

CIPR

CHARTERED INSTITUTE
OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

#PR2017

Insight and trends impacting
UK public relations

PROFESSIONAL
STANDARDS
—
cipr.co.uk

CPD  5

#PR2017 is worth 5 CPD Points

Contents

Sectors

Construction & Property	4
Education & Skills	5
Not-for-Profit	6
Public Affairs	7
Health & Medical	8
Internal Communications	9
International	10
Local Public Services	11
Marcomms	12
STEM	13

Nations and Regions

Wales	14
Northern Ireland	15
Scotland	16
Channel Islands	17
East Anglia	18
Greater London	19
Midlands	20
North East	21
North West	22
South West	23
Wessex	24

Foreword



Jason MacKenzie Found. Chart.
PR, FCIPR
CIPR President 2017

2016 was a year of unprecedented change. Political upsets and socio-economic consequences have had a profound effect on business around the world.

As we approach the new year, the prevalent theme is uncertainty.

The CIPR's community of National, Regional and Sector groups play an invaluable role in keeping their members ahead of the curve. That's why we asked them to consider the issues and trends impacting public relations in 2017.

The result is #PR2017 – a compelling snapshot of the challenges, events and opportunities facing communicators in the year ahead.

The report harnesses local intelligence and sector-specific information from twenty interest groups to deliver powerful insights essential for communications planning.

If there's one thing we can learn from 2016, it's that modern PR professionals can ill afford to restrict themselves to the silos of their region or sector. The new landscape demands a broader, more outward looking approach.

I commend our community of volunteers whose contributions have resulted in an inspired piece of thought leadership.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jason MacKenzie'.

Construction and Property



Paul Wilkinson FCIPR, Chair,
CIPR Construction and Property

Brexit has created a huge amount of additional uncertainty so far as UK construction and property is concerned.

Prior to 23 June 2016, the industry was already wondering how it was going to close a growing skills gap. In February 2016, according to a CITB/Experian construction skills forecast, over 230,000 new construction jobs needed to be created across the UK by 2020. And this need wasn't evenly spread, with a large proportion of the requirement concentrated in London and the south-east of England, a region also facing a chronic shortage of affordable housing.

Partly because it shed – and didn't replace – half a million jobs in the recession, construction has become hugely reliant on imported expertise, from architects, engineers and other white collar professionals to skilled technical staff – electricians, plumbers, joiners, bricklayers, and the like. With labour in short supply and wage inflation growing, some projects were already being delayed or facing increasing costs; in some cases, this meant projects became less economically viable.

Brexit has made the situation more complex. Employers are realising that, unless rules on migrant workers are relaxed, leaving the EU could deepen an already chronic skills shortage. But Brexit is also hitting some property investments in the UK. Some corporations have cancelled or postponed proposed London office developments, with an immediate impact on their planning and design teams, but also lowering future labour demand.

However, whatever happens with Brexit, the construction skills gap won't be resolved solely by migrant labour, and this points to a fundamental public relations problem. The industry's inability to recruit and retain sufficient UK-based workers is largely due to the construction sector's poor image compared to others. Years of under-investment in training, in R&D and in technical and process innovation has resulted in an industry which, unsurprisingly, is unattractive to many prospective new entrants.

Rightly or wrongly, the sector has earned a popular reputation as dirty and dangerous, the realm of low margins, lowest price "cowboy builders", late payment and litigation. Its leaders – sometimes

characterised as "male, pale and stale" – need to recognise they are part of the problem and work together to start delivering profitable but fairly priced projects efficiently, safely, on time and on budget, with a workforce that is diverse and fairly incentivised and rewarded.

As a technology evangelist, I think adoption of new technologies such as building information modelling (BIM) can help transform the current image of construction (BIM is also one area where the UK is a world leader), but successful collaborations are built far more on people and processes than technology.

Professional public relations is not about polishing a company's or industry's image. As consultants and in-house practitioners, we can help businesses and industry organisations understand the reasons behind the sector's poor reputation, make some of the changes necessary to make it more attractive to future workers, and help it counter some of the effects of continued Brexit uncertainty.

Connect with CIPR
Construction and Property

 [Twitter](#)

 [LinkedIn](#)

 [Facebook](#)

Education and Skills



Simon Butt-Bethlendy MCIPR,
Chair, CIPR Education and Skills

Everyone who works in our sector and supports it, and those of us who communicate on behalf of schools, colleges, universities and 'learning organisations', tend to believe in the ideal of education's progressive power to transform lives. Policies and contexts change continuously and our work is diverse and complex.

Much of the above would apply in any given year. In 2016, things became different.

A popular referendum to leave the European Union won 'Brexit' a place in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. A former Education Secretary, Michael Gove, proclaimed that people had "had enough of experts" – apparently giving everyone leave to trust their own gut feelings or preferences over facts.

Less than five months later, Trump won the US Presidency. A property dealmaker and belligerent host of reality TV show *The Apprentice*, he played to similar fears and emotions, with scant regard for truth or evidence.

For education, the OED's 'word of the year' – *post-truth* – causes concern. Brexit and the Trump victory highlighted the triumph of emotion over reason and the way that a large proportion of the electorate is not swayed by those previously deferred to as 'experts', and votes for those whose rhetoric supports their own gut feeling. This sets an example for families and communities and further undermines for many the relevance of school and university.

It also calls into question the credibility of news and views. Vast numbers now rely on social media whose networks use algorithms increasingly to match, link and curate feeds that embed confirmation bias into what many of us digest and believe throughout each day.

Facebook, Google, privately funded media networks and purveyors of 'clickbait' are all implicated. What does this mean for PRs and for educators in making sense of society and how politics is changing?

For communicators involved in the business of persuasion it means that fact-based argument may no longer be the most appropriate approach to take. But as ethical PR professionals it is our duty to present the facts and tell the truth, avoiding spin. Simple messaging is now the norm. Are we oversimplifying too much?

For educators – whether they are working in schools, colleges, universities or adult education – how do they engage people in active citizenship and properly informed political debate?

The implications of Brexit are far-reaching. Already, stricter post-study visa rules and anti-immigration rhetoric mean universities are seeing drops in international student numbers from countries like India. Others warn of an exodus of some of our brightest and most talented people.

I think part of the answer for us is maintaining professional integrity, resilience, ingenuity and ever-closer working relationships with our teaching colleagues who strive for educational excellence. Another part is understanding better and engaging with the communities we serve.

On a practical level, 2017 will see a new Higher Education and Research Bill become law. This will bring TEF, the Teaching Excellence Framework, to a sector with a greater mix of institutions and a new Office for Students.

In other parts of the sector, changes in policy – for instance, skills, where 65 Secretaries of State have been responsible for skills and employment policy since the 1980s – make it hard for PR advisers to keep up: especially as our role is often to make sense of things!

Finally, one fast-growing area of risk and opportunity is artificial intelligence (AI) and automation, referenced in a fascinating new City & Guilds Group Skills Confidence Report. Horizon-scanning will become more important for our practice in 2017 and, as education and skills communicators, we should renew our commitment to CPD.

