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## PROS DISCUSS IMPACT OF DIGITAL MEDIA

"A few years ago, this was social media," said Doug Simon, President & CEO of DS Simon Productions, to a packed room at the International Cinematographer's Guild in New York.

The times aren't changing — they've already changed. Online media's revolution has given birth to a need for informational immediacy. With news coverage moving into the digital realm, how can publicists ensure their relevance?

This was the topic of discussion at a January 23rd panel hosted by the Entertainment Publicists Professional Society, an event that brought together some of the biggest names in digital entertainment to discuss the future of publicity.

According to Lloyd Trufelman, president and CEO of Trylon SMR, maintaining relevance is essential. Thinking strategically and coming up with a unique voice is key for surviving in what he called the "big, disintermediated cloud" of digital convergence.



The Jan. 23 EPPS panel (L-R): Marc Kurschner, VP of entertainment for Getty Images; Doug Simon, president & CEO of DS Simon Productions; Michael Slezak, senior writer of ew.com; Lloyd Trufelman, president & CEO of Trylon SMR, and Jesse Washington, entertainment Editor, Associated Press. Photo by Jon Gingerich

"It's not if or when, it's now. The Internet revolution has already happened," he said. "Everything is instantaneous. Everything is global. And you can't control it."

Trufelman, whose firm was one of the first to integrate blogs into its standard media relations practice, believes new technology works to the PR pros' advantage. New media outlets give publicists more choices, making the traditional Page Six route no longer "the only game in town."

"The blogosphere is terrific from a publicist's point of view. The fact is, the blogosphere is now extending the reach of mainstream media. Today's blogger is tomorrow's MSN chief," he said.

Trufelman believes a responsibility falls on the shoulders of PR pros to educate clients about today's media landscape. A generational gap may have clients believing that print impressions are better than their web counterparts, but Trufelman thinks PR pros should make a concerted effort to push for an online presence. Showing web stats and a list of recent impressions can remind clients that online coverage is good coverage.

“Send them stuff to show that it’s working,” he said. “As PR people, we can explain to management and to clients the value of third parties. That’s one of the big things comforting people nowadays.”

Publicists aren’t the only ones who’ve seen their professions altered in the information age. Just as it has done with traditional journalists, wire services and press agencies now find themselves competing with blogs to get stories first. Jesse Washington, Entertainment Editor for the Associated Press, said because today’s media climate requires instant coverage, AP’s knack to break news makes them “perfectly suited for the digital age.”

In fact, while newspapers have historically been their primary customers, Washington said AP has now found a growing market in catering to online news sources.

“We go to great lengths to be prepared. Because we always need to have the story first, we have to be able to instantaneously respond to what’s out there,” he said.

Likewise, Marc Kurschner, Vice President of the Entertainment division for Getty Images, said he’s also felt the business shift in recent years. Getty, which licenses photography footage to companies all over the world, has now found a new customer in an Internet news sites.

“For everyday people, blogs brought in a ‘what about me’ mentality. For us, it brought in a lot of business,” he said.

The panel discussed the versatility afforded by news organizations that own both print and online publications. Michael Slezak, Senior Writer for Entertainment Weekly’s web publication [ew.com](http://ew.com), said one of the greatest advantages of working online is the level of public interaction that is allowed through message boards, forums and surveys.

“We get to build a real community with our readers,” he said.

So what can we expect in the future? The panel said blogs will become more integrated into mainstream media. During this time, Simon said we can expect to see more organizations and individuals becoming their own media outlets. Just as it is with traditional media, not all blogs will hold the same level of credibility, and the public’s media choices will weed out the good from the bad. Simon himself runs a blog at [www.dssimonvlogviews.com](http://www.dssimonvlogviews.com).

As new ways of delivering media are brought to the table, this shift will invariably have an effect on what kinds of news people continue to seek. Washington said audiences can expect to see a growth in entertainment news in the future, as video clips are now doing to the networks what Napster did to the music industry in the 90s.

Washington also cautioned of an employment migration that may happen for many working in journalism.

“It used to be, people who worked at AP went to newspapers to make a name for themselves and to make more money. Now, all the people who are losing their jobs at newspapers are coming back to AP,” he said.

Finally, Trufelman offered some much needed solace to old-school media practitioners, that today’s new media world doesn’t render them obsolete. In a society that caters to increased integration of platforms, a knack for old forms of media will always be in demand.

“Think of your own consumption habits. Your media diet is a mix: you’re reading the Times, you visit Media Bistro every day and you go home and watch the evening news. It’s a mash-up,’ he said. “In the world of accelerating digital media, analogue is still a skill. Gut, analogue, quantitative skills are more important now than ever before.”

The panel was moderated by Bill Sobel, Chief Connections Officer of [SobelMedia](http://SobelMedia).