AN INTRODUCTION TO

PR and Communications Strategy

strategy outcomes

CONTENTS

Chapter 1
WHAT IS PR?

Although it may be obvious, Public Relations (PR) as a discipline is shifting along with the landscapes in which they work. While it is not immune to disruption, at it's core PR or 'Communications' remains a multidisciplinary field, focused on developing and executing key messaging that's aligned to a clearly defined outcome. This includes media relations, thought leadership, crisis communication, financial or investor relations, corporate social responsibility, amongst other things.

In helping to position your business as a leader in a respective field, PR should be an important part of your marketing and communications strategy.

Interestingly, the dividing lines between the communications and marketing function are starting to blur as more companies rely on the insights derived from data and analysis to build an integrated MarComms strategy. No matter the structure of your business or team, this document should help guide you through key aspects that need to be covered in developing you traditional or more integrated strategy.

Chapter 2

UNDERSTANDING THE MEDIA

The global media environment today is complex, fragmented and constant. The media is no longer the exclusive domain of traditional news publishers, and as communicators, we must remain vigilant and be mindful that independent sites, influencers, brands and consumers are all contributing to a 24/7 media cycle.

The window to respond quickly and effectively to any story or subject matter is getting smaller. Social media has become a primary source of news, and the public is, more often than not, forming an opinion before engaging with reputable or credible journalistic analysis.

Across the world, there has been a steady decline in full-time and experienced journalists writing for media outlets. But while this landscape paints a dark picture, there remains a bright side. There is now an opportunity for brands to create their own content, guide conversations, influence stakeholders and deliver points of view that cut through the noise and directly communicates with their target audience.

What makes news – defining 'newsworthy'

News can be defined as *"newsworthy information about recent events or happenings, especially as reported by news media". But what makes a story newsworthy?* While every news media company has its own editorial guidelines, there are typically five universal factors that determine whether a story is newsworthy: timing; significance and relevance; proximity; prominence; and human interest. When an editor or journalist needs to decide whether to run with a particular story, they will likely assess it against these criteria. It's not to say all stories have to meet all of these, but a good story will likely be strong in at least two categories. The competitive spirit is alive and well in news media. If it's a huge news day with a number of big stories breaking, stories of a lesser priority will be dropped – even if they meet the above criteria. While some stories can be delayed until a new slot becomes available, time sensitive stories are often dropped permanently.

Timing

The word news means exactly that things which are 'new'. Topics which are current are good news. Audiences are used to receiving the latest updates, so old news is quickly discarded.

A story with only average interest needs to be told quickly if it is to be told at all. If it happened today, it's news. If the same thing happened last week, it's 'stale news' and no longer interesting.

Significance and relevance

The number of people affected by the story is important – the more people, the better the story. For example, an income tax increase may, at first sight, seem the basis of a dull article – but it has impact, because it will affect many people's pockets.

A story always has to be relevant to the audience, which in turn dictates what media outlets are interested.

For example, The Australian Financial Review might consider a story about changes to income tax, but Vogue probably won't.

Proximity

Stories which happen near to us have more significance. The closer the story is to home, the more newsworthy it is. For someone living in Taiwan, a major plane crash in New Zealand has a similar news value to a small plane crash near Taipei.

It's important to note that proximity doesn't explicitly mean geographical distance. Stories from countries with which we have a particular bond or similarity have the same effect. For example, many Australians would still be expected to relate more to a story from the United Kingdom than a story from a much closer Asian country.

Prominence

Whether we like it or not, famous or influential people get more coverage because they are, well…famous. The same goes for famous places, companies and groups.

If you break your arm it won't make the news, but if the President of the USA breaks their arm it's huge news.

Similarly, the press love instances of prominent figures betraying their own publicly-stated positions or falling from grace. Examples include the councillor who takes bribes, the anti-firearms politician who gets caught at the firing range and the chairman of an animal rights group who's seen buying caged eggs are all likely candidates for a news story.

Human interest

Human interest stories are a bit of a special case. They often disregard the main rules of newsworthiness; for example, they don't date as quickly, they need not affect a large number of people, and it may not matter where in the world the story takes place – but they have to be unique.

Human interest stories appeal to emotion. They aim to evoke responses such as amusement or sadness. Television news programs often place a humorous or quirky story at the end of the show to finish on a feel-good note. Newspapers often have a dedicated area for offbeat or interesting items.