Connect with
CIPR Education and Skills

 [Twitter](#)

 [LinkedIn](#)

 [Facebook](#)

Not-for-Profit



Frances Hawley MCIPR,
Chair, CIPR Not-for-Profit

Over 2016 we saw a continuing scramble to shore up charity reputations as parts of the press swooped in on the collapse of Kids' Company in 2015. Until its closure, the charity had attracted high-profile attention and government funding. Swiftly afterwards came a parliamentary select committee that established more stringent fundraising practice embodied in the Fundraising Regulator. You can catch the musical at the Donmar Warehouse over spring 2017 (no joke)!

With this kind of attention, ethical fundraising practice will be the single most important area for charities to improve upon with regard to reputation. Early indications demonstrate that the regulator is quick to confront non-compliant charities, so the wider question in 2017 will be whether small and medium-sized charities have the capacity to rise to the occasion.

The changing fundraising environment should see an increase in impact-focused reporting of activities. This could mean good news for in-house charity comms teams: If the carrot was not previously large enough, here is a stick that can stimulate better measurement and evaluation of social media strategies throughout the sector! Charities finding themselves overwhelmed by that task may seek out agency outsourcing.

The march towards digital will continue, with many exciting opportunities for voluntary organisations to capitalise on low-cost opportunities to raise their profile. As social media channels rise and fall, in 2017 charities will do well to realise the need for ruthless selectivity using evidence-based learning and testing. Confidence, and a thorough knowledge of target publics, will be key in beating a path through this jungle of opportunity. As charity PR and comms officers decipher the vast potential of social media with fewer resources than ever and a regulator ready to pounce, only the most adaptable charities will thrive.

Email is not dead! Many charities will (wisely) continue to hone their email strategies, safe in the knowledge that email is a firm favourite method of communication with supporters and the public.

Mental health issues are being discussed with increased openness amongst campaigners. This is a good sign in a sector where high levels of compassion create the temptation to go the extra mile for beneficiaries unsustainably. We might see more support training pop up in 2017 as a result of growing awareness around this issue.

2016 was the year of Brexit and Trump's ascent. Public mood will reflect perhaps cautious optimism after overcoming the shocks of 2016. Though with a deepening crisis of trust in institutions like politics and the media, and with the new regulator looking over the sector's shoulder, charities will need to reconsider their individual reputations in such an environment. The wisest comms teams will seek to be collaborative and outward-looking as they contribute to rebuilding trust in the sector. If there is ever a year in which public pressure provokes up-skilling of charity reputation shapers, 2017 is it.

The sector needs serious investment, particularly at the lower income end where comms and PR are often seen as unaffordable luxuries. Those charities counting their number of staff on one hand would benefit enormously from sector-specific PR training, particularly if they plan to pursue new funding or campaigning streams.

In January 2017 our group launches its first ever day conference for charity PR practitioners, open to the whole sector regardless of CIPR membership. As the CIPR drives towards an increased number of chartered practitioners in 2017, the not-for-profit group is encouraging its members to be at the forefront of this push for excellence.

Connect with
CIPR Not-for-Profit



Twitter



LinkedIn

Public Affairs



Paul Beckford MCIPR,
Chair, CIPR Public Affairs

Following the year that has been 2016 it would probably be wise not to make any political predictions about what might happen in 2017. If you want really accurate ones perhaps we should closely study episodes of The Simpsons! After all the volatility of this year, public affairs professionals could be forgiven for hoping for a somewhat more stable 2017. However, in this new era of politics this does not seem particularly likely.

We do know that the Prime Minister will trigger Article 50 towards the end of March and there is definitely a plan, a cunning one probably. We also know that Parliament will have a say on the deal struck although the detail of what will actually be debated, much like the detail of the Government plan, remains unclear.

The Presidential elections in France and the General Election in Germany next year are likely to have a major impact on the Brexit negotiations. A possible change of top leaders in both France and Germany could prove destabilising to the EU and any deterioration in the relationship between Paris and Berlin would raise further questions about European unity. Chancellor Merkel has just confirmed her intention to stand for a fourth term and is widely considered to be in a strong position despite perceptions of her soft stance on immigration. In France, a strong performance by Marine Le Pen is likely to result in her defeating either Francois Fillon or Alain Juppé in the first round. Although the French system makes a Le Pen Presidency difficult, many said the same about a Trump triumph. Whilst such a victory would be another huge shock to the political system and very 2016, it would reflect the success Le Pen has already achieved in capitalising on the anti-establishment sentiment of both the EU referendum and the US election.

One set of elections that will be taking place in the UK are for the Metro Mayors in May which offer Labour the opportunity to taste electoral victory, particularly in Manchester and Liverpool where the candidates Andy Burnham and Steve Rotherham have strong support. It will be interesting to note the turnout in these elections and whether that reflects the level of the support and understanding that the general public has for devolution.

What does this all mean for public affairs practitioners? Well in an ever changing and unpredictable political landscape our ability to react, adapt and analyse will be even more crucial. Traditional mechanisms of engagement and lobbying will remain important but the ability to understand and deploy new techniques that capture the attention of key stakeholders, influencers and particularly the public will be vital. It also might be wise to think twice before commissioning polling to support a particular campaign or policy initiative.

Professionals in public affairs are also going to have to develop new skills as communications plays a more central role in business planning and delivery. Integrated communications campaigns are now the norm; therefore the ability to incorporate ideas and deploy strategies across an organisation is essential. Consequently, the CIPR's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and the opportunity to become an Accredited Practitioner or gain chartered status (Chart. PR) will be even more important to future career success. If one thing is certain following Donald Trump's victory it is that politics truly is the art of the possible.

Connect with
CIPR Public Affairs



Twitter



LinkedIn

Health and Medical



Justin Wilkes MCIPR,
Chair, CIPR Health and Medical

The healthcare sector is in a state of crisis in terms of public perception and our role as communicators over the next twelve months and beyond must be to address this as a matter of priority and to lobby for increased investment in the communications function.

In the face of funding cuts and low staff morale, discontent with the way our NHS is being run has increased by some 16% in the past year, according to an independent report commissioned by the British Medical Association. The same report shows that the vast majority of us distrust the notion that the NHS can provide a seven-day service in hospitals, or even agree that the government has adequately communicated what is meant by a 'truly 7-day NHS'. Deteriorating confidence in perhaps the most historically trusted, and most fundamentally important institution in this country is cause for serious concern, and it is a theme which runs throughout the various constituents of the healthcare sector in Britain.

Pharmaceutical companies have a so-so reputation at best, with many seeing their primary motivation as increasing profits for shareholders through high price tariffs. This is a trend which seems to show no sign of reversing itself as a Reputation Institute study reveals that the perception of pharmaceutical companies among 18-24 year olds is significantly lower than that of any other age group. This is concerning when viewed in isolation, and even more so when viewed in the wider context of the day. As we see a general rejection of the status quo in public and political spheres, it would be arrogant to presume there wouldn't be a similar rebuttal of the way pharmaceutical companies currently operate, should nothing change. A rethinking of the ethical fabric of the industry is perhaps inevitable, and the same could be said of the charitable sector.

