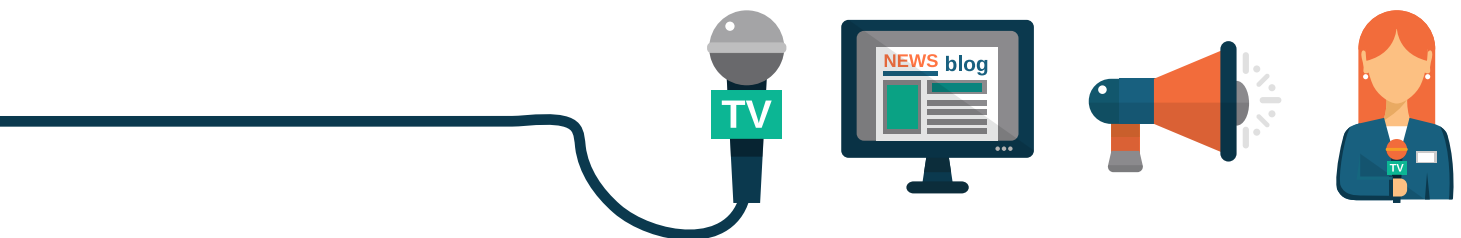


# HOW TO CREATE A PR NEWSROOM AND OWN YOUR STORY

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WHY NEWS CONTENT SHOULD DRIVE YOUR  
BRAND STORYTELLING AND COMMS



# SUMMARY

In modern media relations, speed is essential. To raise your brand's profile in today's fast-moving news cycle, you need to respond quickly to breaking news with your own creative ideas and commentary.

PR newsrooms provide a simple solution to this challenge – and in this white paper, you'll see how to implement one of your own in three easy steps.

It outlines why adopting a newsroom model is the best way to stay relevant in today's media landscape. Then, industry leaders and influencers including Ketchum's Stephen Waddington and Good Relations' Lawrence Collis will reveal how to overcome the key challenges you'll face when making the switch.

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# INTRODUCTION

Microsoft's Redmond Campus

**It's 2013, and Microsoft is about to do something that will change its corporate comms strategy forever.**

Steve Clayton, the brand's chief storyteller, has been writing an unusual story. It's called '88 Acres: How Microsoft quietly built the city of the future' – and he thinks it has legs. But despite the huge amount of time and effort he's invested, this story isn't destined for the mainstream press.

Instead, Clayton's team publish the story themselves on the brand's in-house newsroom, Microsoft Stories. And the response is spectacular.

88 Acres receives more than half a million views. What's more, it has directly generated sales by inspiring other companies to ask how Microsoft can smarten up their buildings.

All this, because Microsoft's ground-breaking newsroom culture empowers its team to uncover and tell the stories people genuinely want to hear about.



"The world of media and the world of marketing are smashing into each other," explains **Dan Lyons**, a former **Newsweek** technology editor. "Microsoft runs one of the finest publishing operations that I've seen."

"The media is overwhelmed and simply can't keep up," he adds. "The best



Here, we reveal how you can do exactly that. But of course, it's not just simply a case of having an online platform where you can post the latest company news.

This is about helping your comms team respond quickly to breaking stories with its own creative commentary. It's about ensuring your brand can lead the conversation on key talking points and bringing your comms in line with how people want to 'consume' digital content.



**Stephen Waddington, Ketchum's** chief engagement officer, explains: "This is an absolute requirement of modern public relations, to enable us to be responsive to the pace of conversation on the internet."

Traditional PR functions simply can't turn stories around fast enough in an age where a single tweet can change the course of a day's news agenda. That's why brands as diverse and Coca-Cola, Intel and ING are all using newsrooms to streamline their comms operations.

But as you'll soon see, this approach can work for companies of all sizes. Whether you represent a corporate giant like Microsoft or a tiny start-up – this report will help you uncover the great stories that are bubbling beneath the surface in your organisation, just waiting to be told.



"Every organisation with people is, by definition, interesting," says **James Curtis**, the co-founder of corporate comms specialist **Stampa**. "The companies that embrace the newsroom culture are really only just beginning to discover the possibilities it opens up."

"The time is right for this because it helps companies deal with big corporate changes," he adds. "It can really drive a change in culture, which puts communications in a more central role."

