

## Overview of Changing Communications Environment

- **Smartphones** have been a **game changer for traditional media** resulting in falling readership and circulation figures across national print media
- Irish consumers are **still very interested in news** and specialised papers and online publishers are on the rise
- A 2017 study by DCU/Reuters showed that:
  - 80% of Irish consumers check news at least once a day
  - Younger consumers the most frequent with 58% citing checking news several times a day
  - 31% categorised as 'traditionalists' who still read a paper, listen to the radio or watch the news
  - An analysis of the platforms used to source news shows 68% using TV sources (down from 76% in 2015); 66% using online channels (excluding social media and blogs); 52% using social media; 46% radio and 40% printed newspaper (down from 49% in 2015)
- **Facebook** can now be considered the **world's largest newsroom** accounting for 64% of account ownership with 71% citing daily use (IPOS August 2017)

### Top Tips for Communicators:

1. The role of PR and communications professionals is still as the ultimate '**storytellers**'. We need to be able craft and tell stories to connect audiences with the brand
2. We need to **embrace the changing communications landscape** and adapt our approach to the new reality
3. New channels provide great opportunities for **two-way conversation** and feedback which should be welcomed
4. The key to successful communications is **knowing and understanding your audience**
5. The creation of **strong, relevant content and messaging**, targeted for your specific audiences is crucial
6. Remember it is not all about the product or company, consider bringing your company to life with **behind the scenes insights or editorial** highlighting something different in your day to day work
7. Don't forget direct communications to **staff and stakeholders** about what your company is doing as they will also disseminate information on your behalf

### Multi-Media Toolkit

The availability and development of a multi-media toolkit for communications is essential. The following are some of the items which should be considered when approaching a PR campaign. Not all elements will be required for every campaign however.

- **Press Release** - still relevant but crucial that it is short and concise and only sent to appropriate media
- **Photography** – crucial for brands to invest in good stock photography of both their product and their people. Photocalls are no longer necessary for every campaign, use selectively
- **Video** – hugely popular communications tool. Must be subtitled or risk losing half your audience.
- **Graphics / Infographics** – can work well to capture a complex story in graphical form, people more likely to read than long form article
- **Media Pitches** – crucial to successful media relations, can be hard work but necessary in securing decent features. We can no longer rely on press releases alone, instead offer insights or behind the scenes access
- **Social Media** – development of messages and visual assets tailored for appropriate channel use
- **Blogs** – development of owned content focussing on insights or 'behind the scenes' of your business
- **Sponsored content** -can work well for key target market reach. Advise the media outlet/journalists write the content to reflect the correct tone for their readers/viewers
- **Influencers/ Brand Ambassadors:** not always crucial but can work really well in reaching niche audiences

## Influencer Marketing

- Influencer marketing should be considered at the **communications strategy stage** rather than as a tactic
- The term 'influencer' has grown hugely in recent times but the **concept of using celebrities** to reach an audience is **not a new one**
- Remember **influence is relative** so you must be clear on who your target audience is and where they get their influences from
- **Influencer marketing is on the rise** for a number of reasons:
  - **Ad blockers** have risen 30% year on year between 2016/2017 so brands need alternative communications
  - Studies have shown that globally **trust is in crisis** (in brands, media, institutions etc) therefore brands looking to use influencers to advocate on their behalf
  - Individuals have proven to be **capable of having a much higher reach** than traditional media channels in some circumstances
  - According to Twitter, **nearly 40% of users say that they made a purchase as a direct result of a Tweet from an influencer**
- For brands, there are three distinct ways which influencers can be used in communications:
  - **Paid:** Content creation, partnerships, attendance at events
  - **Earned:** Social media engagements, recommendations, reviews, blog-posts
  - **Owned:** social media take overs, brand ambassadorships
- There are three types of influencer campaigns:
  - **Amplification** – influencers speaking about or giving a 'shout out' to your brand/product which can help to gain reach and drive word of mouth and awareness.
  - **Ambassadorship** – engaging an influencer as an ambassador for the brand can drive wider reach, enhance sales and credibility – opportunity to embed sales codes, personalised discount codes to measure ROI
  - **Co-creation** – brand love, change opinions, drive action
- In the main, **influencers expect payment** but it is not all about money. You may also be able to engage with them through offering **exclusive access; free product; or a VIP experience**
- It is crucial to be aware of the [tax implications for bloggers](#) who are in receipt of products and the [ASA](#) and [PRII guidelines](#) which state that influencers must **tag posts with #ad #sponsored** when working with a brand
- In **choosing which influencers to work with** it is important to **research and analyse** your audience. Tools which can help include:
  - [HYPR](#) – access influencer audience demographics, geographic data etc.
  - [Buzzsumo](#) – analyse what content performs best for any topic or competition
  - [Brandwatch](#) – discover insights from conversations happening online every day
- Brands should always consider drafting **influencer contracts/agreements** which clearly state payment terms, dates, analytics and any exclusivity agreements
- Brands should be aware of **how they can protect themselves if things go wrong:** 1) Seek advice and use online experts to manage online activity 2) Prepare a holding statement acknowledging that there is an issue which you are looking into 3) Investigate 4) Prepare a statement and take action
- In **measuring return of investment:** 1) be clear about what the business objectives are i.e. sales 2) do not rely on social results in isolation 3) remember the human aspect and importance of a recommendation or positive action

