators is don’t feel you need to become experts yourselves. There are plenty of people in this industry who can help you out.”

“There are media intelligence companies like Cision which can help you out, experts who do this every day. Within some agencies, such as Ketchum, there are whole departments which do research and analytics which can help out. And, PR measurement has its champion in AMEC.”

These examples illustrate that third party data specialists will be on-hand to undertake the data mining required, allowing creative PR professionals to concentrate on weaving the insights provided into their earned media campaigns.

CASE STUDY: USING RESEARCH TO GATHER ACTIONABLE DATA



Paul Stallard
managing director
Arlington Research

Is helping to solve the dichotomy of how to leverage insights from data in an industry famed for its creativity. He is in the process of establishing research agency Arlington Research and explains the value of researchers.

“PR agencies love research, especially if a client is in a vertical that doesn’t have quarterly launches, ground breaking updates or particularly ‘sexy’ topics to shout about. Instead, they can focus on making a drama out of an issue that is important to the client’s customers and look to proactively drive the news agenda themselves.

Put simply, research-led campaigns can be instrumental in generating great coverage for clients and hugely successful in highlighting important issues and starting a debate. What isn’t there to like about that if you work in comms?

There are many reasons why research is such an effective tool but the most important one is that the statistics provide validity, rigour and depth to any bold story. Statistics help make the story far more powerful by making the claims come to life.

The problem arises with using research in a campaign when a trained researcher isn’t used to design the project. Understanding the sample and questionnaire and how to effectively analyse the results so that the data is interpreted correctly and that you gain maximum insight from the field work is often overlooked. As with all disciplines, the old

adage, 'rubbish in, rubbish out' is especially true for research and a poorly designed piece of research will fall short of everyone's expectations.

There has been a lot of buzz in the communications industry about the importance of becoming data scientists but I believe this is unnecessary.

All you need to do is find an expert that you trust and work with them.

If you were buying a new car, knew you would like a red one and how many miles per gallon you wanted, you wouldn't need to become a mechanic to source the most appropriate options.

The same principle applies here. If you know what you want to get out of a project, take this brief to a trained expert rather than spend a minimum of 45-60 hours studying to achieve a Market Research Society (MRS) qualification and let them do the work. This will ensure your valuable investment is a success.

A research expert can ensure that the results will meet your objective and help tell your story in a robust and impactful way. Analysis by an expert researcher will also ensure that the results are correct and reviewed from different perspectives to maximise their influence on the story.”



ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST USES OF DATA

At a Cision panel event, Ketchum's head of strategy and planning, Ruth Yearley, and Cision's head of insight, Paul Hender, argued their cases for the use of art and science respectively. Here is a summary of their arguments:

Ruth Yearley head of strategy and planning, Ketchum

I believe that creative communications start from a creative insight. For work to be effective, motivating and memorable for communications to touch people, it has to have at its heart something people recognise. Insight is what makes the connection between you, the communicator, and the audience.



For me an insight is the expression of a common sense truth, an unspoken known. If that is the case, then that means we have to know stuff to start with. In my case, that information comes from just living my life, paying attention, immersing myself in society, experiencing and exploring.

I like to refer to this as being an “insightrapologist”, mixing insights with anthropology. Like an anthropologist; paying attention to what is going on in society, with people, trends and behaviours and using these to come up with insights.

I am not a data hater. Big data can tell stories.

I do worry that what has happened is that people have mistaken information for insight. Facts are not insights. However, research and data are solid and quantifiable. If our thinking or insight or creativity are challenged, they can be justified and validated with a data source.

That's why I feel vilified. As an instinctive planner, not a data driven one, I am out of fashion.

I do want to be clear that, whilst I am passionate about instinct as a valuable business tool, this isn't an anti-data stance. Of course I acknowledge that data has merit. However, I believe that the comfort that people get from data could end up leading to complacency.

We do need deference to reference and to respect data, but we need to apply it with caution. Creativity and data should not be an either/or.

Paul Hender
head of insight
Cision

We've seen a huge series of crises affecting major companies that wipe huge chunks of value off their share price. CEOs are becoming very aware of their vulnerability to a media crisis.



If CEOs need to know about reputation, they need to communicate with their comms team. What's the language of the boardroom? They need concise data to explain what is going on so that they can make a quick decision.

There's a lot of evidence that traditional paid media is struggling to survive in this new digital world. Data from Nielsen suggests that earned media is significantly more trusted than owned or paid. The huge paradox is that more money still goes into paid media over earned media.

Some 85% of all new ad spend goes to just two sources: Facebook and Google. Why? Because both platforms offer data to tell you how to reach your target audiences and give you data to tell you how those audiences have responded and reacted as a result, proving your effectiveness.