At Cision, we believe every brand should be benefitting from this streamlined communications model. So, read on to discover how to set up your own newsroom and transform your business in three easy steps.



# WHY PR NEWSROOMS ARE THE FUTURE OF BRAND STORYTELLING

The Good Relations newsroom team

**The newsroom model enables daily news titles to work fast to fill their pages online and off with great stories that sell papers.**

Your business most likely has different strategic objectives to *The Sun* or *The Daily Mail*. But you can still apply the same editorial principles to turn your comms department into a well-oiled content machine.

Right now, some of the world's most recognisable brands are applying these techniques to ensure their comms initiatives deliver results.

Adobe, Oracle and Microsoft all operate newsrooms. What's more, the big three venture capital firms in Silicon Valley – Sequoia Capital, Andreessen Horowitz and Battery Ventures – have hired journalists from the Wall Street Journal, Wired and Forbes, respectively.

But at the same time, media titles throughout the UK are cutting staff, or else closing altogether. Since 2005, 300 newspapers have shut down and specialist reporters are becoming something of an endangered species.

Against this backdrop, perhaps it's not surprising that so many brands are taking matters into their own hands. Companies like Microsoft can afford to invest more resources into telling their stories than their media counterparts, and are producing better content as a result.

Today, we'll show you how to do the same – and the first step is to start thinking like a publisher.

## THINK LIKE A PUBLISHER TO TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR BRAND'S STORY

Establishing a successful newsroom is about empowering your team to communicate your organisation's strategic content using robust editorial standards and a journalistic mindset.

For Microsoft, this means giving staff the freedom to write about whatever interests them most. For companies like HubSpot, it's about driving lead generation. Meanwhile, IBM uses its primary blogs to establish itself as an industry thought leader.

This doesn't necessarily mean you have to implement a brand new structure or team. Often, it's just a matter of adopting a new way of thinking.

Who are the key stakeholders you're trying to communicate with? How can your company improve their life? And what's the most captivating way of sharing that story with them?



"This can be a pretty big mindset shift for people in the corporate world," says **Stampa** co-founder **Abigail Levene**. "Your readers are your clients. Your client is not the business department that comes to you and says 'I want you to profile my work'."

Thinking about your comms initiatives in this way will help you bring them in line with how people naturally consume their content. Always keep your audience in mind and tell the stories you think they want to hear.







## HOW TO IMPLEMENT A PR NEWSROOM IN 3 SIMPLE STEPS

**In-house corporate newsrooms are the best way to ensure your comms function can keep stride with the sheer pace of conversation on the internet. But how do you create your own?**

As Stephen Waddington says, they're an absolute requirement of modern PR. They provide an elegant solution to the biggest challenges modern communicators face – creating a centralised content hub for your organisation in the process.



### 1. AGREE YOUR “SAFE TOPICS” IN ADVANCE

Getting approval for new ideas quickly is typically the biggest challenge comms teams face when implementing a newsroom structure.

To combat this, you must decide on an official internal stance on what issues your company is happy to create content for – and which ones you should avoid.

“You need a workshop with all the stakeholders in the room that are responsible for agreeing and signing off content,” Waddington explains. “What are the topics and media areas you’re prepared as an organisation to have a point of view on?”

The answer to this question will depend on the brand you represent. Some thrive on controversy, while others are much more conservative. But wherever your business falls on that spectrum, making these decisions at the outset will ensure your newsroom runs efficiently further down the line.



## **2. FIND THE BEST OPPORTUNITIES WITH REAL-TIME MEDIA MONITORING**

Creative ideas can come from anywhere. So, it’s important to assign staff to monitor what’s going on in the media and meet regularly to brainstorm fresh content ideas.

Professional journalists scour the day’s headlines, social media feeds and leading newswires like Cision Distribution by PR Newswire to source great stories – and your comms team should, too.

“You need the basics of someone who’s able to listen to conversations or monitor the media,” says Waddington. “It’s what we should all be doing in the morning when we get into work.”

He adds: “Bring people together first thing in the morning and typically in the afternoon for 20 minutes to brainstorm whether there’s an opportunity to be part of the conversation.”

