

# The Ultimate Guide to a Modern PR Campaign

There's a reason that the PR profession is considered one of the most stressful jobs in the world—doing it well is really, really difficult. Executing a modern PR campaign requires a huge array of tools and skill sets, ranging from research and writing chops to social media mavenry, master networking and C-Suite whispering. The siloed media landscape of even 20 years ago is LONG gone, replaced by a dynamic and cramped playing field that insists on new strategies and more sophisticated tactics.

In this e-book we'll walk you through every step of a modern PR campaign, detailing exactly how each step connects with the next (and how the Nexis Media Intelligence™ suite can elevate your work to new heights). We'll also provide some timeless communication advice and insight into what the media landscape looks like today.

Change can sometimes feel daunting, but with the right prep, planning and tools, navigating this ever evolving and ever-changing landscape can be deeply rewarding and also a lot of fun. Let's dive in.

## How Have PR Campaigns Changed?

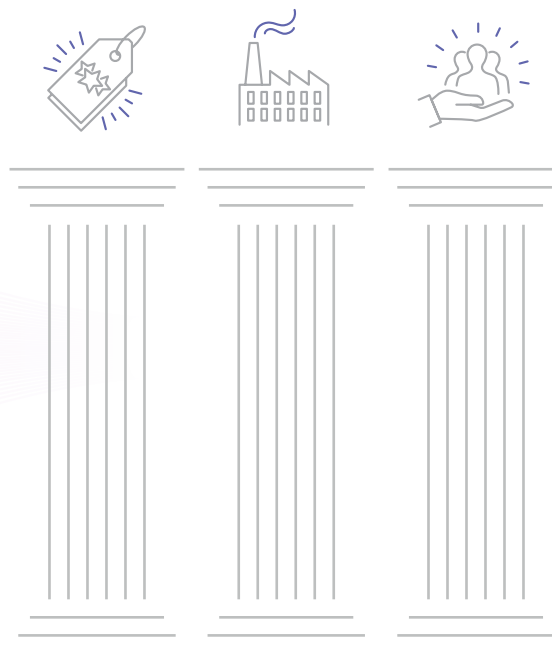
OLD-SCHOOL PR	MODERN PR
<p><b>Broad and shallow</b> Mass market research that identifies messaging and channels that provide the widest possible reach</p>	<p><b>Narrow and deep</b> Highly focused research that explores a brand's industry, competitors and target audience(s)—identifying their motivations and defining their behavior</p>
<p><b>For the masses</b> Strategic plans centered on leveraging traditional media to reach a mass audience</p>	<p><b>Hyper-targeted</b> Strategic plans laser-focused on the channels, writers, editors and influencers most likely to impact the target audience(s)</p>
<p><b>Earned media focused</b> A primary focus on earned media opportunities</p>	<p><b>Omni-channel</b> A multi-faceted, strategic mix of earned, owned and shared media, amplified via targeted ad networks</p>
<p><b>Media coverage reporting</b> Tracks and reports high-level, difficult-to-verify metrics</p>	<p><b>Media intelligence reporting</b> Translates sophisticated performance metrics correlated with business outcomes and audience feedback into meaningful insights</p>

# 1 STEP 1: Research

The best PR campaigns are rooted in a solid foundation of research. It's no longer enough to stick a few coins in an observation binocular and take a cursory look around. Instead of operating like a tourist, you need to operate as someone who has lived all your life within the landscape you're surveying. To reach that depth of knowledge you need to learn everything you can about the industry, the brand and its customers.

Ask questions. Seek to become as much of an expert as possible in the amount of time you have. In the recent past, this type of deep dive would have felt improbable. Today, media intelligence solutions make the once improbable not only possible but imperative.