Far from being seen as beacons of morality, the lack of confidence in charities is arguably more pronounced than the lack of confidence in the NHS, or pharmaceutical companies. In the digital age, the public increasingly demand transparency across all sectors where they are seen to hold a vested interest, and the purportedly virtuous ideals of charitable organisations make them ever more vulnerable to scrutiny. Indeed, this is a vital moment for the charitable sector. In the face of both an increasing demand for transparency, and the recent barrage

of negative stories on individual charities, work needs to be done to regain the trust of the public.

While undoubtedly, some structural changes are essential in all three sectors, the communications sector can and must play an equally integral role in rebuilding public perception and support across all three of these cornerstones of our society. Whilst NHS funding is being squeezed, it has never been more important that investment in positive and pro-active communications does not suffer. Increased (or at the very least, sustained) investment in communications is essential if we are to effectively build advocates of NHS trust, improve public perception and restore public confidence. The same is true of the pharmaceutical industry, if the shift from seeing pharmaceutical companies as bastions of corporate greed, to seeing them as proponents of social good is to happen. By the same token, helping to transform charities into open, transparent organisations will ensure that all the undeniably wonderful work that they do is not undermined by questioning fundraising activities, funding, political and commercial affiliations, or senior salaries.

I hope that we can see a greater focus on positive healthcare communications and a shift towards more positive public support over the coming months and years in order to help ensure the long term survival of the UK healthcare sector, and most importantly, the best outcomes and experience for patients.

Connect with CIPR Health and Medical

 [Twitter](#)

 [LinkedIn](#)

 [Facebook](#)

Internal Communications



Steven Murgatroyd MCIPR,
Chair, CIPR Inside

I'm always very nervous when people ask me to make predictions for the coming year. I'm a firm believer that if you spend too much time predicting then you don't spend enough time delivering. I've recently finished reading a book called 'Team of Teams' by General Stanley McChrystal, which is a great read for anyone who wants to learn about how organisations need to be run in the modern world. In the book, he explains the difference between complex and complicated change. Complicated being something that looks difficult but can be broken down and predicted, while complex is something that cannot be predicted and you simply need to be adaptable enough to survive. The world we live in now is complex, I'm pretty sure that this time last year no one would have predicted Leicester winning the premier league, Brexit or Donald Trump (in fact a £5 bet would have won you £15m). So rather than try to predict what will happen over the next twelve months and where Internal Communications will be this time next year, I'd rather we all spend time becoming more flexible, adaptable and ready to accept change.

There will obviously be fallout from Brexit and Trump (not so much Leicester) over the coming 12 months, but if we spend too long trying to work out what it is, we will probably miss hundreds of other changes that happen every day. As Internal Communicators we should be out in the business, listening and learning to what our people are saying and what they want from us. We should be people-led and never launching something new just because it's the newest shiniest thing on the market. We have to make sure what we do is relevant to our people and the culture of our businesses, this might mean that Workplace (Facebook@Work) is not the right thing to do and we should carry on with our monthly printed magazine.

There's nothing wrong with not using cutting edge technology if it won't work for your people, but in the same breath, that doesn't mean you should just sit back and not try anything new. Internal Communicators often have a fear of failure that dwarfs most other departments (except maybe Legal and Risk). This means that we sometimes try and play it too safe and do things the way we always have; we need to get much better at accepting that not everything will work. Agile methodology isn't right for everyone but the idea of

launching things quickly, testing them to see if they work and learning from your mistakes is something that we can all benefit from.

2016 has shown that no one can predict what will happen next. So while making plans is the right thing to do, if they get thrown out the window...don't panic! Rely on your core skills as a communicator, listen and learn, and continue to add value and business impact. Like every year, 2017 will be exciting and unpredictable. Our job as communicators is to be flexible and adaptable enough to spot where we can add value and move quickly enough to provide that value in a way that employees will appreciate. My big tip for 2017 is to listen, learn and adapt.

Connect with CIPR Inside

 [Twitter](#)

 [LinkedIn](#)

 [Facebook](#)

International



Shirley Collyer,
Chair, CIPR International

As economies, technologies and societies have evolved in the last few decades we have seen the rise of a new, dynamic and increasingly interconnected world. And the rate of change for all of us as communications experts has been phenomenal – particularly in recent years.

As global working and cultures have become the norm, so we have seen the era of 'glocal' develop where even local SMEs and communities are touched on a daily basis by the ebb and flow of the wider world. So many PR practitioners have had to become internationally savvy, not just in terms of being on top of global headlines and social media developments, but in seeking to understand and be sensitive to cultural divides and ethical dilemmas.

But my predictions as an international communications leader and Chair of CIPR International go a step further from the developments we have seen to date. And they relate to the macro reach of on-going socio-political events and a trend that is developing whereby people are actively turning their backs on what the establishment (which includes traditional media) thinks. The Trump and Brexit results show just how sentiment in the West has become seemingly 'anti-global', 'anti-establishment' and geared towards a more local 'movement' and sense of purpose.

I am personally and professionally fascinated by the way in which these movements have developed and the impact they will have on our profession as a whole. Particularly with the European elections which are just around the corner.

Nowadays, we can and do choose where we source our news and communications – whether that be via Facebook, specialist blogs or favoured pages on news hubs. And in line with 'movements' we have witnessed in 2016, we are seeing the start of a resistance to globalisation and global communications. While choice is always a good thing, this new trend of self-selecting news can arguably lead to an unbalanced view. And it is our duty as communications professionals to be accurate and relevant with our messaging while taking on board these trends and the implications for our profession.

The future will see people and communities continuing to form silos and movements. They will continue to consume information in a bubble by self-selecting the media they are comfortable with to a much wider degree than ever before.

Do we need to burst this information bubble? Or find ways of harnessing it?

I would argue that to encourage the bubble is to encourage clichéd, blinkered thinking, which only endorses one point of view. It leads to sterile, self-satisfied discussions which only seek to congratulate one narrow point of view or even worse a dangerous one.

We can only burst the bubble if we think broadly and constantly challenge ourselves and our colleagues by seeking out alternative views.

Connect with CIPR International

 [Twitter](#)

 [LinkedIn](#)

 [Facebook](#)

Local Public Services



Claire Melia-Tompkins MCIPR,
Chair, CIPR Local Public Services



Amanda Pearse MCIPR,
Vice-Chair, CIPR Local Public Services

The erosion of trust in politicians, experts and facts will give particular reputational challenges to public service communicators throughout 2017 and beyond.

We believe that public service PR professionals face a perfect storm in 2017 with major cuts to funding coming at a time of rising service demand, increased complexity and challenge to public trust.

Trust and funding

The campaigning we saw both in the UK and US during 2016 will have a lasting impact for those who work in a political environment. The post-truth world has eroded trust in politicians, public servants, experts and statistics at a time when evidence-based decision making around delivery of services is most needed.