Stories about people or organisations at odds with each other or overcoming some kind of conflict are more likely to receive coverage. Conflict has drama. Drama generates interest.

Chapter 4

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has changed the manner and form in which people communicate with one another and with organisations.

Social media has also changed the way we use and access the internet and has helped to drive the exponential increase in internet access from mobile devices. We use it to network professionally and connect with colleagues. We access social media from the first thing in the morning, and throughout the day, with many of us checking our social channels as the last thing we do before we go to bed.

Social media channels have historically been viewed only as vague advertising and promotional tools. However, the application of Social media is changing as organisations increasingly recognise their growing use within other areas of the value chain, specifically into feedback and customer service.

Most organisations recognise the need to participate and become engaged. However, for many, high uncertainty surrounds what to do, how to go about it and how to manage conversations once they commence.

Adopting a dedicated approach to social media is critical for organisations to develop the required level of direct conversations with their target audiences and achieve their desired communications outcomes. It is also an effective way to mitigate online risks.

A comprehensive social media strategy for your brand, and an engagement strategy through social channels should include:

- Setting social media objectives and goals
- The creation of social channel brand personas
- Competitor reviews
- Listening to the social conversations in the market
- Channel selection
- Made-for-social content planning and calendars
- Risk mitigation policy
- Campaign creation
- Amplification strategies
- Social measurement and reporting tactics, and
- Social benchmarking.

Meaningful relationships through social channels

To succeed, today's organisations and brands need to converse directly with stakeholders and customers in a way that both entertains and adds value.

As customer expectations increase, it becomes ever more time-consuming to manage a quality social media presence – depending on your needs you may need a team of social media strategists and social media community managers who have extensive experience cultivating online communities or look for a hybrid social media manager who can cover all your needs.

Depending on those needs, you will have to consider your presence across all major social media platforms, including:

Facebook   LinkedIn   Twitter   YouTube

Instagram   Snapchat   WeChat   Weibo

Ideally, your organisation will take a strategic content marketing approach to community management, devoting significant time to social listening and real-time engagement, allowing your organisation to deliver unique content that your target audience values.

The end result for your organisation should be social media content that excites and motivates action, increases brand reach, improves brand advocacy and elevates traffic and conversions on owned assets. Whichever social media platforms your strategy includes, a complete social media community management strategy should encompass:

- Social listening and key influencer identification
- Channel development, optimisation and effective moderation
- Made-for-social content creation such as competitions, memes, trend monitoring and GIF creation
- Real-time triage for issue escalation, resolution and management
- Paid social media campaigns and segment targeting, and
- Cross-channel social media strategy management.

Chapter 5

DEVELOPING YOUR STRATEGY

Understanding your organisation is one thing, however, before outlining your strategy, it's best to do additional research to understand external factors that can help identify opportunities, navigate around threats, outline competitor gaps and be used to inform priorities or objectives alongside market and business timelines. This research should be regularly reviewed to benchmark performance and ensure that the information is current.

Once you've compiled your research and conversed with stakeholders across the organisation, the strategy you develop should look specifically at how your organisation aims to raise its profile through the media. It should also sit alongside your digital strategy to ensure your business presence is built both through social channels and online in general terms.

Write a purpose statement

In simple terms it often helps to set out a simple statement of intent or purpose for your strategy which helps ensure that your key stakeholders understand immediately what you are trying to achieve. In addition, a good purpose statement will keep your strategy on track as you develop it as it acts as a reference and reminder of what you are trying to achieve. Some simple ideas may be:

• Reposition brand X to be…

• Ensure that our stakeholders are fully aware of our environmental credentials

• Launch product Y and create X number of sales in the first quarter

Determine your public relations goals

Any strategy needs a clear set of objectives to determine what you are trying to achieve and importantly, whether you achieve what you set out to accomplish. Objectives are different from the purpose in that they need to be more specific, are typically shorter term and have to be measurable. Try to write your goals using the mnemonic SMART, which stands for: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timed.

These goals can be as few or as many as you need, just try to ensure that they are consistent with your organisation's overall mission and objectives – your PR strategy should not be a standalone document.