## Working Successfully with Food Bloggers

### The difference between bloggers and influencers

- Bloggers are essentially **storytellers** with a wide range of **communications tools** at their disposal
- Bloggers are **photographers, videographers, writers, editors, and promoters** of their channels
- Bloggers are **not reliant on really high numbers of followers**, but rather a **highly engaged audience**
- Blogs are **permanent homes for content** and not just reliant on social media channels

### How best to approach food bloggers

- Build **relationships** and **two-way conversations**
- Remember that bloggers are individuals with their own interests and styles – **one size does not fit all**
- **Understand the blogger**, read their blog, know their interests, their demographic, their style and use their name!
- Offer **behind the scenes, authentic experiences** which are much more valuable in many circumstances than a press release, product sample or large catch-all event

### PR agencies, press releases and product samples

- When working with a **PR agency**, make sure that they have local knowledge and are suggesting the right fit for your brand. Question any recommendations that are made on reach alone.
- Most bloggers are happy to receive **relevant press releases** for information but do not expect them to take action or write about a product/company as a result
- Understand the difference between a **media drop** and offering a **product for review** and understand that not all bloggers wish to receive or will write product reviews unless they are sponsored content
- If unsure, best to **approach the blogger and ask about their policy** on both

### How to source the right blogger for your brand

- There is no quick fix, generally it takes **research and time** to read and tap into the channels which your audience connects
- Tools such as [HYPR](#); [Buzzsumo](#); and [Brandwatch](#) can help
- Facebook groups such as [Irish Bloggers](#) or [Irish Food Bloggers](#) are a great place to start and brands can ask to be added
- Brands can also **ask for recommendations from other bloggers** who should be happy to recommend a good fit

### Terms & payment

- When working with a blogger or influencer it is important to have **clearly defined terms** and a written agreement outlining expectations, measurement tactics and issues such as copyright of images; IP; and protection of name and reputation on both sides
- You should **never expect a blogger to work for free**, but in some instances if a unique experience or opportunity is offered, this may be accepted. There are differences to those who blog as a hobby versus fulltime
- In approaching a blogger, **know what you are asking them to do** and expect that they will ask you what your budget is
- Any fee agreement should be **directly linked to a clear outline of what will be received** and in what time frame for that fee

## Measurement

- It is key to **discuss from the outset** how the activity will be measured
- **Brands should ensure that blog content** includes links and that bloggers provide ongoing feedback on engagement – too often this is not discussed upfront or requested after
- **Return on investment** should be questioned more and including affiliate links or promo codes can help in measuring success
- Be aware that **impressions alone are not enough** to drive sales – request feedback on how people are engaging with the content on a human level, not just statistics

## Compliance

- Compliance with **revenue and ASAI/PRII guidelines** is crucial for the bloggers and brands
- The **onus is on the brand** as much as the blogger/influencer to ensure that anyone they are working with is fully compliant
- Brands must remember that **if you send something of high value to a blogger** you actually may cost them money
- There is **a lot of self-regulation** within the Irish blogging community and they will be called out

