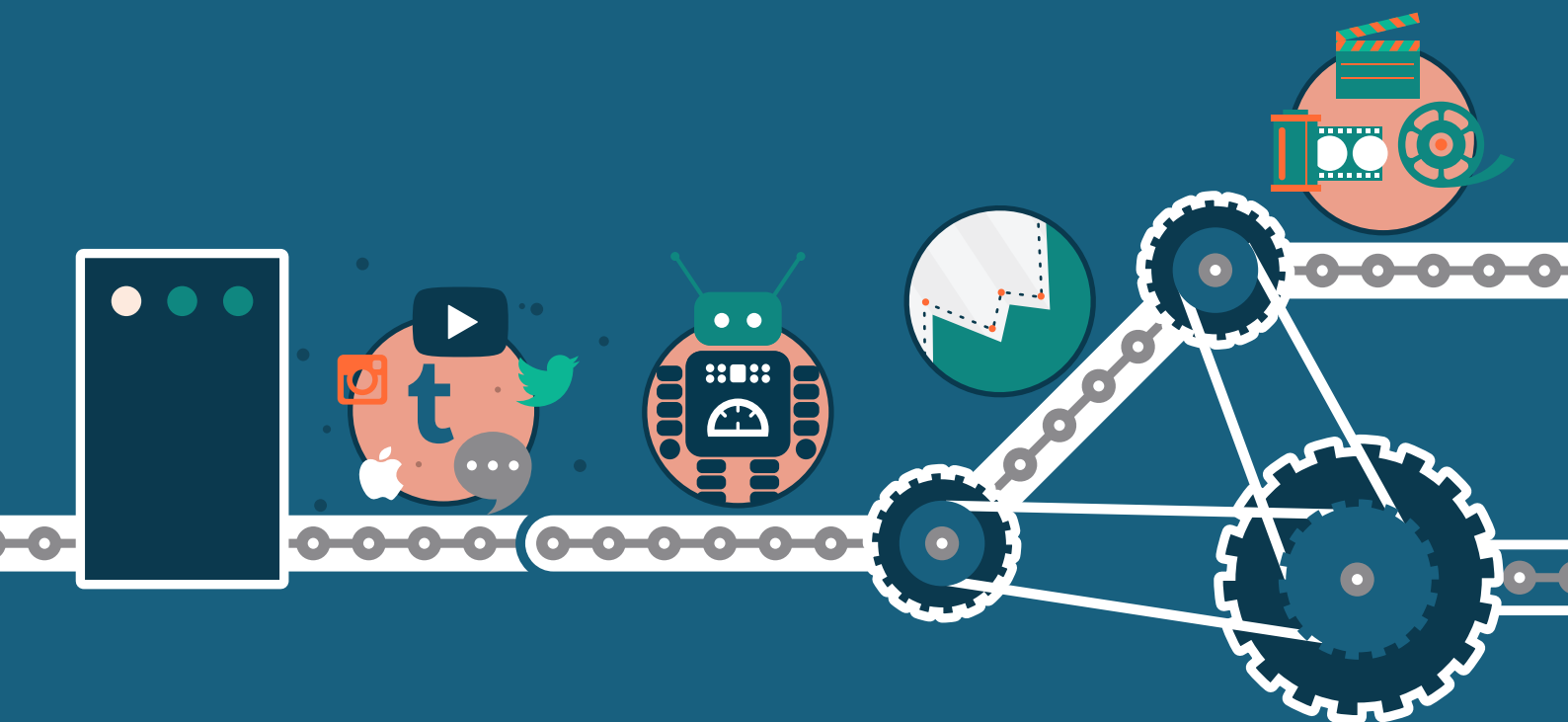


# FOUR TRENDS THAT WILL SHAPE PR AND EARNED MEDIA IN 2018

OUTLINING THE ESSENTIAL EARNED  
MEDIA DEVELOPMENTS  
COMMUNICATORS CAN USE



# SUMMARY

2018 promises to be another intriguing year in the evolution of the PR industry as economic, social and technological trends continue to change the earned media landscape and the wider world.