Money is following measurability. Earned media will only earn the same budgets as paid media if it can show demonstrable effects on target audiences and business impact.

This does not mean that creativity needs to be sidelined. But what is important is that it is framed in the context of understanding how it supports overall business objectives, as creativity on its own merit isn't necessarily going to deliver business value. Make sure you can measure the efficacy of your creativity, as the measurement can often reinforce how good your instinct is.

HOW CAN CREATIVES STAND OUT IN AN INCREASINGLY DATA-DRIVEN WORLD?



John Brown
founder
Don't Cry Wolf

Passionately defends creativity and argues that data will never trump instinct when it comes to producing campaigns with cut-through.

John Brown: Your gut is still better than data

"I'm more of a creative scientist than just a creative". This was a phrase I overheard being belched out at a recent industry drinks reception. Ignoring the unctuous tone for a moment, this statement summarises the way the industry views creative work.

It's no longer adequate to have a great idea. Now, to be taken seriously, your creative idea should have a platform of rich and delicious

data. As you express your idea, your face must show the wrinkles of someone who's devoted an unreasonable amount of their life undertaking impossible maths equations.

All this, so that you can tell your client or boss that it might be worth sailing something down the Thames.

Now, before I'm served a cease and desist from AMEC or CIPR or PRCA or whoever is banging the data led drum today, allow me to first lay out my stall.

**Data is meaningless.
Insight is valuable.**

Most sentient beings can find data, fewer can identify (or even define) insight. Creative ideas built on insight are clever. The kind of clever that makes me look for a way to see if I can tenuously claim some involvement in the idea to impress my wife. Creative ideas built on data are average at best (most creative ideas).

The problem the industry has is that it cannot work out whether it's championing data, which would be a bit of a naff quest, or insight, which is a far nobler endeavour. In this pursuit to sound intelligent, the industry also neglects one of the finest assets a practitioner in the creative industry has. Their gut.

Ladies and gentlemen of the communications industry jury I put it to you, there's nothing wrong with a campaign built around a creative idea that just feels really f'ing cool.

Yet in this hyper-informed world where a Google search can spurt out data that 40 years ago would have cost most agencies their lunch money for the year, people can have their ideas dismissed for not being based on 'evidence' (another wonderful word that means different things to different people).

So, to end, I thought I'd provide a quick guide to navigating your way around this new frontier of creative scrutiny, which I hope will prove useful in both preserving sanity as well as creativity.

- 1• Know the difference:** Knowing the difference between data (raw numbers), information (data that's been organised to provide more meaning) and insight (the eureka moment when information is overlaid on context). Once you can tell the difference it's far easier to know what you're working with and also to help explain to the new age boffin in the room that what they have is a number, not an insight.
- 2• Hypothesise first:** While undoubtedly one of the biggest opportunities lies in the perfect marriage between insight and creative ideas, starting from the perspective of 'I must find data' can quickly snuff out any spark of creativity. Instead start from the perspective of 'wouldn't it be amazing if we did this' and see if you can find the insight to support it. If you can't it still might be a great idea!
- 3• Go for the heart:** There's one thing that will trump data, information and insight. Emotion. If you know you're onto something magical, but just don't have the evidence to prove it, focus on capturing the heart. If your CMO is emotionally bought into an idea, the need for a scientific approach suddenly becomes far less important.
- 4• Be brave:** Some of the worst campaign ideas I've seen have been born out of rigorous data mining and insight sniffing. If you feel you have that killer concept, go with it, it might just be the winner you've been looking for.

WHAT IS RELEVANT DATA?

As both Hender and Yearley state, just because the amount of data available to communicators is growing, it does not guarantee that you will glean actionable insights.

A joint survey of 400 global communicators by Cision and *PRWeek* found that nearly 70% believe that they do not have enough data or analytics to properly attribute how their earned media programmes impacted key financial and business results.

It also found that 72% of those asked felt that they needed to improve their understanding of the demographic, sociographic and psychographic profiles of their audiences, while 75% said that they needed to do better at measuring and proving their impact on business objectives.

The challenge for communicators is to transition from traditional metrics, such as reach, impressions and content performance, to metrics used to measure business performance, including revenue growth, leads generated and shopping cart conversions.

So what is the best way to leverage data to produce insights which can help to improve your campaigns?



Chris Lynch, Cision's CMO, lists his **“three pillars of storytelling”** which align with measurable data sets.

THREE PILLARS OF STORYTELLING

PILLAR 1 - BE HUMAN:

Data foundations: Demographic, behavioural, past purchases, product preference

“Despite advances in machine-learning and automated content development, great stories that have major economic or social impact are still consumed by real people. As a result, it's important to work with specific audience data that helps you understand who they are. This data isn't about what they say; it's about what they do.”