## The Three Pillars of COMMUNICATION STRATEGY



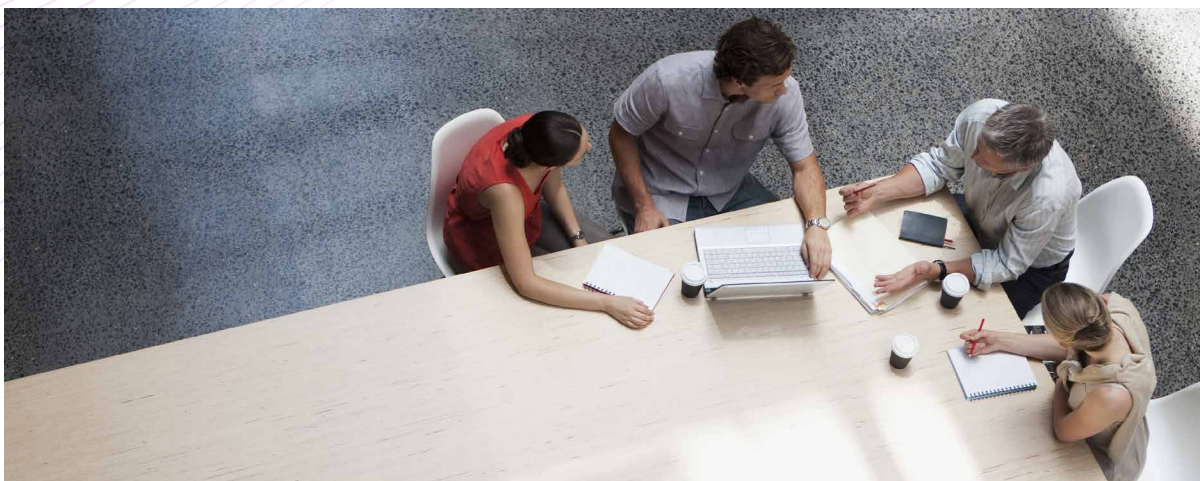
## LEARN THE LANDSCAPE

To truly understand an industry, brand and its competition, you need to do the research—that means searching through social media, blogs, comments, print media, podcasts, radio, video, television, forums/reviews and online news. An advanced media monitoring and analytics tool, such as Nexis Newsdesk™, provides insights gleaned 24/7 from nearly 100,000 news sources and 100 million social media posts from 2.5 million feeds. Nexis Newsdesk™ sifts through more than 4 million articles and social posts daily, delivering fast, filtered results so you can monitor emerging trends and benchmark the brand against competitors.

## Know the Brand

Think of your PR campaign as the most magnificent tree you've ever seen. A thorough understanding of a brand's history and current place in the market form the tree's roots. Put your investigative reporter's cap on and make a list of questions. And throughout, always consider what may be the most important question, the one that makes up the heartwood of the tree: What is the story you want to tell?

One of the simplest and most powerful ways to approach this type of brand audit is via a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis. Take an internal deep dive by looking at the brand's strengths—what it excels at and what separates it from the competition. And then look at its weaknesses—what it needs to improve in order to remain relevant and competitive. External factors that affect the brand include opportunities, such as trends, and threats, such as the competition. Delving into these areas will form the roots from which your campaign will grow.



## ? THE BRAND

### QUESTIONS TO ASK

**WHAT** is the primary objective?

**WHAT** are the existing key messages?

**ARE** the messages resonating in the media and with consumers?

**WHAT** has been tried in the past?

**WHICH** executives are the right spokespeople?

**WHAT** is the vision for the future?

**WHAT** is the story you want to tell?

## Know the Industry

Brands don't exist in a vacuum, and successful communication requires understanding the world your organization works within. Familiarize yourself with industry-specific resources and data. Get in tune with what's happening that's new and headline-making. It's also critical to know not only who the brand's competitors are but their place in the industry landscape.

### PRO TIP

The Nexis Media Intelligence™ suite allows you to conduct side-by-side media relations comparisons between companies, which is a powerful tool for investigating and visualizing how your brand stacks up with consumers emerging trends and benchmark the brand against competitors.



