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## 2009 Predictions: Canadian market

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We asked our Canadian readers to make some predictions for what would transpire in 2009. Below are the responses.

### **Susan Scott, owner, Full Circle Communications**

It's back to basics in 2009 for PR professionals. We've had the hype, now it's time for honesty and reality. Product recalls, financial scandals and the continuing poor economy have played havoc with corporate reputations and brands. Give people the straight goods, information they can use plus valuable, compelling and real stories. Companies and organizations that can cut through the clutter and communicate their brand value clearly will gain customer attention. PR professionals will have their jobs cut out for them.

### **Chris Johnson, CEO, dna13**

PR organisations will demand an improved 'modus operandi' to tackle both 'new media chaos' and a professional environment where pr orchestration must be accelerated with speed, clear visibility and unprecedented corporate accountability. PR professionals will develop close relationships with citizen journalists and rely on the public to spread the news, not just paid journalists. Social media will revolutionize the way people consume their news, and public relations professionals will have to completely alter the way they identify reporters, pitch, and track messaging.

### **Rajani Kamath, director of corporate communications, Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment**

Given the cutbacks among media outlets (print and broadcast), public relations practioners will need to find more creative ways and new vehicles to promote their products, services and clients. I predict that guerillia and grassroots public relations efforts will become more prevalent, and that social media will surpass tradition media as the primary way to reach your target audiences. This will be the norm even after the economy begins its recovery.

### **Beverley Hammond, president, Veritas Communications**

2009 will see many marketers shift or increase focus on PR and Social Media. An unstable economy will create the need to manage issues and brand reputation. However, it will also open up opportunities for engaging key demographics in novel ways. Measurement will continue to be top of mind.

**Jim Warrington, president, Fantail Communications**

PR types will need to be more creative, more resourceful and more budget conscious and this is a good thing for clients! New ways of communicating will be developed that are not just the Internet. In tough times, consumers want real people delivering real and meaningful messages. We need heroes, stories of hope, and the fact that the little guy can make it! Ad agencies will morph into PR agencies because everyone knows PR is more effective.

**Bruce MacLellan, president, Environics Communications**

The year ahead will require everyone to demonstrate ongoing value and results. Public relations often fares better in a recession because of the great value for money in comparison to other forms of marketing. Opportunities exist in the continued growth of social media as will the environmental agenda which we think will have enough momentum to carry on through the tough economic times.

**Jason MacDonald, VP of corporate and public affairs, Veritas Communications**

Layoffs. Lawsuits. Product recalls. A look at the headlines in 2008, coupled with the outlook for 2009, suggests that the demand for effective, expert issues management will be as strong as ever as organizations strive to protect their brand reputations.

**Andrea Hirsch, IABC Toronto chapter**

2009 will be the year digital media becomes mainstream within the PR community. With the proper measurement tools in place, interacting with digital media is poised to be the most important skill we have.

**Keith McArthur, principal, com.motion (the social media division of Veritas Communications)**

In 2008, most businesses dipped their toes into social media. 2009 will be the year they take the plunge. The slowing economy will help, not hurt, social media's growth as businesses look to communicate in more effective, more genuine, more measurable ways.

**Brenna Flynn, consultant, gloss (a Veritas Communications agency)**

The "mom" demographic is the target for many marketers. With tough economic times ahead, "moms" have decreased their non-discretionary spending. Gloss is making a bold prediction – 'Jennifer' (those women 22 – 30) may just be the ones to drive non-discretionary spending in 2009. To breakthrough with this demographic, marketers need a combination of social media and traditional PR.

**Linda Andross, EVP, Apex Public Relations**

It's all about information baby. How, where, when and who consumers get it from is the name of the game for PR. In '09 we'll see a lot more creative, targeted and measurable ideas that other disciplines will build on to deliver a 360 degree approach for clients.

*If you would like to add your prediction, send it to [letters@prweek.com](mailto:letters@prweek.com).*