Identify and manage internal stakeholders

It is always important to align the thinking of key internal stakeholders/groups to ensure both buy in to your strategy, but also support for the messaging. When outlining your approach to the stakeholders you should:

Be clear when explaining your approach to ensure you clearly define who will be affected or can affect its success, and be clear, especially when you have many stakeholders, which ones are the most important:

• Be clear on their expectations to ensure that until you know what's in it for them

• Aim to capture their 'hearts and minds' and not just their generic support, and

• A wholehearted support of your strategy will make a real difference to its implementation.

With regard to stakeholder identification, you may need to consider:

- Executive or senior management
- Key spokespeople i.e. subject matter experts
- Colleagues in marketing or communications roles, and/or
- Colleagues in sales, customer services or other frontline roles.

It may also be useful at this stage to identify who you might need to act as a spokesperson for your strategy and what, if any, media training they may require.

Agree your current situation

At this stage, determine which target audience groups you need to communicate with and ask, for example:

- Who are they?
- Where do they gather their news?
- Are they active in digital or social channels?
- How much do they know about your organisation, product or service?
- Are they supporters or wary of your organisation?
- Do you have any natural supporters or any issues you may need to address?

You might find it useful at this stage to undertake a PEST analysis. PEST, in this in stance stands for: Political, Environmental, Socio-cultural and Technological. Analysing your wider environment from this perspective may identify potential opportunities or weaknesses in your approach or strategy.

Create your communications objectives

Think in terms of the end result you desire, not the process. When communicating with your audience, write objectives in terms of specific results you desire, and what you think is possible.

Each objective should cite an audience, outcome, attainment level (%) and time frame. Consider how should your organization, product, issue, or cause be perceived by your audience. Make sure your objectives are SMART:

- Specific

- Measurable

- Attainable

- Relevant, and

- Timely.

The last and arguably most important consideration for your objectives, is to ensure they are linked to your organisational objectives.

 It is often too easy to draft objectives which are important from a communications perspective, but don't necessarily match the organisations wider strategy.

Confirm key messages

Getting your message right is a critical to managing a successful communications strategy. In simple terms, you can't stay on message if you don't know what those messages are – or more importantly, your team or your spokespeople don't know what they are either.

There are lots of formats you might choose for your messaging, but whichever you choose, ensure they are:

- Clear

- Concise, and

- Consistent.

Crisis communications

Obviously, when you approach a communications strategy you hope that nothing goes wrong!

However, it's always better to be prepared and to have a crisis management plan ready just in case. The communications professional who doesn't plan for a crisis is the one who has never lived through a crisis.

Everyone has their preferred approach, but an easy to follow 12 Golden Rules approach, created by the Forbes Agency Council, is as follows:

1. Take responsibility
2. Be proactive, be transparent and be accountable
3. Get ahead of the story
4. Be ready for social media backlash
5. First apologise and the take action
6. First try and fully understand the situation
7. Monitor, plan and communicate
8. Listen to your team
9. Develop strong organisational brand culture
10. If there's something in it – turn off the fan
11. Avoid knee jerk reactions
12. Be prepared

For more information visit Forbes here.

Finalise a budget

It's the bit no one likes to do, but make sure you create and manage to an agreed budget, otherwise its difficult to justify a successful outcome and impossible to show any ROI.

Measuring and evaluating success

Sometimes it's difficult to see the bigger picture when you're stuck in the detail. So to determine what success looks like and how to best scope what's next, you may want to consider a greater degree of evaluation and analysis, which may, amongst other things, allow you to:

- Demonstrate your effectiveness

- Refine your communications strategy and prove your success

- Establish benchmarks

- Track improvements and trends over time

- Formulate the right key performance indicators for your organisation, contextually within your category or industry

- Understand your landscape

- Highlight the risks and opportunities for your organisation or brand to ensure that you can move into new markets, rebrand, launch or improve existing strategy with confidence

- Manage your response to breaking issues

- Report to your stakeholders accurately and quickly to gain strategic advantage and help contain or control the story.

See also Chapter's 7 and 8 of this document for more information on media measurement and evaluation.

Strategy on a page (SOAP)

Finally, consider creating a Strategy On A Page (SOAP) to help illustrate and describe your approach to key stakeholders. Everyone in your organisation will be busy and may will not allocate enough time to read and digest a detailed strategy document, which is where a simple, one page overview allows people to get to the key constituent parts quickly and in an easy to digest format.