## ? THE INDUSTRY

### QUESTIONS TO ASK

**WHO** are the major players in the industry?

**WHAT** are the topics journalists are most interested in covering?

**WHAT** are the outlets of note?

**WHO** are the influencers?

**WHAT** direction is the industry headed?

**WHAT** are competitors doing well?

**HOW** do competitors position themselves?

**WHAT** are competitors' weaknesses?

**ARE** competitors doing anything you can borrow or need to compete with?



## Know the Customer

Some brands have one target audience, while most have several. These can be external (e.g., shoppers) or internal (e.g., employees or investors), each with its own motivations. PR pros should understand each of these audiences inside and out, and a modern campaign requires targeted, bespoke plans that reach each audience member where they live.

Consider a hot, up-and-coming tech start-up. It may have three target audiences:

- **Customers** (the consumers who are likely to use the company's product)
- **Investors** (attracting new investors and imbuing faith in existing ones is a key part of success for any start-up)
- **Potential employees** (the tech industry is locked in a never-ending battle for top talent!)

- Then consider each audience's motivations and habits:
- **Customers** will be interested in new product features and most likely to be reached via consumer-facing tech publications or via social media.
- **Investors** want to learn about fundraising\ progress, growth and new hires via trusted business resources like the Wall Street Journal.
- **Potential employees** might be best attracted via positive stories about the brand's culture, benefits and testimonials from existing talent that they come across in popular niche trade publications and forums.

That's three different media lists, three different messages and three different goals... but all the stories you tell need to ladder up to the same campaign. Think of the stories as branches, all connected to the trunk of the tree.



## THE CUSTOMER

### QUESTIONS TO ASK

**WHO** are they?

**WHAT** are their demographics?

**HOW** do they spend their time?

**WHERE** do they spend their time?

**WHAT** motivates them?

**WHAT** inspires them?

**WHAT** do you hope your PR campaign will get them to do?

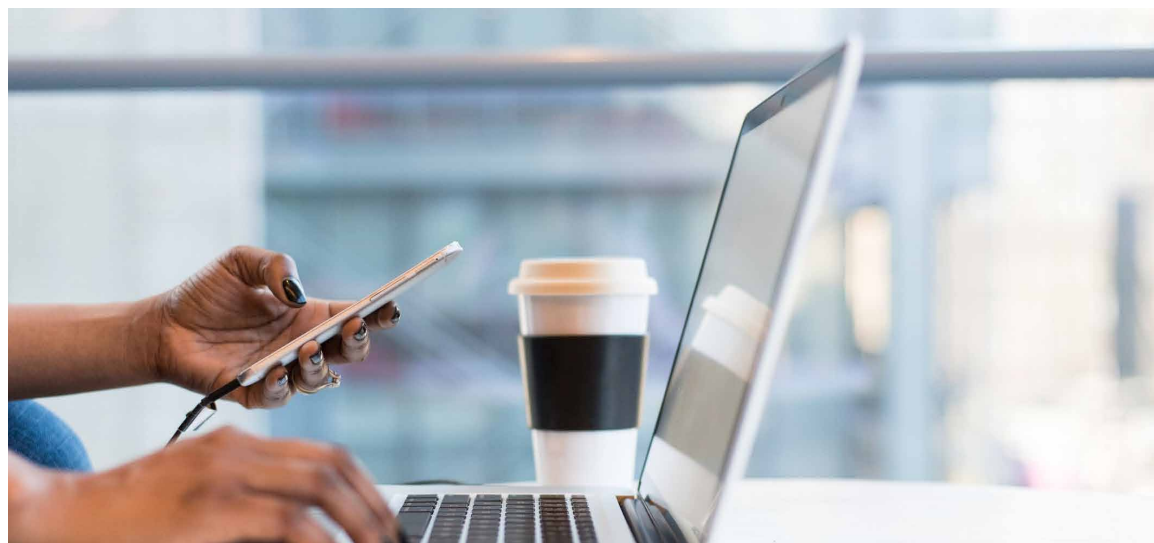
## Follow Social Media Closely

According to Statista, more than 4.26 billion people were using social media worldwide last year—a number projected to increase to almost 6 billion in 2027. And they're on it A LOT. On average, internet users spend 144 minutes per day on social media and messaging apps.

That said, you know where your brand's consumers are connecting and engaging online... and where they're likely to be tomorrow. Thankfully, your understanding of your audience will provide many clues to where to best reach them.