This white paper picks out four key trends for communicators, including, why brands will no longer be able to duck social issues and, instead, be forced to take a stance on key issues in their sector in 2018. It examines how communicators will evolve their use of video content over the course of the year and explore how evolving technology is set to start a robot revolution across the industry.

Finally, the white paper will discuss the need for communicators to use earned media measurement in 2018 to ensure earned media gets the share of the marketing budget it deserves.

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# INTRODUCTION

Technological advances will power earned media developments in 2018. While trends relating to video content and Artificial Intelligence are the direct result of new tools, there are other evolving themes, such as brands representing their audience socially and measurement of earned media, which have emerged because the technology exists for it to do so.

## BRANDS TAKING A STANCE

The interconnectivity of social media has led to people communicating with strangers on issues of mutual interest. It is this capability, combined with increased social awareness, which has led to consumers expecting their favourite brands to take a stance on issues of importance.

“Speaking out on meaningful issues is risky, but if you do it right, your brand reputation can be rewarded,” says Jennifer Zottola, director at Stern Strategy Group.

## VIDEO

Perhaps the most obvious use of communicators using technology to create shareable content, is the ubiquity of video content on social media.

A Cisco study has predicted that 75% of the world’s mobile traffic will be video by 2020, while internet video traffic will account for 80% of all internet traffic in four years.

If communicators are not already integrating video into their campaigns, across both traditional and social channels, then it will become even more imperative in the future.

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

We’ve all read the doom-laden predictions about the effect Artificial Intelligence could have on previously ‘safe’ professional roles, but this extends to earned media, where it has been assumed that technology cannot replace the creativity and interaction of humans.

There are opportunities and threats when it comes to how AI will affect earned media. It could be a disruptive technology, possibly replacing humans and causing job losses throughout the industry. However, it could lead to huge increases in the efficiency and productivity of human

operators, as communicators adopt AI to assist and improve workflow.



**Stephen Waddington**, chief engagement officer at **Ketchum**, only sees AI having a positive impact in 2018: “We’re seeing AI emerging in almost every area of our business; listening, content development, channel management, seeding content and workflow. It’s helping us to become smarter and more efficient in almost every aspect of what we do.”

## EARNED MEDIA MEASUREMENT

As continuing budgetary pressures squeeze what we are able to do as communicators, the need to measure and attribute value and ROI to your campaigns and work will become even more essential as the year progresses.

What will change are the tools available for you to do this, with new technological developments, including those at Cision, allowing you to evaluate your work like never before.



**Barry Leggetter**, chief executive of the **Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC)**, believes that new technology and metrics will finally lead to the end of AVEs and better measurement will allow communicators to align campaigns to business outcomes.

“2018 will see the continued decline of AVEs to a tipping-point beyond which they will lose any remaining credibility,” he says. “I expect to see a continued drive towards measuring the contribution of comms to business outcomes.”

Communicators will need to plan for how these four aspects of earned media, which are all driven by technological advances, will affect their work in 2018, otherwise they will miss out on a valuable opportunity.

1:

## THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL ISSUES

### **PREDICTION: MORE BRANDS WILL NEED TO TAKE A STANCE – FOR BETTER OR WORSE.**

Historically, brands have shied away from taking stances on social issues, fearing that political opinion could alienate customers. However, a combination of the current febrile political environment and the rise of social media has led to people expecting brands and organisations to take a stance on controversial issues.

This means that brands must successfully engage with the issues of the day while ensuring they do not misjudge the mood of their customers or the wider public.

Some have already fallen foul of this tightrope, with Pepsi's advert involving Kendall Jenner sharing the drink in order to calm a stand-off between protestors and the police, is now infamous example of a brand misjudging the public's mood on a particular issue.