The direct financial impact of Brexit will be huge on regeneration and infrastructure in the poorest regions such as Cornwall and the North East as well as parts of Wales and Scotland. But it will affect all areas of public service where development and change has been supported by EU funding. The knock on effects of changes to regulatory environments such as medicine costs in the NHS are likely to be very significant.

Devolution and transformation

Devolution will affect many large urban areas. And where it doesn't – the need to pool resources and work collaboratively will be driven by increasing pressures on health and social care to achieve NHS targets. Mergers, outsourcing and digital transformation to deliver cuts create confusion for service users at a time of rising demand for services for some of the most vulnerable in society. Communicators will be hard pushed to manage brands, lines of communication and retain clarity of responsibility.

Scrutiny and reputation

The need for effective scrutiny of public services to build trust has never been higher. But structural changes to the media provide less quality investigative journalism and more click bait hysteria. Citizen journalists and whistleblowers' personal testimony combined with the publishing ease of social media can show the reality of decision-making and service delivery on the ground. But it will be the public service PRs job to provide an informed narrative and make the link between voter demands, policy decisions and local impacts.

The need for public service communicators to be involved in strategic planning has never been greater, whilst the tactical day-to-day tasks of aligning PR with service delivery remain challenging. Our members face major challenges in managing reputation and providing information as well as building trust and engagement with a cynical public that is demanding change.

The themes we identified in our *Influence for Impact* report remain critical for public service communicators and form the focus for the committee's work in 2017.

Connect with CIPR Local Public Services



Twitter



LinkedIn



Facebook

Marcomms



Gillian Reeves MCIPR,
Chair, CIPR Marcomms

In 2017 PR professionals will need to adapt to a new era in which management of trust and a revised approach to advertising will be key.

Trust

It is fair to say that the age of indifference is over. The democratic mandate has highlighted the fracture between the way politicians, business and other elites see society and how the man on the street feels. Because this runs so deep and is global (evident by the Brexit vote and US presidential election) it would be foolish for PR not to see the impact for today and tomorrow. As this year's Edelman Trust Barometer explains, all business and in particular big business, must see this to be the threat it is. Within the mainstream and social media space the steady flow of news exposing arrogance and hubris will continue to suck the momentum from organisations not fully utilising their PR capabilities to protect and develop their reputation.

In summary trust is on life-support, all but abandoned. Post-truth is a phrase used of politicians (mainly) who row-back on promises with impunity. Is all hope of recovering trust gone? The advent of blockchain technology could present a way of securing the truth. Society needs to decide if we want to hold people to it.

Measurement

Over the next year AMEC's Integrated Evaluation Framework will be seen as the most radical piece of PR re-engineering. It won't evaluate your coverage but it will lead you towards using the best of measurement practices. Use it or get someone to help you use it.

The age of PR data is all but over, to be replaced by the age of PR insights. It is easy to talk about the need for actionable insights, but often another thing to find them. Insight needs to be relevant and must represent a departure from the known and expected.

Paid

Where is PR in its ongoing battle with advertising? Public relations must continue to make the case for the paid coverage budget. This is crucial because in the age of integrated PR many organisations simply do not have the resources for both PR and advertising. As a result, PR practitioners need to understand more about paid media. The PESO model (Paid, Earned, Shared, Owned) will continue to gain in importance. Budget allocators will see the synergies between all four elements and how they all have to operate together to maximise benefit. Time will tell if PR will seize its opportunity.

Connect with CIPR Marcomms

 [Twitter](#)

 [LinkedIn](#)

 [Facebook](#)

Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM)



Jim Sutton MCIPR,
Chair, CIPR STEM

Whilst other colleagues will rightfully talk about the effects of external factors, such as Trump or BREXIT in their sectors and regions, I'd like to take some time to consider how the role of PR itself is changing.

Nowhere is change more prevalent than in one of the key constituencies of our group – the B2B technology sector. There is a well-worn and long-won argument that PR and its almost synonymous tactic – media relations – cannot exist in isolation without the support of other elements such as social media and thought leadership. Also that the world is moving towards a position where companies create their own content, and the filter of the media is less important. This is certainly true. However, I think that journalists, along with other influencers such as analysts, industry leaders, academics and various twitterati, will be with us for quite some time to come.

What hasn't permeated to the very core of every in-house or agency PR professional is how much we must now be fully integrated with other elements of the marketing mix. It's easier said than done, but rather than trying to find ever more complicated and elaborate ways of evaluating and justifying ourselves, we should be tying ourselves to the business objectives of the organisation. We should all be aligning ourselves to a marketing strategy that makes the most of the assets available.

For example – if “content is king”, the biggest challenge to the throne is not using it for maximum impact. If organisations don't realise the full potential of their content through a full suite of integrated marketing and PR tactics, they will be behind their competition. A white paper written by the CTO and currently hiding on a desolate outpost of the website could be the ticket to increased pipeline and sales. All that's missing is a strategic dissemination plan and methodology, which combines traditionally siloed tactics – demand generation and nurture, organic and promoted social, media relations and events – into a single powerful campaign that not only gains thought leadership, but drives sales. Many technology organisations and brands are beginning to understand the importance of this approach, but those who continue to see PR in a very traditional sense may soon be left behind.

Science communication is not immune from these trends. Broadsheet media coverage may still be a good way of demonstrating the impact of research to funders and some sections of the public. However, when it comes to a new generation of scientists, or building trust with those who are not in our natural field view, digital methods such as Reddit AMAs and Facebook Live will continue to grow in importance.

Open access publishing will also continue to erode the vice like grip of the big journals as new and different content providers, even as scientific papers themselves come on stream. Gradually, we as science communicators, will have to deal with a new publishing (as well as marketing) landscape when representing our universities, funding organisations or research establishments.

Of course, not all modern phenomena are for good. And one area that science communication can help to combat is the increasing move to “post truth” politics. As defined by Wikipedia, this terrifying phrase means “*a political culture in which debate is framed largely by appeals to emotion disconnected from the details of policy, and by the repeated assertion of talking points to which factual rebuttals are ignored.*” As those representing science, it's very much our duty to support evidence based policy, to conquer fake news and to promote the views of the science community. To be successful, we have to use a wider set of tools and connect more powerfully with the public, in much the same way that B2B technology organisations should be using the full marketing suite to connect with its buyers.

Connect with CIPR STEM

 [LinkedIn](#)

 [Facebook](#)

Wales Cymru



Eoghan Mortell FCIPR,
Chair, CIPR Cymru Wales

In Wales, the traditional land of rugby, it was soccer that set the pace for communications achievement in 2016. And the nation's 'second-choice' ball game is likely to deliver a repeat performance in 2017.

Having been absent from major tournaments for 58 years, Wales' footballers took Euro2016 by storm, trouncing supposedly superior opposition and claiming a totally unexpected semi-final slot.

But, for communications professionals, it was the success of the associated Football Association of Wales (FAW) #togetherstronger campaign that held particular fascination.

Launched as a Twitter drive to create a mosaic of top players made from fans' profile pictures, it quickly reached nearly 11m users, engaged the active participation of over 208,000 people and got the public completely behind the team.