Younger audiences often spend countless hours on Snapchat and TikTok. Twitter tends to reach a wider age range while slightly older audiences can be found on Instagram and Facebook. LinkedIn is more commonly used for business-to-business communication.

OLD-SCHOOL RESEARCH	MODERN RESEARCH
Brand-focused	Customer-focused
Leverages broadcast ratings and distribution statistics to find the media channels with the widest possible reach	Leverages sophisticated media intelligence tools to better understand the behaviors, motivations and preferences of each target audience
Conducts one-time focus groups	Conducts ongoing social listening



## 2 STEP 2: Develop a Strategy

Once your research has laid a solid foundation, it's time to build a comprehensive, end-to-end strategy that harnesses every communication tool at your disposal. The modern campaign looks well beyond traditional media relations, leveraging a cross-channel, multifaced approach to reach the right people, in the right place, at the right time, with the right message.

### Create Key Messages

The first step is to develop key messages. Now that you fully understand your brand's current situation and future ambitions, what is it that you want to say? How do you want to say it? And what action do you want it to elicit?

Think back to your time spent looking through those observation binoculars. Where did you see whitespace that can be ownable? What messages will most stand out from the competition? What are the things your target audiences will most resonate with? It's important that these key messages be agreed upon by everyone at the very top of the organization and that anyone speaking on behalf of the brand is well drilled on how to deliver them.

### Identify Your Targets

Today's media landscape is not only fragmented but uniquely personalized to every single individual. Thanks to dozens of streaming services, targeted advertising, politically centered cable and online "news" channels and the power to curate our own social media accounts, the average consumer lives, for better or worse, in a hyper-targeted echo chamber. To break through, your strategy needs to leverage insights into your target audience(s) to understand what content they're consuming, where they're consuming it and when they're consuming it.

This starts with creating customized media list(s) that include not only the most relevant media outlets to your audience but the perfect, specially targeted media contacts who work within those outlets. Nexis Newsdesk™ makes this easy, offering the important information you need on more than 1M journalists, social media bloggers and analysts worldwide. And don't forget that no truly modern media list is complete without including the most relevant social media influencers to target for potential partnership opportunities.

### Every Channel Matters

- **Earned:** What's often considered traditional PR, earned media includes any coverage of your brand that is, well, earned. Common examples include news stories, bylined articles, executive commentary opportunities secured via newsjacking (aligning your campaign with trending news), speaking engagements, word of mouth and reviews.
- **Owned:** Any content that is owned and operated by your brand. This includes websites, blog posts, webinars, videos, podcasts, newsletters and any content marketing materials that are entirely in your control.
- **Shared:** Similar to owned, shared media exclusively refers to social media content.
- **Paid:** While a less common tactic for PR practitioners, paid media has become a growing part of the modern campaign. This includes traditional and digital ad buys, but also sponsored content, advertorials, native advertising, search engine ads, social media advertising and more. Influencer marketing has become a significant piece of the paid media pie—something that is falling more and more into communication pros' camps



### Map an Omnichannel Plan of Attack

With these messages in place, it's time to determine the right channels and tactics to spread them far and wide. Your strategy should consider how earned, owned, shared and paid media efforts can complement and amplify one another. What are the tactics that will most resonate with your target audiences?

### Set (Measurable!) Goals and Objectives

Every campaign has a unique purpose—reputation building, education, awareness, increased sales, investor relations, etc. What are you hoping to achieve with yours? Think back to when you were researching the brand. You now know the story you want to tell. How is your PR campaign going to help you tell it?

When talking about goals generally, consider breaking it down further by identifying goals and objectives. Goals detail what you want to achieve. Objectives detail how you're going to achieve them. Goals tend to be broader and speak to the brand's vision and mission. Objectives have deadlines and Known Performance Indicators (KPIs). They are often detailed and more easily attained. It may take several objectives to achieve a goal.

Measuring a campaign's impact has been one of the industry's biggest challenges for decades, but the growth of digital metrics that can track a consumer's path to purchase has made it a bit easier.