To effectively manage your brand’s reputation, it’s also vital you have a clear picture of what people are saying about your business. Whether you’re capitalising on a PR opportunity or handling a crisis, you need to be able to get your message out fast to take control of the narrative.

That’s why it’s important to invest in professional media monitoring tools like the Cision Communications Cloud.

It lets you filter through over two million daily news articles across digital, broadcast and social channels for the stories that matter to you. Plus, it gives you the insights you need to identify trending topics, uncover key influencers and understand what people are saying about your brand.





### **3. EXPERIMENT UNTIL YOU FIND A SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR YOU**

Once your team has had a great idea and it's been approved by your key stakeholders, the rest is easy – relatively speaking.

By assigning a writer to the story and then having an editor prepare and sub the draft for publication, you should be able to turn it around in a matter of minutes – rather than hours or days.

But of course, every company is different. And that's why Waddington believes it's important to experiment with different configurations until you find a system that works smoothly for you.

“We have to get comfortable with experimenting and doing test and learn projects,” he says. “Try something, run a small project, see if it works, learn from it, change your behaviour and move onto the next thing.”

# THE ANATOMY OF A BRAND NEWSROOM

**Like the media organisations they're mimicking, brand newsrooms can come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes.**

To help you find the configuration that works best for you, here's a breakdown of the key roles and possible hierarchies you'll find in a typical brand newsroom:

In a brand setting, your **CMO's** role is similar to that of the publisher at a traditional media title. Their job is to align the blog with the company's business objectives and steer the content agenda.

Below the CMO is the **managing editor**. Their job is to decide which stories run on the site and which don't. They'll review pitches, help writers develop their ideas and edit finished stories before they're published.

The managing editor is the voice of the brand. But, at some companies they'll coordinate with the **head of PR** to discuss controversial posts and ensure sensitive topics are handled correctly.

Finally, there are the **writers** and **copy editors**. Writers monitor the media for trending topics, brainstorm ideas, pitch stories to the managing editor and turn the best ones into posts for the site.

The copy editor will then check each post for errors and ensure they adhere to your brand guidelines before publishing it.

You may have people within your organisation already whose roles encompass some of these duties. Don't be afraid to experiment with different setups until you find what works best.



# CREATE A POWERFUL PR NEWSROOM FAST WITH CISION MEDIAROOM

**Modern comms teams are expected to have a centralised media room to serve as a content hub and be the voice of their organisation.**

This hub forms a dynamic record of your brand's story. It creates a stream of original content to power your organisation's SEO rankings. And it's where you'll publish the great content your comms team creates – from news releases to fact sheets, multimedia content and more.

Over time, your media room will develop into a vital tool for the journalists, influencers and other stakeholders your brand communicates with. In fact, 70% of journalists seek news and information from brand newsrooms.

But developing and maintaining an impactful media room in-house is highly resource intensive. You could save time, money and effort by investing in a streamlined solution to take control of your newsroom – and that's where Cision comes in.

## INTRODUCING CISION MEDIAROOM

Cision MediaRoom will give you complete control over your brand's online newsroom. It's a fully customisable microsite complete with everything your comms team needs to run an effective PR newsroom.

With more than 15 years' experience, our expert web designers will create a media room tailored to your specific needs. They'll use the very latest technology to deliver a flawless user experience that's mobile responsive, socially integrated, SEO optimised and multimedia friendly.

Every news release and multimedia asset you share using Cision Distribution by PR Newswire will then be automatically synchronised and uploaded to your newsroom – saving you time and effort.

What's more, your comms team will be able to access Cision's proprietary content management system to upload and edit content on any device, anytime and anywhere.



From a simple newsletter signup box to forms for unlocking premium content, your media room's on-page lead generation tools will empower your team to deliver a comms strategy that drives measurable business results.

Finally, Cision's robust reporting tools will provide you with analytics and marketing insights into how users engage with your content. We can even build our sites to integrate seamlessly into your existing Google or Adobe Analytics platform.

So, contact [marketing@gorkana.com](mailto:marketing@gorkana.com) today to discover more about how a Cision MediaRoom could transform your brand's online newsroom.



**97% of Cision clients tell us  
they love MediaRoom.**

## INSIDE A BRAND NEWSROOM WITH GOOD RELATIONS' LAWRENCE COLLIS

Lawrence Collis is executive director at Good Relations

### **Brand newsrooms don't just create great content fast.**

They also ensure your team has access to the right expertise to seize on content opportunities as they arise.