More information on the structure and creation of a SOAP is shown in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6
STRATEGY ON A PAGE

Vision	What is the vision for you organisation and how will your PR/communications strategy bring it to life
Brand values	What are the core values of your brand and how do you want them described?
Storytelling	Outline how your organisation will tell stories. Be relevant and unique whenever possible. Keep things simple when you can and respond to change. Maximise your owned channels and the amplification they can bring to your communications.

	Strategic imperatives one	**Strategic imperatives two**
Strategic imperatives	• How many strategies can you deliver against? • Which strategic imperatives are most likely to achieve your objectives? • How does your strategy interlock with your colleagues in other departments? • Do you have the access to all the channels you need to deliver on your strategic intent?	• Describe the core strategic imperatives of your plan • What are you trying to achieve? • Who are you trying to influence? • What does success look like?

	Tactic three	**Tactic four**
Tactics	• What are the key tactics you plan to employ to achieve your strategic imperatives? • How will you distribute your messages? • How will you monitor the results you achieve? • How will you analyse those results? • What does success look like?	• How many tactics can you realistically achieve? • What are the resources you'll require? • What budget does each tactical implementation require?

Chapter 7

NEWS STORY CHECKLIST

When you're thinking about how you might be able to help communicate a new initiative, product, hire or win to your market, the following questions should help you decide what you need to know, what you're trying to achieve and what success looks like.

- ○ What is being announced? (Who? What? Where? When? Why? And how?)

- ○ Why is it important, and why should people care? (Has it been announced/referenced internally/externally? If so where?)

- ○ Why is it important, and why should people care? (Why are we doing this activity? What's in it for us? What benefit do we have to gain? And is it worth the effort?)

- ○ Describe this story in less than 10 words. (Write your ideal headline)

- ○ What is your unique point of view? (What's your vision? What proof points do we have to support our position? What's our point of difference?)

- ○ Are you talking about anything that's relevant outside your organisation or market? (Is what you're announcing only exciting to you, or is it exciting to others?)

- ○ The target audience/s for the activity and the behaviour or perception change required. (What is the demographic/psychographic profile of our core primary/secondary audience and what is it we want them to do, think or feel differently?)

- ○ How you'll measure the success or effectiveness of the activity. (What are the hard and soft measures? Can you be more specific about 'coverage' i.e. where and targeted at who? Can we create our own KPIs and benchmarks?)

- ○ The key milestones you're working towards.

Chapter 7

MEDIA MONITORING AND MEDIA INTELLIGENCE

Data is driving the agendas of most organisations and by 2025 global data volumes will grow to 163ZB (that is a trillion gigabytes).

Data is all around us but at the moment, less than 0.5% of the data generated is categorised and analysed. Every second of every day we create new data. We perform 40,000 search queries every second on Google alone, for example, which makes 3.5 million searches per day or 1.2 trillion every year

We are seeing and experiencing, and creating, huge volumes of analysable data every day and wider environmental forces will continue to change the data we create:

• Audiences are changing

• Society is changing

• Technology is changing, and

• The business landscape is changing.

Some of this data is relevant to organisations, most isn't, but finding the signal in the noise is the key to great data gathering and media analysis.

With increasing complexity in the media landscape, comes an increased need for accurate, timely and relevant media data, analysis and insight.

Reduced print circulations are leading to fewer journalists being employed in newsrooms around the world. Speed of publication is being driven by digital platforms and digital aggregation which are changing both the platform and the devices we consume news through.

Even so, ideally you want to know exactly what's in the news before everyone else knows, or even get a wrap up of the day's events on your way home to make sure you didn't miss anything. Try not to wait to be asked what's happening, make sure you have this information at your fingertips as and when you need it, across whichever device is more convenient for you.

In simple terms, media monitoring is the process of reading or watching media items, either manually or through machine intervention, to identify key items of interest to your organisation. Many organisation's will outsource this component of their media requirement to a specialist service provider.

There are a range of options available to your organisation with regards to the monitoring of your brands, products, services, organisation or spokespeople when it comes to media coverage, but the key is to ensure that you are not surprised by a piece of media coverage and indeed – forewarned is often forearmed.

In addition, many organisations develop a greater understanding of their wider environment or the key opportunities and risks for their organisation by seeking media intelligence from the key issues and drivers impacting their stakeholders. This approach demonstrates the depth and breadth of media intelligence which extends from monitoring through analysis to predictive analysis.