For generations, rugby has been the mainstream sports platform supporting marketing and communications activity in Wales. But the runaway success of #togetherstronger has encouraged many PR practitioners here to view the round ball game as an equally powerful channel for engaging target audiences.

So we can expect to see renewed soccer fever in Welsh PR during 2017, particularly as the nation prepares to host the UEFA Champions League final at Cardiff's iconic Principality Stadium in June, with the prospect of a Barcelona or a Bayern Munich coming to town.

Many PR folk wanting to capitalise on this 'A-List' event, or indeed the marketing potential of football generally, will no doubt be heading to the CIPR Cymru Wales' AGM in February where the FAW's public affairs chief, Ian Gwyn Hughes, will be sharing the secrets behind #togetherstronger.

A more serious and sobering counterpoint to the success of this clear, simple and unifying sports message were the simple, but arguably more divisive, memes of the Brexit campaign, which persuaded a majority of Welsh voters to opt out of Europe. Ironically some of the strongest support for 'Leave' came from disadvantaged areas that received most EU cash over the years.

As it happens, many of Wales' PR and marketing agencies have been heavily involved in campaigns to promote European-funded projects over the past two decades or more. So the rejection of the EU by voters in these areas will surely give communicators much food for thought.

Moreover it will present them with fresh challenges given that demand for publicly-funded campaigns will inevitably dry up along with the departure of European Structural Funds. No doubt new opportunities will emerge as the economy evolves, and PR people in Wales will of course adapt and deliver.

A further challenge facing practitioners in Wales over the year ahead will be the growing demand for bilingual communications, particularly in public sector campaigns. Under the law, the public sector must treat English and Welsh equally so PR teams serving this sector must ensure they have the skills on board to meet this requirement.

The CIPR Cymru Wales Group aims to support its members in preparing for all new challenges and opportunities. The coming year will see a bigger programme of activity than ever before and, for the first time, there will be at least one free event each month for members; to enable them to develop their professional skills and expand their network of industry contacts. Our high-profile Autumn Conference will see its fourth year and we'll also debut a new summer event tailored for senior practitioners wanting to accelerate their career progression.

With an imaginative and hard-working committee and an increasingly engaged membership – as evidenced by the scale of involvement in PRide and other CIPR activities – we're confident that the industry in Wales will continue to progress and raise the bar of achievement.

Connect with
CIPR Cymru Wales



Twitter



LinkedIn



Facebook

Northern Ireland



Samantha Livingstone
Chart.PR, MCIPR,
Chair, CIPR Northern Ireland

This year in Northern Ireland, not only have we witnessed the continued decline of circulation figures for our leading print publications; but more and more local newspapers have closed or merged, there has been a buy-out of our local television station, and a host of seasoned journalists laid-off. This has been accompanied by an unprecedented rise in contributors and online news platforms – with the PR world grappling to stay ahead of this new era of content driven media.

In this 24/7 media cycle, we find ourselves needing good content – and that can come in the form of something produced internally, so long as it's targeted to the publication's readers and is valuable enough for them to want to publish and share. If you have engaged social networks and can prove you are influential in your own right, media outlets will continue to want to work with you, if only for the sole reason that you've increased their page views and maybe even their audience base.

The evolution of digital

In the past, online coverage was often seen as the poor relation to print and broadcast media, but today it is paramount. Digital coverage allows us to reach audiences quickly and allows us to measure and track the effectiveness of an article against our clients' website viewing figures, which is vital in helping to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the articles that we place.

Social media has allowed 'word of mouth' to move at a very rapid pace and, now more than ever, digitally savvy consumers are debunking traditional advertising methods and seeking the opinions of friends, industry experts and celebrities. PR managers must respond faster than ever to keep up with the increased demand for 24/7 news and social media output, and we now have many new platforms from which to communicate, including blogs, video and mobile platforms as well as a vast number of quality online magazines.

It's the hit viral video that links to engaging Facebook and Twitter accounts with interesting articles, blogs, competitions and company endeavours that really make an impact. The ability to easily use these sites to find a product, peruse user reviews and recommendations, or voice customer service concerns, is what fulfils the needs of the ever more demanding customer.

Creating a TV commercial that drives excitement over a new mobile app, and the mobile app that leads a customer to the nearest store location to make a purchase, is what is now considered PR 'gold'.

The entire puzzle is a complicated one that demands calculated integration, and PR will most certainly continue to change and evolve as traditional media roles become outdated. Companies that have the most initiative to invest in integrated communications effectively will ultimately be the ones to reap the benefits and survive in the long term. PR professionals are experts in developing content but they now need to translate this across traditional as well as new online platforms.

I was once asked if PR was dead and digital is the new and only way to connect with target audiences. No. PR does exactly what it says on the tin (build relationships with the public) and will continue to do so. But one thing is clear, PR managers are becoming content managers and marketing departments rely heavily on our ability to connect them with their target audiences.

For this reason, we have seen a lesser reliance on the traditional media release and the emergence of new roles being advertised in the sector for 'Content Producers', 'Digital PR Executives' and 'Head of Content Development' etc. However, at our first CIPR NI #CommsPRDigital conference in Belfast, Former Press Secretary to the Queen, Dickie Arbiter reminded us that nothing beats face to face communication. There is still a need to move away from the computer and talk directly to journalists and influencers.

With that all said, one thing that will remain a challenge in 2017 is the ability to bring clients and colleagues up to speed with this new way of communicating. Encouraging clients and colleagues to think beyond short-term tactics is a challenge we are increasingly likely to encounter. Explaining to them that a tweet, a blog post by a thought leader or a content-driven online campaign can be just as significant in achieving their organisational objectives as the traditional methods used in the past, means we may still have a job to do.

Connect with
CIPR Northern Ireland



Twitter



Facebook

Scotland



Jenifer Stirton FCIPR,
Chair, CIPR Scotland

With seemingly no end in sight to the slump in the oil price, budgets for PR and marketing have been slashed in the north east of Scotland along with many jobs across the oil sector. With public sector finances at both local and national levels also being squeezed harder than ever, everyone involved in promoting public bodies is under huge pressure to do more for less. Many feel that there have been so many budget cuts and staff reductions that there is nothing left to cut and morale in this sector is definitely suffering.

Other regions of Scotland and business sectors seem to be faring better for the moment. The technology sector in Scotland continues to pick up momentum, the financial markets seem to be regaining some lost ground and the construction and housing sectors are showing signs of growth.

Although Scotland voted to remain part of the UK in the 2014 Referendum, the independence question has not gone away. The uncertainty created by Brexit and the possibility of further constitutional change is never far away in Scotland and it's hard to tell what impact these political events will have on the day-to-day economy.

The digital and online elements of our work continue to grow at pace, while others may start to feel the pinch as budgets are realigned. The feeling among seasoned industry professionals is not pessimistic but certainly cautious, and not many expect significant salary levels increases or big bonuses in 2017.

Experiential activity and campaigns are becoming increasingly important in the industry, allowing consumers to live and breathe the brand. PR professionals now have to find a way to own all facets of experiential campaigns – from social engagement, adverts, billboards and pop-ups.