PILLAR 2 - BE EMOTIVE:

Data foundations: Sentiment, affinity, psychographic

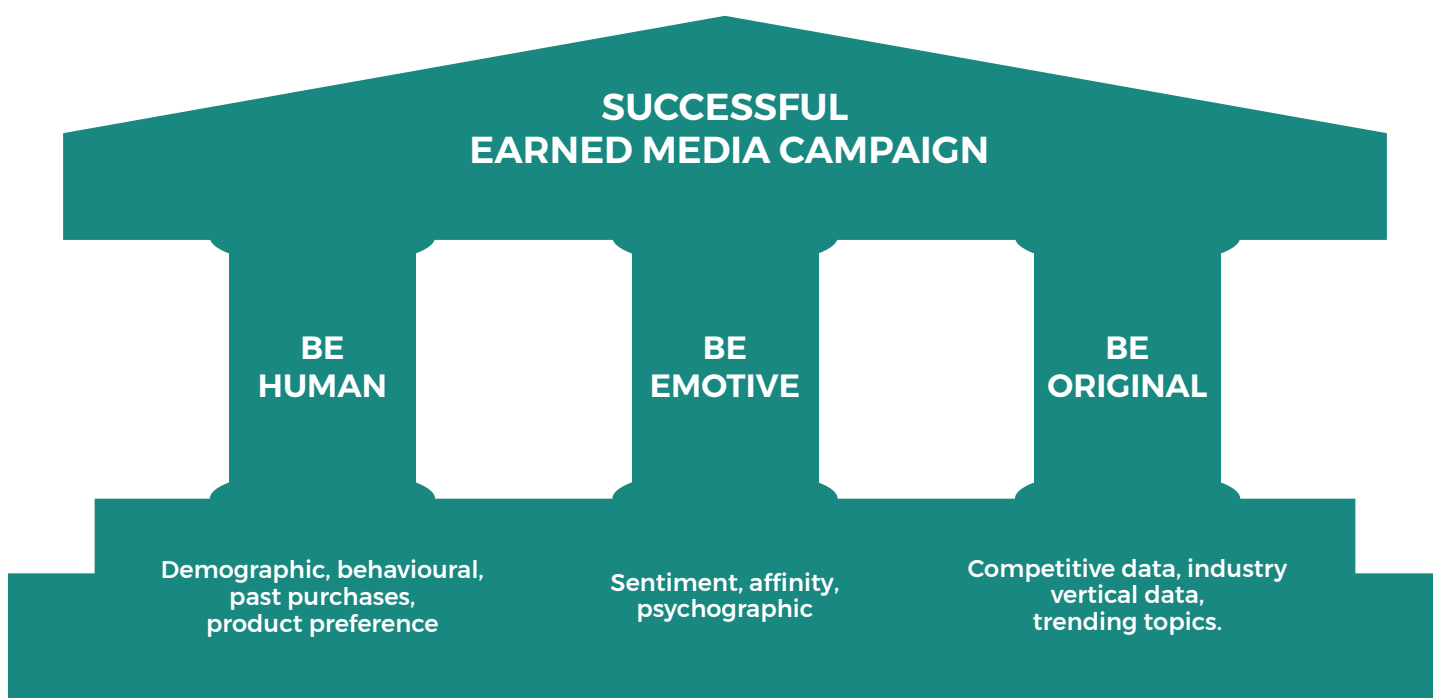
“People are emotive creatures; and social media created a scenario where we started publishing those emotions with fewer barriers to entry than the old days of print publishing. When crafting a story leveraging this pillar, we’re talking less about what people do, and more about what they say. The social networks can be helpful for this. For consumer B2C brands and retailers, Instagram and Facebook reign supreme. B2B marketers are starting to glean a lot of insights of this kind from LinkedIn and Twitter.”

PILLAR 3 - BE ORIGINAL:

Data foundations: Competitive data, industry vertical data, trending topics.

“Originality represents the biggest challenge in 21st century storytelling. That’s because, well, so many stories have been told at this point in human history. Proof of this has permeated the dramatic arts. Hollywood is doing constant remakes from movies 20, 30 and 40 years old. Broadway is copying movies now (didn’t it used to be other way around?).

To be original, you need to look at data even more intuitively. These data points are as much about what people are not saying. Start with your competitors, but also I’d argue timeliness is vitally important here. Often, the originality or freshness of a story will very much depend on the timeliness.”



CASE STUDY: COMBINING DATA AND STORYTELLING

Fever and Sony – No Man’s Sky

The science: Fever’s brief was to get cut-through outside of the traditional gaming pages and build excitement among a wider audience. The agency’s audience insights showed us that the best way for them to reach a broader mainstream audience was to create content that it could use to target them directly and via the media they consume. Further research into the target audience identified an overlap with fans of iconic sci-fi franchises, such as Star Trek.