However, managing to walk this tightrope successfully can see huge benefits for brands. In the US, Lyft was able to overtake Uber in number of app downloads after it made a \$1m donation to the American Civil Liberties Union off the back of the #deleteuber trend on Twitter.

The backlash against Uber was instigated after many believed the company had undermined a taxi strike called to protest against President Trump's immigration ban in February after it issued a tweet during the strike promoting its services.

If a brand is thinking about taking a stance on a particular issue, it is imperative that your audience sees it as an authentic expression. Part of the reason Pepsi's campaign backfired was because people saw it as an inauthentic attempt to jump on the bandwagon of the emerging popularity and rise of political protest.

## **PR CASE STUDY: EDELMAN - I MOVE LONDON** **CLIENT: ASICS | TIMING: JULY 19 - AUGUST 10, 2017**

### **Summary**

Edelman has worked with a number of brands on socially conscious campaigns, including Dove's campaign for Real Beauty. This summer, the agency worked with ASICS to develop a campaign which would boost sales, highlight its sponsorship of the IAAF 2017 World Championships and improve the health of Londoners.

I Move London was a campaign aimed to get Londoners to feel the mood-boosting benefits of movement by making physical activity as easy and accessible for everyone, and the antidote to stress of urban life.

The most common of these 'stresses', backed by Edelman Intelligence research, was the daily tube commute. What if, rather than the ordinary commute, people were inspired to use their city as a gym and run or walk part of the distance instead?

Edelman created a film series that inspired people to use their city as a gym. The campaign culminated with Run the Tube - a touring multisensory 85m light installation tunnel which encouraged people of all abilities and ages to move. Starting with a launch event at a closed Waterloo station, commuters swapped train tracks for running tracks, stuffy air for fresh air and, engine power for human power. The end result culminating with London commuters arriving at the destination feeling mentally alert and positive because when you move your body, you move your mind.

### **Objectives**

- Leverage ASICS' sponsorship of the 2017 International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) World Championships in London
- Introduce ASICS' brand refresh and new brand tagline 'I Move Me' - ASICS' contemporary expression of its founding latin ethos 'anima sana in corpore sano,' meaning a Sound Mind in a Sound Body.
- Engage a new, younger, more diverse audience with the 'I Move Me' message.

## Strategy and implementation

The strategy was to understand the barriers that prevent people from moving and create an activation that made people move. Edelman had to be clear from the start that they couldn't just tell people to move, it needed a strategy and creative idea that actually got people moving.

Edelman commissioned research on barriers to movement and causes of stress in their audience's lives and identified the daily commute to work as a big stress point. This became the jumping off point for the creative idea. It wanted to educate and inspire Londoners on how they could use the city to move in, plus create a live experience that actually made people move.

I Move London launched with a series of social content videos starring ASICS' SMSB influencer collective, culminating in an outdoor experiential called Run the Tube. Run the Tube was an 85m multisensory experience, made from hoops of light that responded to music. Over nine days, Run the Tube toured three public London locations, each targeting a different demographic.

The overall campaign lived through a blend of paid, earned and owned media spanning partnerships with **Spotify**, **Time Out** and **Metro** and engaging 32 paid and earned influencers across the campaign.

All content for the campaign was

housed on  
[www.asics.com/imovelondon](http://www.asics.com/imovelondon).

## Results

- 4.8 campaign video views.
- 9.7m social engagements.
- 12.5k Run the Tube visitors.
- 1.7m campaign engagements.
- 19m social impressions.
- 32 influencers generated 4.36M reach, with 98% positive sentiment.
- 5.8k Runkeeper sign-ups.
- 12.5k Run the Tube visitors.
- 22m partnered impressions.
- £12.5k store sales driven by Metro promotion.
- 57 pieces of earned coverage with 5.1m opportunities to see.
- 7% increase in purchase consideration during the campaign.
- 4% increase in brand awareness.

## KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Making a success of any campaign or comms around social issues requires you to know who you're speaking to and what messages will inspire them. Social activism is most appealing to those aged 18-35, with research from the Global Strategy Group finding that individuals in this age range are over 20% more likely to shop with companies whose corporate stances align with their own beliefs.

As such, using tools to identify the right audience and understanding what is important to them is a critical factor in ensuring that you can create a successful campaign relating to a social issue.

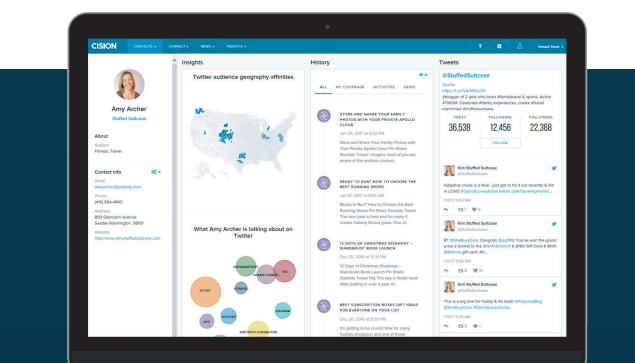
Cision offers a number of services which can help you to craft successful issues-related campaigns. Our media database can help you identify key influencers in your target sector, while you can use our social and media monitoring services to track your campaign, while our insight services will enable you to see the sentiment around your activity.

The Cision Communications Cloud® offers listening tools which allows you track trending and emerging topics across online, broadcast and social channels, delivering valuable insights to help you carefully construct campaigns around the day's issues.

Tapping in to the activist mood and engaging with social issues will be a key way to connect with your audience in 2018. Messaging requires careful thought and planning, otherwise you could risk alienating your audience and being seen as inauthentic and cynical.

DISCOVER HOW TO TRANSFORM YOUR  
EARNED MEDIA STRATEGY WITH THE  
**CISION COMMUNICATIONS CLOUD**

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## 2:

# RISE OF THE MACHINES

## PREDICTION: THE PR INDUSTRY WILL FURTHER HARNESS THE POWER OF AI

The robot revolution has been garnering doom-laden headlines over the fate of professional industries over the past few years, but 2018 could be the first year in which it changes the landscape of earned media.

There is a split between those who believe that AI will disrupt the industry and threaten employment of communicators. Others are more optimistic, convinced that Artificial Intelligence will become a tool communicators use to sharpen their output.



**Stephen Waddington**, chief engagement officer at **Ketchum**, says AI is an opportunity: “More opportunity is going to be created by this wave of technology. I’m hugely optimistic about it,” he said. “It’s helping us become smarter and more efficient in every aspect of what we do.”

Some of us might be fearful that smarter machines and further technological advances will lead to humans being hollowed out of the industry, with AI also taking on “creative” tasks previously assumed safe from being made obsolete.

There are some areas where machines are already fulfilling roles previously assumed to be the preserve of humans. In the US, the Associated Press is using artificial intelligence to write 3,500 full earnings reports every quarter, relating to US companies which generate 100,000 articles a year covering minor league baseball games.

However, if there is automation of existing processes in earned media this year, it will only relate to mundane tasks. Meanwhile, AI evangelists will begin to adapt new technology to augment their offering.

## ANALYSING DATA INTELLIGENTLY

The definition of intelligence is to acquire and apply knowledge and skills. Currently, communicators use technology and services to obtain insights from large amounts of data compiled by machines, as **Clarity PR's Sara Collinge** explains:



“Current applications of AI are primarily in crunching huge amounts of data to glean insights and distributing content. It’s easy to see how analysing huge amounts of data in a short period of time can help PRs get ahead of a reputational issue or to understand what audiences are talking about or interested in at any given time.”

However, this is an example of a repetitive task where computers crunch data on a large scale, with humans then interpreting and acting upon the patterns and trends found by machines.