As with elsewhere in the UK newspaper circulations continue to decline at a steady rate in Scotland, with staffing budgets under more pressure than ever before. While many media organisations are adapting quickly to the digital age and offering strong online content, in many cases it's still not paying enough to help them turn a profit.

Will 2017 be the year they manage to finally square this circle, or will we lose some famous names from Scotland's media landscape?

Meanwhile, broadcast channels in radio and TV appear to be thriving in Scotland and new online news sources are growing their influence, especially specialists covering specific business sectors.

It's clear that the media landscape in our small nation continues to change rapidly. In the year ahead communicators working in PR and marketing will need to adapt faster than ever as their clients' needs change, and we will be there to help support them every step of the way.

Connect with CIPR Scotland

 [Twitter](#)

 [LinkedIn](#)

 [Facebook](#)

Channel Islands



Adam Riddell Chart.PR,
Chair, CIPR Channel Islands

For public relations practitioners in the Channel Islands, 2016 was a challenging but fascinating year.

Although the UK's referendum on membership to the EU was a seminal moment for people working across the UK, for Jersey and Guernsey the significance was a little different. The Channel Islands are not part of the UK and therefore did not vote in the EU referendum. Nevertheless, as part of the British Isles, 'Brexit' will have implications for businesses here.

For most, it is 'business as usual'. There has been no change in terms of the islands' constitutional relationships with the UK and equally, most of Jersey and Guernsey's overseas trade agreements are done directly and so again the relationship is not affected.

However, the islands' economic fortunes are tied with the UK's and, being small island economies, export business (financial services and otherwise) beyond the UK is vital too. That means navigating some complex global issues.

As a result, firms are aware of the need to communicate this impact clearly and there is now greater demand for support in ensuring that internal and external messaging around Brexit is clear, whilst firms are leaning on the 'eyes and ears' of PR professionals at the moment more than ever.

Looking forward

One interesting fallout from Brexit locally has been that PR as an industry is being challenged by consultancy from other well-established sectors, such as professional services and legal. Whilst there is now an opportunity for PR, therefore, at the same time we need to work hard as an industry to make ourselves heard, demonstrate our value, and complement those other sectors.

Away from Brexit, given the international business landscape firms here are immersed in, a plethora of other developments make it a challenging environment for island firms. Political change across the EU; a shifting US political landscape; changing behaviours in emerging markets such as the Middle and Far East, where Channel Islands finance firms are heavily invested.

All this means that, as PR professionals, we will need to think more and more creatively to tell our story in an evolving political landscape and in culturally different markets.

The good news is that the talents of those working in PR in the Channel Islands is right up there with the best of them. Around 10% of our Membership are Chartered PR Practitioners. That's a higher proportion than any other regional group right across the CIPR.

These standards are important. The reputation of the financial services industry – which makes up around 40% of each island's economy – is vital and certainly 2016 has seen more and more pressure being put on the reputation of international or 'offshore' finance.

More and more, though, it is not just a case of explaining that the islands meet internationally agreed standards of regulation and compliance. The morality of finance has become an issue too. The Panama Papers furore was an example of that – albeit largely based on misunderstandings

Looking forward into 2017, this sort of pressure is unlikely to subside and the islands will have to find ways to eloquently explain the role they play and the value they add. For these reasons, evidence-based PR and an emphasis on facts and data will be vital. That's why our annual Channel Islands PR Forum in 2016 focused on the cutting-edge area of open data and the opportunities it can open up for businesses, governments and communities.

The Channel Islands operate in an international commercial environment and that environment is likely to get even more complicated in the coming months. However, across all sectors, the islands have a highly skilled community of PR professionals who are well placed to support innovative businesses, carve out interesting opportunities, and continue to contribute considerably to the CIPR's work.

Connect with
CIPR Channel Islands



Twitter



LinkedIn

East Anglia



Adam Tuckwell MCIPR,
Chair, CIPR East Anglia

Whether it's the automation of tasks, the shift towards contributor marketing, greater levels of knowledge sharing or the advances in measurement practices, the PR landscape continues to evolve as the industry modernises in the face of a changing world.

Having consulted with fellow members of the CIPR East Anglia committee, we believe that PR in 2017 will be defined by two key themes; a growing influence of practitioners outside of London and, secondly, an acceleration in the pace of which PR pros need to upskill as the lines between PR, digital and marketing continue to blur.

Can London be toppled?

East Anglia has historically prospered thanks to successful long-standing industries such as tourism, agriculture, and professional and finance services. While those sectors continue to thrive, the region is now home to some of the biggest, brightest and best technology, medical and scientific companies in the country, which will continue to offer huge growth opportunities for communications professionals in 2017 and beyond.

The foundations are already well established, with good transport links, a talented and well educated workforce and high levels of investment. Sitting in the centre of our region, Cambridge has just received the prestigious crown as the most vibrant economy in the UK by accountancy firm, Grant Thornton. According to the Cambridge Cluster Map, there are more than 21,000 businesses located within 20 miles of the city, with annual turnover of £33bn. With global giants like AstraZeneca relocating to the region, ARM building a new headquarters, and the launch of The Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor's 15-year vision, to create £558m in economic growth in and between the two cities, there are plenty of opportunities for local practitioners and agencies to benefit.

East Anglia boasts just seven per cent of the country's practitioners, but the potential for growth is significant for those working in the region. At the close of 2016, Miles Young, UK CEO of Ogilvy PR, has urged his staff to leave its "ivory towers" and connect with Britain outside of the M25. A view, I'm sure, will be shared by practitioners up and down the country. While London firms continue to dominate

PR awards and revenue earning tables there are key growth areas outside of London who can benefit and there is a huge appetite among practitioners in this region to challenge the perception that successful businesses should look to London for support and talent. 2017 could well be the year that the balance shifts in favour of regional practitioners.

Standing still will result in getting left behind

Our industry is modernising, the media landscape is becoming increasingly digital, and integrated communications have become the norm. PR is currently experiencing a significant challenge as communication channels change and the way audiences access information continues to evolve. But PRs shouldn't be afraid of these changes, after all, standing still can be fatal for your career.

The lines between PR and Marketing are blurring, and practitioners need to be able to upskill to stay ahead. Nowhere is this more prevalent than the importance of video. Video has grown to become an integral part of content for social, email and digital campaigns and this will certainly develop as a key trend in 2017. Videos are simply an easier way for consumers to get a vast amount of information in a short amount of time. According to Moovly, in 2015 online videos accounted for 55% of all mobile traffic and by 2020 this should rise to an enormous 75% – meaning by 2017 visual storytelling will be watched and searched far more than ever before. Whilst we don't all need to rush to become video editors, it is vital that practitioners understand how it should be used and incorporated into our communication plans. If you are going to invest in one for your professional development this year, make it video. We need to embrace change and stay one step ahead to make sure Robert Phillips' prophecy does not come true.