## Blogger Tips for Food Brands

1. Make sure that a brand ambassador or influencer is absolutely the **right fit for your brand**
2. Emphasise **building relationships with micro-influencers** rather than quick hits with macro-influencers.
3. **Do not base your decisions on level of reach or social media measurement alone**
4. **Always turn down requests for product in return for positive reviews**
5. Ensure that you are **compliant with ASAI guidelines** and that sponsored posts are flagged with #ad #sponsored
6. **Value people's time and expertise** and never expect bloggers to work for free
7. Be aware of the **tax implications** when gifting or distributing samples
8. **Agree clear terms** outlining what is expected from the blogger and what the blogger can expect in return
9. Connect with the blogging community and **ask for recommendations** on the right fit for your brand if you are struggling to identify
10. Considering using a **brand collaboration tool** to enhance the reach of the collaboration
11. Ensure that any **nutritional claims are legitimate** and only work with qualified dieticians
12. Do not forget to **tell your story** and give the personal touch to the brand

## Working Successfully with Media

### Trends in Journalism

- The media is going through an **era of huge change** and it remains an incredibly **challenging time** with ongoing casualties in Irish print market, local papers under pressure, issues with media ownership, salaries going down and experienced people leaving the industry
- Traditional media are however **continuing to invest in journalism and strong content** in order to compete with online but have to be giving readers something which they are not going to get elsewhere
- Journalists **are increasingly time-poor** and have to do so much more than write or record the item, they also have to promote and prepare content for publication/broadcast in a number of different formats
- **PR professionals are still relevant** and can be a valuable to journalists in filtering through large quantities of information if they know and do their job correctly
- Journalists also often **use social media to find stories** and engage with brands
- Consumers have **increasingly short cycles of attention** with many only reading headlines and skimming news content so it is crucial to grab attention from the outset
- While short content and video is popular, there is **still demand for the written word** and longer-form journalism for specific audiences
- Younger audiences are however **increasingly engaged on social issues** and eager for their voices to be heard so longer form online features can have high levels of engagement
- A lot of media houses are now using **programmatic advertising** to direct content to a specific niche targeted audience, ensuring it enters their online news feeds
- **Bloggers and influencers** are in some instances **competing with traditional news sources** and while some have reached saturation point, those who remain relevant tend to be selective in their associations with brands and fully transparent
- The future of traditional media will most likely involve **paywalls in various forms** targeting those who believe that good journalism needs to be paid for
- There continues to be a **big interest in food related stories** in the media and so **huge opportunities for brands** to pay for and promote content

### Media Tips for Food Brands

1. **Know the journalist and the media outlet** – read, listen and understand their audience
2. **Only pitch relevant content** – understand that journalists are increasingly time-poor and receive large volumes of information, it is crucial to get your pitch right
3. **Identify your angle** - think about how you can be different and original and how you fit with their audience, identify and offer an engaging news hook
4. **Have strong photography available** – you should have a range of clean, clear product and corporate images at your fingertips before making contact
5. **Provide samples** – media drops are still useful but do not expect or demand a response. If it is a right fit and a good product, the journalist may mention, if it isn't, they will not. Do not engage in “wacky” media drop stunts.
6. **Press releases are still relevant** – but should be concise, well-written and only sent to appropriate journalists
7. **Present the best version of your brand** – ensure your writing, images, packaging and product are the best they can be and that the communicator knows and understands the journalist and media outlet
8. **Communicate in the appropriate form** – most journalists prefer email, some welcome a phone call, others can be contacted via social media. Know and understand their preferred form and do not ring a Sunday newspaper on a Friday!



9. **Food Awards are valuable** – they can provide food journalists with information on upcoming and strong brands
10. **Press events** – Many journalists no longer have the time to attend unless it is something completely unique. If planning a press event consider the best day and time for your target journalists and “drop-in” options to accommodate busy schedules
11. **Choose the right PR supplier** – if working with a consultant, ensure that they know and understand your target market and approach media in the correct way.
12. **Avoid pseudo-scientific claims** - around nutritional/health benefits and only work with registered dieticians
13. **Do not be afraid to approach journalists** – if you know and understand their audience and style, be positive, clear and identify what makes you interesting

Ends