Where AI will speed up this process is by optimising the analysis of data. Computers can process vast amounts of data much faster than a human, but does not know what to do with it. With new algorithms being developed all the time, machines are becoming able to understand the patterns and trends it is searching for, making data analysis far more efficient.

As Collinge notes: “We’ll start to see more agencies and brands trialling new machine-led tools in 2018, but their use is still at an early stage and there’s much more development to come.”

The potential of machine learning goes beyond simply finding trends. We can now use AI in social media crisis management to estimate how big a crisis is going to be. This is done by using an algorithm to analyse data and comparing it with previous crises, enabling communicators to tailor their response to the scale of the issue.

## USING AI TO INTERACT WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

Stephen Waddington believes that two key areas where communicators can take real advantage of the advances in Artificial Intelligence will be home automation devices and chatbots.

While we’ve all probably noticed the increasing ubiquity of home automation devices such as the Amazon Echo and Google Home, Waddington says that communicators will need to find a way of harnessing them to help engage with their audience.

“It’s something we’re very firmly experimenting with within my business to understand the relationship between a consumer and using one of these

devices,” he said. “You can already see it’s stripping out a layer of mediation with the internet as all questions receive one answer, rather than ten from searching manually.”

While chatbots have dated back to SmarterChild, which was a feature of Instant Messaging services at the turn of the millennium, they have now developed to the point at which brands are comfortable in using them to interact with their customers.

Some 18 months after Facebook launched a bot platform on its Messenger service, there are now 100,000 bots live, illustrating their popularity and scale.

“People are creating bots for basic sales functions, basic customer service, basic travel information – so if you want to query the time of a train or plane you can do that,” Waddington said.

“There’s some really interesting work being done by travel organisations, led by the airline and train industries, in providing customer service via this new technology. In 2013 and 2014 if our train was late we moaned on Twitter, now you’re likely to connect to a bot on the Facebook Messenger platform.”

Given the nature of technology, the predicted uses of Artificial Intelligence detailed above are likely to only cover a small fraction of the ways in which earned media practitioners will adopt the technology in the future. One thing is for certain though; you will have a huge competitive advantage if you are able to adapt to take advantage of the possibilities created by advances in Artificial Intelligence.

# 3:

## THE EVOLUTION OF VIDEO IN 2018

### PREDICTION: VIDEO WILL DOMINATE IN 2018

That video is becoming one of the most dominant tools in a communicator's arsenal will come as no surprise. However, every year the use of the medium evolves, with communicators needing to adapt to keep their video content relevant.

With the sheer diversity of platforms that now use video, we not only have to decide the type of video we want to create for our campaigns, we must also now decide which platform it should be allied with and even whether we film live or stick with a pre-cut package.

It is the variety of platforms which now host video which will be both the biggest opportunity and challenge for communicators looking to maximise the effect of video content in 2018.



"The platform should also be part of the creative process, looking at how the audience engages on each platform, how it's viewed etc and this should inform how the video is produced," says **Laura Sutherland**, chief at **Aura PR**.

Specialist broadcast PR agency **Shout! Communications** produces video content across a wide range of platforms. On the next page **Rory Green**, one of its videographers, outlines what he thinks the biggest changes in video content will be in the coming year.

## OPINION: HOW VIDEO WILL CHANGE EARNED MEDIA IN 2018



**Rory Green**  
videographer  
Shout! Communications

Video content is ever-changing. If you look at the most popular videos from a couple of years ago they are completely different in style and content to videos that are trending today. While it is difficult to predict exactly what the video landscape will look like in 2018 there are current trends that will continue to shape what PR video will look like next year.

If you look at your social media feeds, you will not have to scroll down too far before you see a video. Increased video presence on social is not a new trend, but what has changed is the style of these videos.

There are many social media platforms out there now, and each has its own specific audience and style. So, ensuring that your videos can work across all platforms will be very important in 2018, and could mean filming in a way that the footage can be repurposed to work across multiple platforms.