Connect with CIPR East Anglia



Twitter



LinkedIn



Facebook

Greater London



Antony Cousins MCIPR,
Chair, CIPR Greater London

London didn't vote for Brexit, but navigating the implications of that decision will dominate the thoughts of our members in 2017.

The Greater London Group (GLG) is the CIPR's largest regional organisation. We are a diverse community of nearly 3,000 practitioners, spanning the full range of economic sectors and government activities found in the Capital.

It is hard to find something that unites that group. However, in a recent poll of our members over three quarters said that Brexit, or political uncertainty, would be their biggest strategic challenge in 2017.

Over half of GLG members hold positions as managers, or are more senior, and so they will be tasked with helping their organisations and clients to succeed in post-Brexit Britain.

It does though seem increasingly clear since the US election that Brexit is part of a broader paradigm change.

Since the 1940s the world has been focused on free trade and, particularly in the EU, the free movement of people. During that time London has grown to become one of the world's wealthiest and most multicultural cities.

Now, a growing number of countries are challenging the outcomes of those policies and the impact they have had on the distribution of wealth and on national cultures.

It will be important for Londoners to continue to make arguments about the benefits of globalisation. There will be a battle in 2017 – particularly for members working in financial services – to retain the rights which have made London economically successful.

At the same time, it will be important that PR practitioners listen with renewed vigour to those who feel left behind by globalisation.

From lost tax revenues to the changing make-up of communities, it is clear that businesses are seen as not a solution to the issues that have led to the current political change, but rather as part of the problem. That will be a huge challenge for those of us working in PR in 2017 and beyond.

I expect to see more companies – led by their PR strategy – positioning themselves as local, everywhere they operate.

Corporate Social Responsibility will continue to grow in importance as companies must show that they directly benefit the markets in which they operate. It will also continue to be transparent about the tax they pay and the environmental impact of their operations.

GLG members working in internal communications will have the important task of bringing together organisations that may feel fractured after a tumultuous 2016, and to help colleagues understand the changing political environment.

Uncertainty can be hard for us as individuals, but is good for the PR profession. What is certain is that London-based organisations will need well trained PR people to help them to make sense of the fast-changing external environment.

I am certain that GLG members will rise to that challenge. We will continue to support members with training and events that help them to gain the skills and contacts they need for 2017 in pursuit of our goal to make London the PR capital of the world.

Connect with
CIPR Greater London

 [Twitter](#)

 [LinkedIn](#)

 [Facebook](#)

Midlands



Bron Eames, FCIPR
Chair, CIPR Midlands

There may be a scary amount of political and economical uncertainty from a national perspective, which obviously cannot be ignored, but personally I feel incredibly excited about how the Midlands is evolving as an 'Engine' and what 2017 might hold.

From Leicester City winning the Premier League to the arrival of HS2's head office in Birmingham city centre, from the now established and iconic new New Street to umpteen corporate investment announcements – there is a buzz about that has bred a new confidence in the region. For too long, we have lacked courage and determination. We could maybe learn something about selling ourselves from our colleagues in the North West, rather than reverting to the more likely stance of the self-deprecating, apologetic Brummie?!

We need to be braver and prouder – Jaguar Land Rover, JCB, GKN, IMI and EON being just a few big reasons why. Not to mention some fantastic universities alongside top class rugby, cricket and football teams – and more Michelin starred restaurants than ever before. With exchange rates in the favour of visitors from Europe and further afield, we can expect an influx of tourists too – which is also a good thing.

So, the Midlands is a thriving region which should yield expansive opportunities for a growing communications sector. The challenge is adapting to the new mix of skills and new priorities required. From a talent perspective, it is vital that we harness bright young newcomers to the sector and equip them with the appropriate new skills – whether that be how to commission aerial photography using a drone (without breaking the law) or conduct video interviews singlehandedly. To champion best practice most effectively, I strongly believe that we need to collaborate with other professional trade bodies and industry associations. We held a fantastic event entitled 'Who is the master of content?' with the PRCA recently, which was extremely well attended and well-reviewed – we need to partner up more!

Collaboration works well across in-house and agency PR practitioners, but also across different marketing disciplines. The more integration we see, the more we can learn from other specialists – planners, creatives, media buyers, digital strategists etc. And we have much to offer too. Big ideas that deliver cross channel cut-through can come from anywhere but it is our discipline, I believe, that remains the guardian of reputation and is responsible for earned media amplification.

Connect with CIPR Midlands



Twitter



LinkedIn

North East



Sally Pearson MCIPR,
Chair, CIPR North East

Members in the North East region are part of an exciting and rewarding profession operating in-house, within agencies or as independent or freelance practitioners. Working across both the public and private sectors, our members play a crucial part in helping to shape the future of the PR and communications industry in the area.

The past year has remained challenging in terms of the unknown impact of Brexit. There is undeniable uncertainty on what Brexit will mean for businesses and organisations nationally and regionally and what needs to be done to prepare for the change. It seems that whilst PR practitioners in some sectors in the North East are outlining preparations for Brexit, it will be a little while yet before we fully understand more around the full implications that require detailed planning.

Alongside this, as the landscape changes nationally and in the region, specifically around the the growth of digital businesses and with the development of digital cities across the region, communicators skills are changing to meet work-performance demand. Google has cited research showing that more than 90% of jobs will require digital literacy in the near future.

Whilst there remains an open-mindedness on the convergence of communications and the changing channels of public relations, it does pose questions around the skill-set required now and in the future.

The voluntary CIPR NE committee members have provided a range of events and workshops for members to keep members informed and updated on industry matters that are relevant to all practitioners including; DigiCon Teesside with Google Digital Garage and #Futureproof Edition 2 with President-Elect Sarah Hall.

Technological developments in the way that we work mean that there is a growing 'always on' culture, which raises parallel concerns around mental health and general wellbeing in the workplace.

The North East is keen to retain the hundreds of very talented students in the region and to provide opportunities they need to develop. We are fortunate to have a number of CIPR accredited

University courses in the region and it is inspiring to see a number of PR people invest in the future communications workforce by providing student with work experience opportunities.

Other industry issues in the region which are expected to remain on the agenda are around the gender pay gap and equality. The North East is well placed to be a game-changer and to embrace change and innovation within the PR industry.

Connect with CIPR North East



Twitter



LinkedIn

North West



Amanda Jackson MCIPR;
Bridget Aherne MCIPR;
Amanda Coleman Chart.PR,
MCIPR; **Hayley James** Chart.
PR, MCIPR, CIPR North West
Chair (ed.)

View from the private sector

Confidence

The potentially far-reaching political changes of 2016 have yet to filter through to the agency or independent PR practitioners in the North West. We are in a 'wait and see' period, but the business world is always on moving sands, and they can't hold off investment forever. Forward thinking management boards have realised that they can't just sit still and do nothing, and that confidence has been contagious across a number of our regional sectors.

Infrastructure

The UK is the 9th largest manufacturer in the world – and much of this manufacturing is in the North West. As a consequence, HS2 (when it comes) is unlikely to have a huge impact. Most manufactured products are still transported by road, and we do have good links across the region, including to the new Liverpool2 port. Probably more significant in the short term will be the region's smart motorways, enhancing our infrastructure. While the fall in the pound will make UK exports seem more attractive, many raw materials are imported, so the costs will increase.