At Isentia, we've reinvented media intelligence – to make it more than a measurement tool. We call it real data intelligence.

Real data intelligence is centred on our clients – creating value for their organisation by informing their decision-making with data, and shaping their conversations with highly impactful analysis and media insights.

Powered by industry-leading technology and inspired by our team of world class experts, our vision is to help your organisation leap forward.

Technology is crucial, but relationships are everything.

We have the platforms that make managing and getting value from media data easier, but we're equally invested in understanding your organisation and your goals to develop a relationship that goes beyond the day to day.

Our primary aims for our business are based on the best possible service for the organisations we work with and we consider that:

- We lead our industry
- We are powered by technology
- We're inspired by people
- We develop unique, market led services and
- We are client centric.

Isentia's primary media intelligence services include:

Intelligence and analysis

Information without insight is noise. Insight without action is useless. That's why we've reinvented media intelligence to make it more than a measurement tool. We call it real data intelligence.

But data alone is not as valuable as the insight derived from it and our analytics software includes a range of delivery, viewing and reporting options that allow you to delve into your media coverage and discover the insight within the noise.

Stories

To cut through the noise and run computations that have never before been possible, we have introduced Stories, our first product to run media analytics through a machine learning led approach.

Connect

Our Connect module empowers you to link your organisation and content to the most appropriate influencers. Connect also provides comprehensive press release distribution services that ensure your messages get to the right journalists at the right time.

Insights

Our analysis delivers either quantitative or qualitative insight into your media data and as we have the most comprehensive coverage, you get the complete picture of your organisation's and your competitors' media profiles.

Alerting

When you need to know, you really need to know and our media alerting uses all platforms and devices as well as our market leading account management teams to ensure that you hear the news you need to hear – first.

Daily Briefings

The media never sleeps, and neither do we. Our early morning daily briefings team is up and busy before the sun rises, making sure you're informed of the day's media landscape before your day starts.

Social media measurement

It's difficult to your improve results without learning from the way your target audience engages with your content. By undertaking ongoing performance analysis and reporting, you develop valuable insights, which drive real business outcomes.

In outline terms you will need to monitor all facets of your social media content, including:

- Engagement with your brand's social media content including likes, shares, comments, embeds

- Follower growth and demographics

- Persona measurement and qualification

- Performance of the content in driving traffic back to owned assets

- Which types of content are generating the most social engagement and why

- Conversion rates from followers to subscribers, and

- Results of paid amplification.

Chapter 8

MEDIA EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS

Sometimes it's difficult to see the bigger picture when you're stuck in the detail. So to determine what success looks like and how to best scope what's next, you may want to consider a greater degree of evaluation and analysis, which may, amongst other things, allow you to:

- Demonstrate your effectiveness

- Refine your communications strategy and prove your success

- Establish benchmarks

- Track improvements and trends over time

- Formulate the right key performance indicators for your organisation, contextually within your category or industry

- Understand your landscape

- Highlight the risks and opportunities for your organisation or brand to ensure that you can move into new markets, rebrand, launch or improve existing strategy with confidence

- Manage your response to breaking issues, and

- Report to your stakeholders accurately and quickly to gain strategic advantage and help contain or control the story.

Media coverage analysis

The explosion of data is nothing new and tracking performance, not only for your organisation but the trends that are happening inside, outside and in the wider environment, have become daunting.

Quantitative, media coverage analysis should streamline that volume of data into reports that provide instantly comparable and easy to understand metrics that enable you to plan ahead and evaluate performance across all media types and channels.

The more comprehensive your coverage, the more complete the picture of your media profile, as well as your competitors, which is ideal for campaign analysis, competitor research, event performance, crisis reporting, brand tracking or simply staying on top of what's happening in your industry.

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How do you reveal the truth behind the noise to see the whole picture? How do you ensure that you understand the effectiveness of your campaigns, strategy and business decisions?

Our in-depth qualitative analysis can help you identify the factors driving certain trends or patterns affecting your business.

We provide you with an understanding of where the media sits in your organisation's ecosystem, and what those magic metrics are that give you real insight - enabling you to capture more of your target market.

Media analysis insights

In-depth qualitative analysis could help you identify the factors driving certain trends, enabling you to capture more of your organisations target market.