### The Barcelona Principles

The Barcelona Principles were first introduced by the International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communications (AMEC) in 2010, as a consensus on measurement and evaluation. Due to the rapidly evolving landscape, they have been revised two times since, most recently in July 2020. Following is AMEC's overview of the Barcelona Principles 3.0:

- Setting goals is an absolute prerequisite to communication planning, measurement and evaluation.
- Measurement and evaluation should identify outputs, outcomes and potential impact.
- Outcomes and impact should be identified for stakeholders, society and the organization.
- Communication measurement and evaluation should include both qualitative and quantitative analysis.
- AVEs are not the value of communication.
- Holistic communication measurement and evaluation includes all relevant online and offline channels.
- Communication measurement and evaluation are rooted in integrity and transparency to drive learning and insights.



A well-written press release distributed via a newswire no longer cuts it. Today's marketplace requires an omnichannel campaign that's authentic, relevant, targeted and personalized, with many moving parts.”

**Tom Biddle** – General Manager Media Intelligence, LexisNexis

To truly show the value of your work, focus on SMART objectives, which The Barcelona Principles 3.0 considers an “essential prerequisite” to communication planning. Use them to achieve your goals and objectives.

- **Specific:** What is your objective?
- **Measurable:** How are you going to measure its success?
- **Actionable:** How are you going to achieve your objective?
- **Relevant:** How does the objective tie in (to the brand, a current trend, the story you’re trying to tell)?
- **Time-bound:** What is the deadline?

**Keep Time in Mind**

Timing is everything when it comes to successful PR, and rightfully so. For every award-winning campaign, there are thousands of great ideas that never got off the ground because they were buried under a breaking news story, launched too early or were rolled out during a period when their audience’s attention was focused elsewhere.

And the same is true for the timing of individual tactics. For large organizations, a successful PR campaign will likely require coordination and collaboration with other internal departments to ensure everyone’s goals and objectives are timed appropriately.

**PRO TIP**

Keep in mind that every brand and/or industry has important days (major holidays, conferences, etc.) can increase or decrease your odds of a win—especially in terms of earned media. You may also consider piggybacking off a countless array of fun-yet-gimmicky holidays throughout the year to secure coverage. These include everything from National Creative Ice Cream Flavors Day to National Dog Day.

OLD-SCHOOL STRATEGY	MODERN STRATEGY
Broad, national media lists	Niche, audience-specific influencer lists
One message track with mass appeal	Multiple message tracks with personalized appeal
Earned media	Earned, owned, shared and paid media
Broad, loosely defined goals	Measurable SMART objectives

### 3 STEP 3: Activate

Now that your strategy is in place, you're ready to tell your brand's story and engage directly with your audience.

#### Create!

With the framework set and the roots in place, it's time to create all of the stuff that will help spread your campaign far and wide. These materials should fulfill the needs of your campaign's objectives, which in turn will help you achieve your goals.

- **Press materials:** This may include news releases, an online media kit that's easy to update, share and customize, fact sheets, infographics, videos, targeted pitches and more.
- **Social medial content calendars:** A structured and well-organized overview of upcoming social media content that is regularly updated and available to all stakeholders is essential. This should be as detailed as possible, taking advantage of the unique, individual features of each channel (for example: Instagram Stories, Facebook Live, LinkedIn posts etc.).

- **Owned media content as appropriate:** This may include a new or updated website, blog posts, podcasts and thought leadership.

#### Earned Media Outreach

Once you've completed your media materials, thoughtful distribution is paramount to a successful campaign. Today, audiences are inundated with information, and it can be all too easy for your story—no matter how brilliant or beautifully told—to get lost in the crowd. So how does one stand out? Through a combination of broad and targeted outreach.

- **News release distribution:** The traditional news release is still around for one simple reason: it works! Today's news cycle moves at an absurd rate, and journalists rely on releases to keep on top of their beat's biggest news stories as they're breaking.
- **Targeted one-to-one pitches:** While news releases are great for achieving a wide reach, targeted, customized and personalized pitches are one of PR pros' most effective tools for earning press coverage. Pro tip: distribution

services like Nexis Newswire® now allow you to track opens and click-throughs within individual messages, allowing you to glean who is most interested in your pitches (or when it's time to go back to the drawing board on a specific angle).