Powerhouse

The Northern Powerhouse is creating a shift away from London. In particular, Media City coming to Salford has been terrific for the North West, and our broadcast media is sounding more diverse. The shifting access gives us the chance to demonstrate we're as relevant and capable as other parts of the UK.

View from the public sector

Partnership

Lines between the public sector and private business are blurring as residents in North West towns and cities find new ways to deal with austerity.

Local Enterprise Partnerships and city deals has evolved into Combined Authorities and devolution agreements. Greater Manchester was the first English region to negotiate a devolution deal, allowing the city to deliver its ambitious strategy of a joint plan between public services and business. If successful, this will deliver a net contribution to public finances by 2020.

Liverpool City Region was hot on its neighbour's heels, and other areas of the North West are likely to follow. Liverpool and Greater Manchester will also have metropolitan mayors elected for the first time in May 2017.

There is a clear role for public relations in all of this:

- Residents will have choices to make; people and organisations will want to influence this
- As public services change, so too will relationships with their stakeholders
- New and different ways of working will mean businesses will have a different colleague mix, presenting opportunities and challenges in equal measure.

Skills

PR needs to promote itself and demonstrate honesty, transparency and accountability. In recent years it has been seen as spin or fluff and 2017 has to be the year that we reclaim PR as a strategic communication function.

Public relations in the North West has an opportunity to rise to this challenge quickly but there are things we need to do here quicker than anywhere else, perhaps.

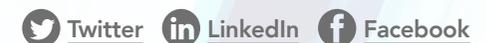
Regardless of sector, we need to ensure we're in a position to influence at the highest level; tactical outputs will not be enough – we are a management discipline.

There is a need for us to demonstrate our value and to explain what we bring to the business. For those working in-house and particularly in the public sector we are expecting a further squeeze on funding which will mean fundamentally reassessing how we work.

We also need to help establish a strong pool of new talent who are resilient, intelligent thinkers and advisors rather than fast-paced doers.

Reputation can be won and lost overnight and through it all an ethical and professional approach has to shine through.

Connect with CIPR North West



South West



Rachel Picken Chart.PR, MCIPR,
Chair-Elect, CIPR South West

In the face of Brexit, 2017 is the year to get agile, be resourceful, think collaboratively and look at broader markets.

Business is tentative in my corner of the UK – Cornwall – with the spectre of Brexit looming. Tourism is faring well with strong bookings for the 2017 season reported from many accommodation partners. It's hard to tell if this is a result of the EU referendum, or the Poldark effect.

But Brexit has made some markets sluggish and decision making cautious. With an established network of European funded economic support programmes running in Cornwall and other rural areas of the South West, many are awaiting further details on the transition from Government.

Another challenge for 2017 will be to continue to demonstrate the value public relations plays. Content marketing, as a tactic, is now 10 years old. According to the CIPR's State of the Profession survey 2016, 76% of our colleagues say they are working more closely with social, digital, marketing, advertising and sales teams. I fully expect that to rise again in the 2017 survey.

Brands are increasingly employing the PESO model (Paid, Earned, Shared, Owned) and agencies and in-house practitioners alike can't afford to rest on the laurels of media relations alone. I'm really enjoying working with the AMEC Integrated Evaluation Framework that launched in June this year, and I hope many more PR professionals adopt its principles in 2017.

On a personal consultancy level, I believe in the power of collaboration. I believe traditional agency models are changing, and I'm seeing some agencies struggling to recruit experienced PR practitioners into senior roles.

We are also seeing a different type of candidate entering the job market – Generation Z. Gen Zs are typically entrepreneurial, incredibly tech savvy and have a different work ethic, with a desire to maintain a much more appealing work life balance. It's a shift in culture for a workplace previously dominated by hardworking Gen X and Baby Boomers who are used to the graft. At our South West AGM, through a special round table event, we will be addressing the void between

the two groups and how they can collaborate and perform together.

Many PRs, like me, are relishing the opportunities of freelancing or working as independent practitioners. With improvements to superfast broadband in our region, transport links and flexible working space, more people are seeking a better life balance for themselves and their family. I believe we will continue to see a steady rise in people going it alone.

Meanwhile, I have been developing a new CIPR training course in Agile Project Management for PRs. This project management framework came from the software industry and draws on key themes of collaboration, establishing motivated teams and delivering value – all values we've long embraced in the PR profession.

Connect with CIPR South West

 [Twitter](#)

 [LinkedIn](#)

 [Facebook](#)

Wessex



Natasha Tobin FCIPR,
Chair, CIPR Wessex

Dorset is the UK's fastest-growing digital economy, with digital agency start-ups rising 212 per cent between 2010 and 2013 (Telegraph, 2015). Bournemouth is now one of the UK's leading regions for digital marketing and advertising services, presenting opportunities for PR companies branching out into creative digital content campaigns. But it's not just about the film or the image or hashtag: what is happening is the big idea – based on a solid understanding of the audience – driving meaningful conversations about the client's brand in communications campaigns.

In its report, Tech Nation 2016, More Than Just Disruption, Nesta found that this dynamic sector is creating a new type of communicator and jobs that did not exist 10 years ago. The research incorporates evidence from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) 2014 study of the Non-Financial Business Economy which shows that digital communications and telecoms are also driving the growth of our national media and communications consultancy sector.

These industries are represented in Bournemouth by a burgeoning enclave of digital businesses. They bring a more communitarian approach to business development, choosing to work like freelancers, in purpose built, project client teams. They are good at problem solving, building content, are close knit and imaginative, less risk-averse, and good at finding solutions. CIPR Wessex is increasingly running events where we share best practice as a community.

On 23 January, we will be examining the CIPR Public Services Group 'Influence for Impact' report with CMI members. This frames discussion around the challenges public sector leaders experience in communicating with taxpayers as consumers, such as inclusivity, and delivering high quality services on tight budgets. The event is timely for 2017, when it is expected that local authorities uniquely serving Dorset, Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch will undertake mergers to perform more efficiently.

Each year CIPR Wessex also visits local media companies. In 2016 this was Heart FM near Portsmouth and BBC South in Southampton. We also ask members from leading corporations to run an open house and share their skills, insights and best practice with our members.

The Wessex region probably stands alone in being home to a slightly older demographic: 28% of residents are 65 or older compared with 17.9% across the rest of England and Wales (ONS 2015). They tend to retire to the beach or the New Forest from cities and suburbs and take an interest in the property market. This may have contributed to Dorset being home to one of the biggest pro-Brexit communities in the UK. This means that PR professionals need to be cognisant when planning campaigns – especially Millennials – that they listen and take into account the sensitivities and beliefs of this demographic group. Overall prospects for the region look strong: Dorset and Hampshire are both getting stronger and investing in tourism, education, property, healthcare, arts and a thriving digital economy.

**Connect with
CIPR Wessex**



Twitter



Facebook



#PR2017 is worth 5 CPD Points