In many ways, big data is the perfect embodiment of the information age. Across Asia Pacific and around the world, organisations operating within a range of sectors are collecting trillions of ones and zeroes that measure just about every metric imaginable.

What's more, this trend looks set to grow. However, collecting data for the sake of it is largely pointless, and organisations need to think carefully about how they can extract meaningful value from it in order to justify their investments. For example, while quantitative analysis is useful in the manufacturing space, industries that are a little more nuanced – such as the communications sector – will often require a different tact.

This is where qualitative media analysis comes in. Whereas quantitative analytics are focussed on the 'what', qualitative analytics are featured on the 'why'. Essentially this means that the former is focussed on identifying patterns in the data, while the latter is centred on identifying the factors driving these trends. Garnering greater insight into the reasons behind why your communications efforts are or aren't working can help you capture more of your target audience and bring more visibility to your brand, business or organisation.

Insights might include, for example, identification of a gap left by competitors, an opportunity to seize thought-leadership on an emerging issue, a likely legislative initiative based on patterns of political comment, or a mood swing among stakeholders that can be productively addressed at an early stage.
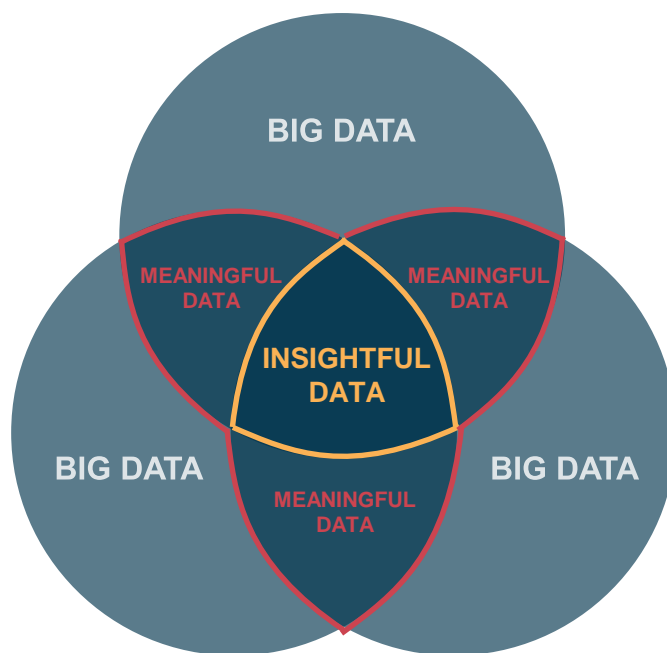
WORKING WITH AN AGENCY PARTNER

You may not need to work with an agency to achieve your goals, but just in case you haven't worked with a PR agency before, the following outlines some hints and tips which might help should you find yourself employing agency support.

Get to know each other

Please spend some time to meet your agency contact and get to know them and their team. Equally, you have chosen to partner with them, so let them know what we're doing and why we're doing it.

Communicate

Communication starts with the first meeting and continues throughout the relationship. Please share your goals and expectations with your agency early on to help them achieve your PR objectives. The team can do great things if they are in the loop. So, if you're in any doubt, here are a few things that are always good to communicate.

- Upcoming product announcements

- New hires

- New partnerships or big client wins

- Award wins

- Upcoming events or tradeshows you are attending or hosting

- Interesting things that are happening within your industry, and

- Anything else you think could possibly be relevant to the media.

Provide feedback

Please give your agency contact as much feedback as you can and specifically around results their work might have achieved, for example whether the coverage is moving the dial with web traffic, conversions, sales, etc. If you're getting owned or earned coverage that isn't helping your business they need to know.

They can change their strategy relatively quickly if they know what we know. Also, it's always nice to give them a "good job" or "this is awesome" and it's always nice to say "thanks" every once in a while.

Thank you

Isentia (ASX:ISD) is APAC's leading integrated Media Intelligence and Insights business, empowering nearly 4,000 clients in 12 locations to connect the dots between data and decisions. Isentia blends market-leading monitoring experience with analytics to help the world's biggest brands uncover the whole picture – and act on it.

Powered by cutting-edge technology and a team of world class experts, our mission is to help businesses leap forward where only genuine insight can take them. To find out more about how we inform better decisions, please visit www.isentia.com

We understand that creating your PR and Communications Strategy is no simple task and sometimes you need help. Discover our services and contact the team for more information around how we can help support you.

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