# PR acceptance of brand content & journalism slows

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Mixed picture – long-term acceptance up, attitudes vary in short term

(London, 19 April, 2016) – PR professionals are gradually accepting the legitimacy of brand content and those who create it, according to this year's research carried out by Collective Content and ResponseSource. However, there are still major differences between traditional journalism and brand content and most likely always will be, PRs told us as part of this unique study.

The survey of 266 UK-based PRs – 69 of whom work in-house, the rest at agencies – was carried out in February this year. Among a range of findings, the research found:

• The number of PRs saying they remember being contacted by someone creating content on behalf of a brand fell – from 67 per cent in 2015 to 58.1 per cent in 2016.

• But this year the number saying they treat brand content enquiries the same as those from the media rose – from 39.4 to 53.6 per cent.

Rather than a gradual increase in the acceptance of those creating content directly for brands, there were mixed results, for example in the ways PRs work with them – providing access to events and client briefings as well as checking the destination of any coverage and other activities.

Do they have a future together?

In the short term, this year PRs said brand content creators are less likely to be treated the same way as traditional journalists (12 per cent this year versus 17 per cent in 2015). However, those who answered that there would 'Never' be parity fell strongly, from 42 per cent in 2015 to only 27.4 per cent this year.

This year's research was again full of strong opinions from PRs, with those embracing non-traditional approaches and publications balanced evenly with those who don't see any value in helping competitor brands' content creation.

Collective Content MD Tony Hallett said: "The rise of brand content is unquestionable. But it needs more PR involvement if its quality is to improve. Our research shows there is still a long way to go but the long-term trend is positive, with PRs already citing examples like the WSJ's Cocainenomics native feature for Netflix, or work they do with glossy brand magazines."

ResponseSource Founder and Chairman Daryl Willcox said: "Attitudes among the PR community to brand content are evolving, but rather than a general shift in either a positive or a negative direction the research paints a more complex picture. There are a lot of contradictions in the way PR professionals approach brand journalism, but if the most is going to be made of the opportunity it represents then the industry would need a more cohesive view and perhaps some more leadership on this issue from industry bodies."

This year's study also considers:

• Levels of understanding around key terms such as 'content marketing', 'native advertising' and 'brand journalism'.

• Whether there is a role for 'guerrilla PR' – purposefully seeking coverage in competitors' platforms.

• The reasons why brand content creators are treated differently – the main reason being 'conflict between those paying for the content and your own company/client', cited by 66.5 per cent of respondents as opposed to 54.5 per cent in 2015.

Download the full report: PR Uncertainty around brand content and journalists (http://www.responsesource.com/content/uploads/2016/04/cc-responsesource-PR-report-2016-FINAL.pdf)

Methodology:

There were 309 UK respondents from the ResponseSource database to an online survey during the month of February 2016. Of these, 266 were in PR, with 197 (74%) at agencies and the remaining 69 (26%) in-house. The other 43 were not in PR but often in related fields such as marketing roles. The focus of the report is on the PR community in the UK.

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