- **Strategic follow-ups:** Nexis Newsdesk™ includes tools that help you identify journalists covering (or not covering) your campaign, gain insights into their style and activity and contact them to shape and share the message. Whenever you see an article of interest, you can click on the journalist's name to open a Journalist Card that provides all their relevant information. Sending customized pitches to the journalists you know are interested in your campaign is a great way to spread your messages even further.



### Amplify Your Campaign Through Paid Media

It bears repeating: no modern PR campaign is complete without some paid media support to get your message in front of the right audience. That's why wire services are increasingly offering paid media amplification.

For example, Nexis® Newswire helps you drive the *right* traffic to your news releases and announcements, as well as distribute your news releases and announcements to high-traffic sites within the Google Ads network. You also can monitor how your news releases are performing. Key features allow you to:

- **Maximize your ROI:** Run a paid Google ad promoting your news release on up to five premium sites.
- **Target the right audience:** Target any country, state, city, and zip or postal code worldwide, and/or audiences based on different demographics. News releases can be published in up to nine different languages.
- **Analyze your results:** In just 24 hours you can check out a report showing you the number of clicks and the exact number of people who saw your news release. Social pick-up is also reported.

OLD-SCHOOL TACTICS	MODERN TACTICS
News releases issued via a traditional wire service	News releases turbo-boosted via targeted digital ads
“Spray and pray” pitching	Targeted, personalized pitching
Press conferences	Social media announcements
Newspaper and broadcast features	Blog and podcast features
Celebrity endorsements	Influencer campaigns



## 4 STEP 4: Monitor and Refine

Once your work is live in the wild, that doesn't mean the job is done. Modern PR campaigns are living, breathing things, with feedback incoming from a range of sources. And much like trees need sunlight, air and water to grow, your campaign needs data, analysis and refinement in order to flourish.

These efforts should go far beyond old-school media monitoring, correlating media coverage with key business outcomes and offering a deeper level of analysis and actionable insights. At LexisNexis we call this media intelligence. Let's explore the basics of a modern media intelligence program.

### Prepare Before You Launch

A little pre-launch legwork can help maximize the efficiency of your monitoring efforts. In your media intelligence software, create campaign-specific searches that go beyond mentions of your brand name to capture other important information like hashtags and taglines.

For example, tracking coverage for Nike's 50th Anniversary campaign wouldn't be complete without keeping an eye on coverage that referenced the "Never Done" mantra that was used in all the brand's ads, press releases and marketing materials.

### Track Coverage

When tracking coverage, you need a media intelligence solution that can provide you with answers to these critical questions:

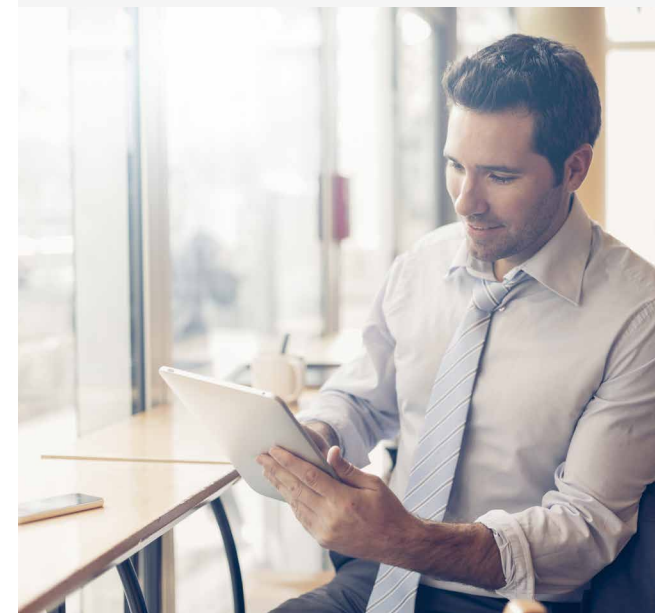
- How much coverage have you achieved?
- Where is coverage the coming from (including channels and geography)?
- What's the sentiment?
- Is it positive, negative or neutral?

