Cision Unveils "Inside PR 2026": The Definitive Report on PR Trends, AI Adoption, and the Future of Communications

New research reveals how PR teams are adapting to resource pressures, media fragmentation, and the accelerating shift toward AI and measurable impact.

CHICAGO, Jan. 6, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- Cision, a global leader in consumer and media intelligence, today released *Inside PR 2026: Trends, Challenges, and What's Next*, a landmark study examining how PR teams are responding to one of the most transformative periods the industry has seen in decades. Drawing on insights from nearly **600 PR professionals** across the U.S. and UK, the report highlights a profession balancing tradition and transformation: Creativity and storytelling remain foundational, even as agility, AI fluency, and clear business impact increasingly define success.

"Inside PR 2026 shows a profession undergoing a profound evolution," said Guy Abramo, CEO at Cision.

An Industry in Transition — and an Agility Gap Slowing Progress

The report reveals a profession operating under sustained pressure. **Sixty percent of PR teams cite the rapidly shifting media landscape** as their biggest challenge, and **58% point to resource pressure**. Agency teams feel this pressure more acutely than their counterparts on in-house teams, with **71% reporting media fragmentation** as a major hurdle, underscoring how journalist behavior and formats continue to evolve.

These pressures directly shape how agile teams feel they can be. While **one in three** executives describes their organization as "extremely agile," only **14% of employees agree**. Structural barriers such as **team size and organizational design (63%)**, along with **slow approvals (53%)**, are the biggest factors holding teams back.

Taken together, the findings point to a profession not short on ambition, but constrained by infrastructure. The opportunity for 2026 is clear: Agility requires investment, process simplification, and better access to real-time insights, not just intent.

What Matters Most in 2026: Awareness, ROI, and Revenue

Brand awareness remains PR's guiding priority, cited by **36%** of respondents. But the data shows a clear shift toward measurable commercial outcomes at the senior level. **Executives (32%)** and **agencies (33%)** are far more focused on revenue and ROI, while in-house teams and non-executives still lean heavily toward brand awareness, with around 40% naming it as their top priority.

Taken together, the findings point to a widening alignment gap, with senior leaders pushing for measurable results and frontline teams remaining anchored in brand-building.

AI Moves to the Center of PR Workflows

One of the strongest trends highlighted in *Inside PR 2026* is the rapid integration of AI across PR activities. Ninety-one percent of professionals report using generative AI as part of their workflow, with **73%** applying it to idea generation and **68%** using it for writing and content refinement. AI is also reshaping data gathering and analysis, with **40%** using AI-driven media monitoring and nearly a third relying on AI-powered reporting tools.

Yet the data makes one thing clear: Despite AI's growing presence in PR, the human elements remain at the core of the profession. **Storytelling** was cited as the most in-demand skill for 2026 (**59%**), followed by media relations, strategic planning, and the ability to interpret data to guide decision-making – skills that ultimately rely on human interpretation, context, and strategic discretion.

The New PR Playbook: Creativity, Intelligence, and Technology Working Together

The evolution of PR is increasingly defined by the blend of craft and capability. Media monitoring remains the most relied-on tool for teams, supporting a more analytical approach to narrative management. Meanwhile, the skill sets PR teams value are becoming more multidisciplinary — combining creative storytelling with data literacy, strategic agility, and cross-functional collaboration.

Taken together, these changes point toward a more adaptive, insight-led, and AI-enabled model of communications.

"Inside PR 2026 shows a profession undergoing a profound evolution," said Guy Abramo, CEO of Cision. "PR teams are being challenged to move faster, prove impact, and integrate AI responsibly — while continuing to deliver the creativity and narrative craftsmanship that make communications meaningful. The teams that can blend human insight with intelligent automation will be the ones who define the next era of PR."

Download the Full Report

The full *Inside PR 2026* report, including deeper insights, role-level analysis, and practical recommendations for PR teams, is available now.

Download Inside PR 2026

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Cision is the global leader in consumer and media intelligence, engagement, and communication solutions. We equip PR and corporate communications, marketing, and social media professionals with the tools they need to excel in today's data driven world. Our deep expertise, exclusive data partnerships, and award-winning products, including CisionOne, Brandwatch, and PR Newswire, enable over 75,000 companies and organizations, including 84% of the Fortune 500, to see and be seen, understand and be understood by the audiences that matter most to them.

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