

**'Clients are willing to experiment as tried-and-tested ways no longer guarantee success'
In today's edition of 'PR Outlook for 2022' series**

Ashwani Singla, Founding Managing Partner, Astrum, shares upcoming trends in the PR industry, benefits of AI, opportunities, challenges, and more



The PR industry has observed many changes in the first five months of 2022. To understand this in detail, e4m PR and Corp Comm has come up with the 'PR Outlook for 2022' series, where PR industry stalwarts share their views on the shift the industry is experiencing towards digitalization and AI, talk about the transition, current trends, future of the PR industry, and more.

In this edition, we spoke to Ashwani Singla, Founding Managing Director, Astrum, where he discussed opportunities, challenges, upcoming trends, and benefits of AI in the PR industry, and more.

According to you, how is 2022 different in terms of trends, opportunities, and challenges the industry is facing?

After two difficult years of the pandemic, 2022 will certainly be a year of revival and growth. According to me, the year 2022 will have:

Opportunities

Clients are willing to pay a premium for demonstrable results that shape business imperatives. Clients are willing to experiment as tried-and-tested ways no longer guarantee success. Multi-skilled talent is willing to have a 'skin in the game' for a shared purpose. Sustainability & DEI performance are becoming an integral part of the organisations.

5 key trends

- Insights and data-driven communication strategy will command a premium as clients seek greater reassurance of success for their investments
- Reputation Risk will continue to keep the C Suite executives up at night as mobile internet dissolves boundaries & time
- Web 3.0 will further empower individuals and give birth to a new set of influencers and thought leaders
- Hybrid will be the way we live, work, play, and communicate
- Increasing responsibility of external scrutiny & compliance on corporations as governments adopt 'nation and citizens first' approach

Challenges

The economy continues to be volatile with cascading impact of Covid, the Russia-Ukraine war, and the rising cost of fuel. Clients will continue to be cautiously optimistic and conservative in their spends. Leadership will continue to struggle in striking the right balance of Hybrid working. Finding and keeping high performing talent will take center stage due to the 'COVID reset'.

Almost every organisation adopting digital nowadays, how do you see clients focusing on data customisation?

I believe all insights and data, unless they are bespoke or proprietary, provide little or no competitive advantage in a cluttered marketplace with little differentiation. Our clients rely largely on 'bespoke' data to inform their decisions. Just as we at Astrum only provide proprietary insights to our clients through our custom studies to understand and shape public opinion ethically.

The PR and Communications industry is now making its way into the podcast space. What are the advantages professionals can garner from the same?

Audio books and podcasts are now increasingly becoming popular as they can be consumed conveniently and on the go. The data revolution through broadband and smartphone access is the driver of the tectonic shift we are seeing in content development and consumption.

How do you foresee the future of the PR industry with the increasing use of Artificial Intelligence?

As I have said before, NLP as a programme will be useful for converting unstructured content into structured content. In time it could automate basic tasks in news monitoring and authoring content based on learning to read standard content like contracts, press releases, amongst others. But these are early days and whilst AI is making rapid strides in various aspects of business, I am yet to see a really successful business use case in the public relations industry.

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