

# Industry Visionaries Share Perspectives on the Future of Marketing and Communications at The PR Net Future Focus Conference

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The PR Net Future Focus Conference was held on March 31st at The Wall Street Hotel and brought together top global players in the marketing communications field, to discuss innovative ideas and visionary perspectives that are shaping the future of the industry. The conference featured six panels covering a range of topics from the future of media to the new rules of events, and attracted a diverse audience of senior executives from various sectors.

To purchase professionally produced recordings of the conference, showcasing all panel discussions from the day for \$49, [click this link here](#).

## **The Future of Media**

Moderator: Tiana Webb Evans, founder & CEO, ESP Inc.

Panelists: Skye Parrott, Editor in Chief, Departures; Jessica Cruel, Editor in Chief, Allure; Erik Maza, Executive Style Director, Town & Country; Amanda Sims Clifford, Executive Editor, House Beautiful

'The Future of Media' panel assembled publishing leaders to discuss the changing landscape of media. Amanda Sims Clifford acknowledged the current state of the industry in a post-pandemic world, noting that "disruption has become a state of existence" due to the significant changes the media industry has undergone over the past few years. Jessica Cruel, Editor-in-Chief of Allure, stressed the importance of engaging with audiences across various brand touchpoints, pointing out that "Many of our readers are typing in a question on the internet and Allure's got the answer. That means we need to meet them where they are asking questions." Erik Maza, Executive Style Director of Town & Country, shared his appreciation for the value and luxury of journalism, describing it as a "bespoke, carefully crafted product that's expensive to produce." Skye Parrott, Editor in Chief of Departures, shared insight into the publication's approach to bridging the gap between online and offline mediums, stating that they give the same level of attention to both digital and print features to create a luxurious experience across all touchpoints.

## **Web3 + Metaverse: Powering Brand Marketing and Innovation**

Moderator: Megan DeMatteo, Independent journalist, CoinDesk Contributor

Panelists: Akbar Hamid, Founder & CEO of The 5th Column; Brian Trunzo, Metaverse Lead, Polygon Labs; Neda Whitney, SVP, Head of Marketing Americas, Christie's; Justin Breton, Director of Brand Experiences & Partnerships, Walmart

'Web3 + Metaverse: Powering Brand Marketing and Innovation', presented by The 5th Column, discussed the emergence of Web3, its impact, and the importance of integrating the platform into brands' marketing approaches with longevity in mind. Akbar Hamid, the Founder & CEO of The 5th Column, stated, "Brands are slowing down the hype but actually speeding up in terms of innovation. We're seeing brands test and try different things as part of a long-term strategy, not just a one-off." Justin Breton, Director of Brand Experiences and Strategic Partnerships at Walmart, emphasized the importance of adopting and adapting to this new technology as a part of a future-proofed marketing strategy, saying, "I think brands that fail to embrace the metaverse today are at risk of being left behind as we enter this new era of commerce and engagement. We'll witness an interesting blend of content experiences, socializing, and commerce that have never been seen before."

## **What's Next in Influencer Marketing?**

Moderator: Reesa Lake, VP, Head of Creator Expansion & Agency Partnerships, LTK

Panelists: Nana Agyemang, Multimedia Journalist and CEO, EveryStylishGirl; Luke Meagher, Founder, HauteLeMode; Emily Yeston, Co-Founder & CEO, Doré; Permele Doyle, Founder & President, Billion Dollar Boy; Cynthia Andrew, Founder, Simply Cyn

The 'What's Next in Influencer Marketing?' panel brought together content creators and influencer marketing experts to discuss recent developments and future predictions for the creator space. Emily Yeston, Co-Founder & CEO of Doré, a brand co-founded by Garance Doré, one of the original social media influencers, shared her thoughts on brand partnerships, stating, "There's so much freedom for individual creators now, to have more power over what you say yes or no to." Luke Meagher, founder of HauteLeMode, emphasized the need for education and strategy when switching platforms, saying, "It doesn't matter if people are talking about that new platform; you have to understand it. If not going completely through the door, at least crack the door to understand it." Permele Doyle shared her forward-looking predictions on the next phase of marketing spend, stating, "We've seen a return to earned and advocacy - clients are going to invest into gifting, seeding, press trips, events."