The agency’s research into our top tier media targets found that funny videos elicit the strongest reactions and engagement, so it set out to create a funny piece of video content that would appeal to a mainstream audience without alienating the core fans of the game.

The art: Fever decided that the video needed to feature a genuine gamer who was a known fan of sci-fi and they needed to be funny.

As such, they enlisted Bill Bailey, known for his love of gaming and a self-confessed ‘Trekkie’ to star in the video, working with him and comedy specialist production company Roughcut TV to develop the video concept. The resulting video followed Bailey as he explored a small fraction of the game in his iconic comedic style.





In addition to being hosted across PlayStation's owned social channels, Fever also seeded it to UK national news, consumer lifestyle press and key influencers for editorial use. This generated widespread coverage within our target media, supported by direct-to-consumer engagement on social media.

The result: The video secured coverage across UK national newspapers, consumer lifestyle press and influencer social channels. Key coverage included *MailOnline*, *Evening Standard*, *i*, *UniLad*, *ShortList*, *NME*, *Huffington Post* and *SBTV*, with all pieces including the video and full credit to the game.

On social media, the video generated over 1.7 million video views on Facebook within one month, with one million in the first 48 hours. The video also garnered 18,000+ positive reactions on Facebook and over 7,800 shares. The team recorded highly positive sentiment in Facebook comments, dedicated Reddit and NeoGaf threads and from reactions to Bill Bailey's social posts.

And in business terms? No Man's Sky exceeded week one sales targets, becoming the second biggest PS4 game launch ever after *Uncharted 4*.

THE CISION COMMS CLOUD

How can you emulate the success of No Man's Sky and demonstrate a measurable impact on achieving organisational objectives? Cision has a range of products which will allow you to target, monitor and measure your campaigns.

The apex of Cision's product suite is the Cision Communications Cloud. The result of almost \$2bn-worth of investment, the Cloud is a service which allows you to both optimise your campaigns and measure their impact in a language which engages your organisation's C-suite.

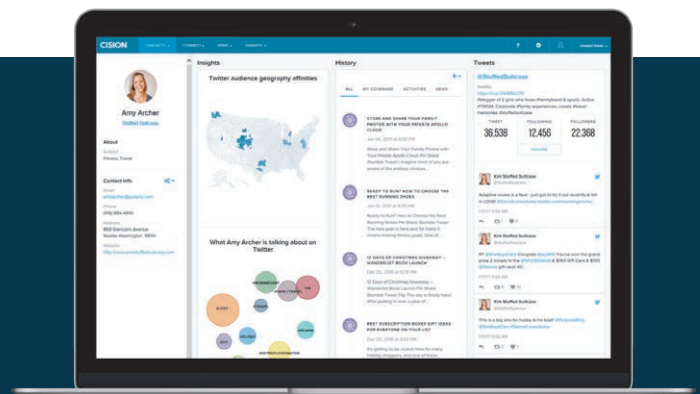
It can identify influencers based on information input by communicators into the platform relating to customers; such as behaviours, attributes and preferences. Communicators can base these queries on areas such as topic, geography or consumer product interest.

You will be able to measure coverage across print, online and social media, with the cloud service also featuring analytics which allow you to measure the value of coverage to the business and demonstrate ROI.

Click the link below to find out more about how you can use the Cision Communications Cloud to power your campaigns.

DISCOVER MORE ABOUT HOW
CISION COMMS CLOUD® CAN
TRANSFORM YOUR PR TODAY

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



CONCLUSION

Successful earned media campaigns of the future will not be exclusively scientific or artistic. The best communicators will exploit the data they have available to craft meaningful campaigns which will connect to highly targeted audiences.

You will need to gain a greater understanding of how to leverage data in order to maximise the effectiveness of your campaigns, as well as conjure metrics which illustrate the ROI of your work.

However, you will still be prized for your communication skills rather than your data evaluation proficiency. Data analysts, such as those at Cision, will be able to explain insights gleaned from data, leaving you to get on with using imagination and creativity to craft campaigns.



SOURCES

nku.edu/~turney/prclass/sections/art_science.html

forbes.com/sites/forbescommunicationscouncil/2017/08/10/how-pr-can-and-should-be-more-data-driven/#78f745a03ecb

campaignlive.co.uk/article/unilever-quest-magic-failure-option/1101662

marketingweek.com/2016/11/03/most-advertising-is-terrible-says-unilever/

cision.com/us/2017/04/art-science-the-three-pillars-of-story-telling-mapped-to-data/

gorkana.com/2016/09/pr-case-study-no-mans-sky/

Written by Alister Houghton, content marketing manager, Cision

Designed by Omar Baisar