Nexis Newsdesk™ offers global media intelligence for all media types and channels, including proprietary licensed content, forums and reviews, social media, comments, podcasts, video, blogs, print media, radio, television and online news. Even better, the new Insights feature automatically visualizes the most important data in a handy exportable format.

## Research Anywhere with the Nexis Newsdesk™ Mobile App

Today's media landscape can change quickly, requiring instant, around-the-clock access to breaking news and data.

The new Nexis Newsdesk™ mobile app offers intuitive media monitoring from anywhere, which means you can assess and understand what's being said about the brand as your campaign moves forward.





### Social Listening

Social media is one of the busiest and loudest channels where your brand is discussed. That can make it difficult to stay on top of, but the realtime feedback on your efforts—directly from your target audiences—makes the effort well worth it. You should be mindful of not just how your key messages are resonating, but which individual tactics are making the most impact. Lean heavily into what's landing, and if you see something that isn't working? Fix it fast.

### Media Coverage Reports

Even the most successful campaigns can go underappreciated by key stakeholders if the results aren't packaged and delivered in a compelling way.

That's why the final step to effective media intelligence is to convert the data and learnings you collect into high-level yet actionable evaluation and insights. Most often, this means making the most persuasive case to the C-Suite possible through a combination of sound media measurement and evaluation, the right business language, and creative analytics and reporting.

For in-the-moment updates, consider creating a dashboard within your media monitoring platform that allows your team and key stakeholders to keep track of performance in real-time. For frequent but not-quite live updates, Newsdesk also allows you to schedule a media coverage newsletter that automatically distributes coverage featuring your brand and/or key campaign terms.

### Listen to What's Out There with Nexis® Social Analytics

Bring focus to your social listening by filtering out the noise to hear the conversations that matter most to the brand. Nexis® Social Analytics, powered by Talkwalker, offers real-time monitoring of more than 150 million websites in 187 languages across 196 countries. Using visual and text analytics on a single platform you can quickly and easily listen to what's being said about the brand on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram, Vimeo, LinkedIn, Pinterest and more.

more than

**150** MILLION websites  
in **187** languages  
across **196** countries

**Refine**

The modern communication landscape is always changing, with new platforms and trends developing at a moment's notice. What that means is that no truly modern PR campaign is ever perfect. The impact of individual messages, tactics and content should not just be tracked in real-time but adapted to account for how they play out in the real world. Ask yourself: Is your key message not driving social media conversations like you hoped? It might be time to adjust it. Are reporters not interested in the angles you're pitching? It's time to try something else.

A lot is asked of communication professionals these days. But still, at the heart of the work is telling the brand's story. And you need time to focus on that: telling a story that's authentic and relevant, and one that can cut through all the other stories to reach the brand's ideal audience on the ideal channels. By adding Nexis Media Intelligence™ to your toolkit, you can spend less time looking for the right audience, channels and media contacts, and more time crafting the perfect pieces of marketing. We'll lay down the roots so you can grow the tree. And what a beauty it will be.

**Go Deeper with Nexis® Media Intelligence Research and Analytics**

Deep, meaningful media intelligence reporting takes time, which is why the knowledgeable Nexis® Media Intelligence Research and Analytics team is there to serve as an expert extension of your team when you need an extra set of hands. Our team can quickly tackle labor intensive projects like curated newsletters and custom analysis reports.

OLD-SCHOOL REPORTING	MODERN REPORTING
Press clippings	Real-time campaign dashboards
Single number assessing a campaign's reach	Actionable campaign insights assessing a campaign's impact
One and done	Ongoing refinements based on real-time results



## Interested in how LexisNexis can help improve your next PR campaign?

You can start searching Nexis Newsdesk™ today, gaining access to local and global news, and company and executive data, with a free, seven-day trial, [here](#).

For more information about products and pricing for Nexis Media Intelligence™, request a consultation by completing our online form or call **1-888-466-3947**.

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