## **The New Rules of Events**

Moderated by Jack Bedwani, founder & CEO, New Moon

Panelists: Rachna Shah, Partner, Managing Director PR and Digital, KCD; Sue Chan, Founder, Care of Chan; Brian Feit, Founding Partner, BMF

The 'New Rules of Events' brought together event planning and production experts to discuss the current state of post-pandemic events and best practices for success in the future. Sue Chan, Founder of Care of Chan, emphasized the importance of creating bespoke memorable experiences that cater to targeted communities and audiences, stating, "Monoculture is dead now – it's all about niche culture. Brands are realizing they have to target niche markets in order to succeed." Rachna Shah added her perspective on the need for inclusivity and events that reach audiences beyond industry insiders, saying that "it's not just a press or VIP experience anymore – we're delivering to such a broader audience" and that "brands have to be in the market with their superfans, wherever they're located." Brian Feit, Founding Partner of BMF, rounded off the discussion by noting the influential movement of creating advertising content from the backdrop of an event, sharing, "The idea that events are to create content for ad campaigns is something new and exciting."

## **Why Purpose & Impact Will be Inextricable from Tomorrow's Marketing Strategy**

Moderator: Sophia Li, Award-winning Journalist and Climate Advocate

Panelists: Janna Pea, Executive Vice President, BerlinRosen; Aidaly Sosa, Head of Marketing USA, Tony's Chocolonely; Anu Rao, SVP, Communications, Sustainability & Responsibility, Pernod Ricard

During 'Why Purpose & Impact Will be Inextricable from Tomorrow's Marketing Strategy,' panelists discussed essential elements for brands to create an inclusive and impactful presence, including their mission, vision, purpose, team and sustainability. Janna Pea, Executive Vice President of Berlin Rosen, noted that "your North Star as a brand is to create moments and opportunities that are truly inclusive; so every person feels seen and heard." Anu Rao, SVP, Communications, Sustainability & Responsibility, Pernod Ricard, stressed the importance of prioritizing team values and beliefs, stating that "the ambassadorship for your beliefs and purpose starts with your team." By prioritizing these elements, brands can differentiate themselves from competitors, connect with customers on a deeper level, and contribute to a more sustainable and equitable future. Aidaly Sosa, Head of Marketing USA at Tony's Chocolonely, added that their focus is on being an "impact company that sells chocolate, not the other way around." Rao emphasized the importance of "doing the right

thing and doing it right" before communicating about sustainability efforts as a summary of the talk's thesis.

## **Is Traditional PR Dead?**

Moderator: Elizabeth Harrison, CEO & Co-Founder, H&S Communications

Panelists: Lisa Frank, President and Founding Partner, Derris; Karina Sokolovsky, Chief Communications Officer, Sotheby's; Andrew Lister, Executive Vice President, Purple PR; Gabrielle Gambrell, Senior Communications Lead, Amazon; Brian Strong, Global Head of Communications, Bloomberg Media

The highly anticipated panel, 'Is Traditional PR Dead?', delved into traditional PR's role in the fast-paced communications landscape. Panelists highlighted the need to adapt to new technologies while retaining some traditional PR techniques for effective communication. Lisa Frank shared essential skills for modern professionals: "Be a voracious consumer of various outlets. Observe trends to bring to clients. Be a thoughtful, concise writer." Relationship-building and adaptability emerged as key themes. Frank urged, "Relationships – make them ongoing, not just when you need a favor." Brian Strong concurred, "Relationships are a traditional part of PR that will not go away." The conversation also touched on storytelling, audience identification, and message medium selection. Andrew Lister remarked, "PR is not just about getting stories. We now advise on everything with clients." Gabrielle Gambrell noted the enduring significance of outlets like The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, and The Wall Street Journal. Discussing content selection, Gambrell advised using LinkedIn for self-publishing, while Karina Sokolovsky underscored the value of traditional media, mentioning Sotheby's success with well-placed articles in top-tier outlets, often leading to bids and clients.

The Future Focus Conference was a resounding success, providing attendees with invaluable insights about the future of the marketing communications industry. The networking sessions peppered throughout the day were embraced by the audience, which included representatives from brands like Virgin Group, Airbnb, American Express, Sephora, Hilton Hotels, Dow Jones, COS, Tend, Mikimoto, Brunello Cucinelli, Small Luxury Hotels Group, Anthropologie, Four Seasons, Fritz Hansen, Proximo Spirits, Air France/KLM and Pernod Ricard, and agency leaders from MC Saatchi, Magrino, Finn Partners, Derris, Day One Agency, WE Communications, KWT Global and LaForce.

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## PHOTOS:

Socials & PR Panel: Link [HERE](#) (credit: BFA / Deonté Lee)

Panels & Atmosphere: Link [HERE](#) (credit: Dusan Jovic )

Panelists: Link [HERE](#) (credit: Adele Makulova)

**ABOUT THE PR NET:** The PR Net is the premier global network for marketing and communications professionals. It is a modern take on the classic networking club and an "industry insider favorite" for executives looking for a central platform for industry intelligence and connections. Founded by industry veteran Lisa Smith in 2015, The PR Net consists of online content that reads like a magazine, member-only services, and highly sought-after digital and in-person member events.

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