Sound, or should I say lack of it, will also continue to influence how we make our PR videos. Since most people watch videos silently on their phones or on their computers at work you need to make your video work hard visually. This means that most videos now have subtitles. However, our attention spans are getting shorter and

audiences may switch off if they have to read lots of text! Therefore, you can expect to see more visual, interesting, ways of making videos work silently.

News and lifestyle websites are embracing video content and many now have their own in-house videographers and editors. This means that they want to re-purpose B-roll into their own online package rather than taking a PR branded more polished film.

When we create a b-roll for television we ensure that it is filmed in a news style so that broadcasters can seamlessly edit our footage into their own packages. This is also the case for websites that use b-roll. However, the style of filming will differ from television, for example and you may have to leave space for text and frame your shots in a way that they can be cropped to fit on multiple video platforms.

One final trend for 2018 will be how technology will change PR videos. Virtual reality headsets are now extremely affordable and it won't be long until they are commonplace in everyone's household. This will mean that PRs will need to start taking advantage of this new technology. It is genuinely exciting to think of the possibilities of being able to fully immerse your audience into the brand or product that you are PRing!

- **Shout! Communications is an agency which specialises in video, TV, online and radio broadcast content. It services a wide range of clients across a range of sectors.**

## HOW TO GET YOUR VIDEO STRATEGY RIGHT

Like being able to use data to amplify and improve your campaigns, successfully crafting video content into your stories has become a necessity for communicators who want to engage as many people as possible.

A survey by video company Animoto found that four times as many consumers would rather watch a video about a product than read about it, while one in four lose interest in a company if it doesn't produce video content.

Sutherland believes that, in an age where people have more constraints on their time than ever before, earned media video will become shorter in 2018, more like the length of the first television adverts.

“Video has long, in my opinion, been one of the best forms of media to engage audiences and in 2018, videos will be even shorter, as the consumer attention span is shorter than ever, overloaded with content. If you think about TV adverts, they have had massive impact on consumers, started back in the US in 1941, with short sharp messages 10-30 seconds long and specific calls to action.”

Video in 2018 will be about evolution rather than revolution, as communicators find a way to stand out in world where attention spans are getting shorter and the amount of video content available is growing exponentially. You will need to ensure that you decide which platforms you are creating video content for and tailor each video to suit them, rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach.

# 4:

## EXPECT AN EARNED MEDIA MEASUREMENT REVOLUTION IN 2018

### **PREDICTION: COMMUNICATORS WILL USE TECHNOLOGY TO “JOIN THE DOTS” BETWEEN EARNED MEDIA AND BUSINESS RESULTS.**

We all know consumers trust earned media more than any other kind of marketing content. Paid media, on the other hand, encompasses many of the world’s most hated marketing tactics.

Consumers avoid paid advertising wherever possible. A staggering 88% of people say paid ads have no influence on their buying decisions. And according to GlobalWebIndex, 79% want ad blocking software installed on their mobile devices.

But despite all that, paid media budgets have grown rapidly in recent years – while earned media has remained stagnant. Ask any CMO and they’ll tell you why. They feel confident investing in paid media because it’s easy to measure, easy to manage and easy to see when it’s generating ROI.

At Cision®, we know ensuring company execs feel the same way about earned media is the key to unlocking its true potential. And thanks to a revolution in PR measurement technology, that will finally be possible in 2018.

“Recognition that businesses have under-invested in earned media and over-invested in paid is happening right now,” says Abe Smith, Cision president, EMIA. “There has never been a better time to be a communications professional, whether you’re on the agency side or the brand side.”

In fact, communicators across the globe are already harnessing the latest tools to measure the business contributions their campaigns are delivering – and make the case for greater investment in PR and comms.

## IT'S TIME FOR COMMUNICATORS TO GO BEYOND REACH AND MEASURE THE TRUE VALUE OF EARNED MEDIA

Monitoring your earned media coverage is essential for understanding its reach and seeing what people are saying about your brand. But it's not sufficient on its own.