According to Lawrence Collis, executive director at Good Relations, that's why the agency uses the newsroom model for everything from news generation to crisis management.

### **Q. You're responsible for Good Relations' dynamic newsroom model. But what is a dynamic newsroom? And how does one work?**

To allow us to be as reactive and creative as possible with the right expertise, we structure our press office accounts as brand newsrooms.

We assemble bespoke teams of specialists tailored to unique challenges, whether it be in creative news generation, issues and crisis management, broadcast PR, social media, public affairs or influencer relations.

Daily news conferences allow us to react to issues and seize opportunities to turn stories into creative content for traditional, digital and social media.

**Q. How big is a typical brand newsroom team at Good Relations? And how are the different tasks divvied up?**

The size of each team is entirely dependent on client needs. We tailor relevant expertise within the business to fit that.

When it comes to tasks, having a clear decision maker is vital to ensure discipline, keeping to and improving process and ensuring clear actions come from brand newsroom meetings.

**Q. What would you say are the key benefits of this approach, compared to more traditional PR techniques?**

Our way of working ensures there is input from a diverse range of experts at every stage of the process. This diversity of expertise enables us to be highly reactive and seize on opportunities.

**Q. How do you measure the performance of your newsroom teams' content at Good Relations? Do you believe it's important to show the impact they have on a brand's business objectives?**

We put a huge importance on evaluation and demonstrating impactful outcomes in everything we do, as with any activity within the business. The newsroom is no different and we set (where relevant) KPIs against this to ensure that it's a valuable addition to campaigns.



# CONCLUSION

## There's no question that PR newsrooms are the future of comms.

They provide a simple solution to some of the biggest challenges facing the comms industry – and today you've seen how you can implement one at your own organisation.

Not only will creating a newsroom unify your comms initiatives and bring them in line with how people naturally consume content online. But it's also the best way to keep up with the pace of conversation in the modern media landscape.

By thinking about comms like a publisher, assigning staff to specific newsroom tasks and monitoring the media for trending topics in real-time, you can start reaping the benefits of a brand newsroom right away.

Then, you can use Cision's industry-leading technology to take full control of your brand's story:

- We'll build you a personalised **Cision MediaRoom** that saves you time by automatically uploading everything you share with Cision Distribution by PR Newswire directly to your newsroom.

- **The Cision Comms Cloud's** comprehensive media monitoring tools will let you tap into more than two million daily news stories to identify potential media opportunities.
- And with the **Cision Comms Cloud's** cutting edge analysis tools, you'll finally have access to the insights you need to identify the best ways to influence your target audiences.

In short, this is everything you need to take your comms strategy to the next level and get the most out of your brand newsroom.

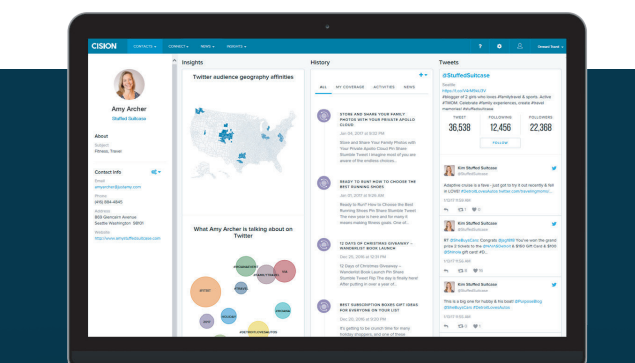
The Cision Communications Cloud does more than centralise your brand's comms activities and let you pitch to influencers, distribute content, monitor your coverage and measure results from a single platform.

It also gives you the tools to see how effectively your campaigns are generating media coverage, increasing your share of voice and driving sales.

So, start getting the most out of your comms programmes. Click the link below now to discover more about how Cision can bring your brand's newsroom into the 21st century.

DISCOVER HOW TO TRANSFORM YOUR EARNED MEDIA STRATEGY WITH THE **CISION COMMUNICATIONS CLOUD**

**FIND OUT MORE**



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Written by Solomon Radley, content marketing manager, Cision

Designed by Omar Baisar, digital designer, Cision