

THE BLOG 05/09/2016 02:15 pm ET | Updated May 09, 2016

# Why words and numbers must go hand-in-hand



By Sarah Cannata

*"Communication - the human connection - is the key to personal and career success." - Paul J. Meyer*

Take it from me, a Communications/PR person who is as comfortable with numbers as words, is a rare breed. As someone who has worked in the Communications/PR sector for what seems like forever (trust me, I'm starting to sport the grey hairs to show it), I know how stressful roles in these fields can be.

I'm blessed to have mostly worked for companies and alongside people who have always valued what I do. I've also experienced times when I've felt like I work and I work and nobody notices because I don't have a set of shiny statistics that'll knock a boss out of their seat. After all, organisational decision-makers are results-driven and keen to see what proof is in the pudding.

There's always something special about hitting it off with someone who works in a similar field to you and straight away, Deb Camden and I just clicked. Don't you just love technology? Thanks to Skype, people such as Deb and I can chat even though we're not in the same state (as I look outside at Melbourne's gloomy weather, I'm terribly jealous of the sunny and warm Brisbane she calls home).





Here's an interesting question for you:

*Did you know that in Australia, organisations invest almost half a billion dollars on their public relations activities?*

Now, I'm not the biggest numbers person but even I know that's a massive stat and even though I'm in the industry, I was completely shocked when Deb shared this information with me. What she asked me next made me feel a little uncomfortable because as someone who does work in the industry, it has been a sore spot in the past.

*How much of this activity is actually delivering value and where is the proof?*

I looked at Deb over the Skype call and honestly had no answer for her. Communications/PR people aren't salespeople with a string of reports to generate on a monthly basis that help to prove our worth. And let's be totally honest here, the mere mention of numbers sends the majority of us running away in panic, faster than Usain Bolt. Anyone like Deb who uses the words "love affair" when talking about numbers and words pretty much has my automatic respect. As the Principal at PRISM Communication Architects, Deb is bursting with these sorts of challenging questions.

"Here's the thing Sarah. For someone working in PR to claim the seat they deserve at that management table and in the boardroom, we need to play according to the same rules. That means applying the same discipline and accountability as our colleagues working in finance, operations and HR departments."

If there's one thing we all agree on and recognise, it's that the business world has its gaze firmly set on triple and quadruple bottom lines. What this means is that if a PR strategy and corporate strategy are acting more like Batman and Superman now that the superheroes have decided to turn on one another, that's never going to work. The two must link and work together, otherwise, press releases, brochures, videos and so on... they're all basically just a bunch of activities without effect.


The good news is that Deb is so passionate and committed to helping Communications/PR professionals to get the attention and praise they deserve, she's combined more than three decades' worth of business experience to create something called [The Communication Dividend](#). In a nutshell, this industry-shaping measurement framework delivers a simple, practical approach that can be applied to any organisation. It's designed by communication professionals for communication professionals.

So, what did I take away from my Skype session with Deb? Sometimes, it's incredibly easy to forget that people have walked a similar path before and in my experience, we fail to reach out to seasoned professionals such as Deb because we feel intimidated by them and what they have achieved. Next time you're feeling a little out of your depth and fear holds you back from reaching out to someone, remember that knowledge exists to be shared.

***Sarah Cannata is a Communication Consultant for PRISM Communication Architects***

**Follow Sarah Cannata on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/CannataAU](https://www.twitter.com/CannataAU)**



Sarah Cannata   
Professional writer