As **Nicola Green, Telefonica UK's** director of corporate affairs, says, to compete in today's media environment you also need to measure the business impact of your comms initiatives.

"When we can deliver against our business objectives then, I guarantee, that's the one time the board sits up and listens," she promises. "This is our opportunity. We've been waiting donkey's years to get the board to realise how great comms is."

**Jay Baer**, the *New York Times* bestselling business strategist, adds that it's already possible to measure the impact your earned media initiatives have on hard business metrics using the latest technology.

"Earned media attribution is very real," he says. "Imagine the CMO's surprise when the PR team (of all people) slaps down a report that shows precise leads, sales and ROI from their efforts in almost real-time."

This measurement revolution looks set to help earned media reclaim its rightful place at the heart of the marketing mix. By arming your comms team with the latest measurement tools today, you can ensure they're ready to benefit from this earned media revolution in 2018.

## HARNESS THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY TO TRACK CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR WITH UNRIVALLED ACCURACY

Industries as diverse as marketing, sales, customer services and more have all undergone the same transformation in recent years.

Take the Adobe Marketing Cloud, for example. It revolutionised marketing by combining a full suite of services into a single platform. In doing so, it gave marketers the tools to run more effective campaigns and powered a huge expansion in the owned media industry.

Now, it's time for earned media to make this same leap.



It's time to harness the power of cloud technology to bring together all your comms activities in one place – and start tracking customer behaviour with unrivalled accuracy.

That's why we have created the Cision Communications Cloud®. Right now, it's helping communicators across the globe see exactly which outlets are driving traffic to their websites. What's more, it's revealing the exact demand generation results and revenue their activities deliver.

But that's just the start. Over the next 12 months, we'll bring our patented Cision ID technology to the UK market.

In the US, it's already helping communicators see exactly who engages with content and who later goes on to make a purchase. Even offline, it uses third party data to “connect the dots” and trace the sale back to their earned media coverage.

These are the same insights that have fuelled rapid expansion in the paid and owned media industries in recent years. Now, with the Cision Communications Cloud, they could soon be doing the same for your business.

With it, you'll be able to see how effectively your campaigns are in generating media coverage, increasing your share of voice and driving sales. What's more, you'll have the tools to directly (and indirectly) attribute sales to specific pieces of coverage – just like your colleagues in paid media.

Finally, you'll be able to bring your comms into the 21st century and create a detailed picture of the value of earned media for company stakeholders.



# CONCLUSION

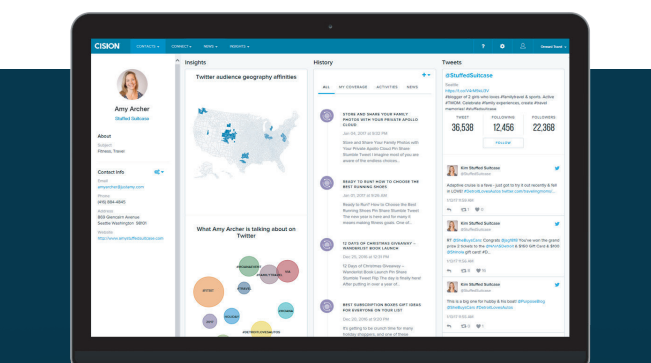
Communicating a brands position on social issues, harnessing the power of Artificial Intelligence, creating multi-platform engaging video content and platforms and ensuring your measurement aligns with business objectives are all trends which will affect how comms professionals operate this year.

Given the fallibility of making predictions, there is a possibility that some of these trends, such as the use of AI in earned media, do not materialise as quickly as believed, or that another aspect of earned media will be the defining trend of 2018.

However, by using Cision's Communications Cloud™, as well as its other products, you will maximise your ability to take advantage of the trends explored in this white paper, as well as any further industry developments, to hone your earned media offering.

DISCOVER HOW TO TRANSFORM YOUR  
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