

Meltwater Summit

PR PLAYBOOK



Introduction

Nearly 1,500 marketing and communications professionals gathered for the 3rd annual Meltwater Summit in NYC — two days of insights, community building, and groundbreaking announcements with some of the most recognizable names in the world.

With a wide variety of sessions, ranging from the practical to the visionary, Meltwater Summit delivered on its promise of new perspectives and actionable takeaways from expert speakers.

Looking for advice from Reese Witherspoon on the value of data for proving assumptions? Done. Curious how to tap into the brainrot phenomenon? We've got you covered. Or maybe the ways you can incorporate video into your strategy with limited resources?

It's all here.

In this playbook, we'll cover the top 16 PR and comms sessions from Meltwater Summit 2025, giving you not just the high-level insights but also the steps you can take to implement them in your own organization. **Let's dive in!**



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Opening Keynote with Reese Witherspoon

While she may be globally known for her acting career, Reese Witherspoon's mastery of storytelling extends to her business ventures, Hello Sunshine, Draper James, and Reese's Book Club. In a thoughtful conversation with Meltwater VP of Marketing, Jenny Force, she touched on leadership and staying true to your mission, emphasizing the importance of grounding business decisions in core values.



Key Takeaways

- **Social media has the ability to bring your audience closer to you.** Use it as a tool to invite your audience into this shared experience — they are part of your community.
- **Data-backed instincts are the best instincts.** Reese's instincts told her that women consumed more media than men, but the confluence of social media and streaming gave her the data to prove it. This helped productions like *Wild* and *Gone Girl* become box office and critically-acclaimed successes.
- **Clear decisions inspire confidence.** "Walk with purpose in the direction you're going. You might not know exactly what you're doing... but when you have that kind of direction and make clear decisions, people will walk with you in that direction."

And if you ever need extra motivation, just act like Elle Woods when Warner told her she wasn't smart enough for Harvard.



Introducing Mira AI



The excitement didn't end there! Meltwater Summit also saw the unveiling of Mira — our newest AI innovation, specifically designed with PR and marketing pros in mind.

Unlike typical generative AI tools, Mira is deeply embedded in your workflows — it writes recaps and releases, summarizes coverage, compiles insights, and more. It's here to help you shine in your job by eliminating repetitive tasks, delivering fully formed outputs to elevate your impact, and, of course, giving you more time to focus on creative thinking and strategy.

Fully integrated into the Meltwater Suite, Mira is here to help PR, communications, and marketing teams get from deeper insights to greater impact faster with:

- **Mira Studio:** This chat-based interface within our social listening solution does everything from uncovering consumer insights to compiling media lists, all with a quick prompt.
- **Mira Companion:** Integrated throughout the Meltwater Suite, these context-specific, pop-out companions streamline and accelerate existing workflows.
- **Meltwater Copilot:** Available for Microsoft-enabled organizations, this chat-based AI assistant within Teams brings Meltwater insights to broader internal audiences.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Lessons in Leadership from Astronaut Dr. Jonny Kim on the ISS

If Reese Witherspoon set the tone for Meltwater Summit Day 1, Day 2's Keynote — a live Downlink via NASA with the International Space Station — sent the energy into the stratosphere.

Acclaimed NASA astronaut Dr. Jonny Kim joined Meltwater Summit from space to discuss leadership in extreme conditions, the future of technology, and how forging and cultivating human connections is the crux of success.



Key Takeaways

- **Human connection is a cornerstone that should fuel all aspects of leadership and teamwork.** See beyond barriers and differences in background to ground your leadership style in appreciating the universal human experience.
- **Vulnerability is important to effective and well-rounded leadership.** Emotion will always factor into leadership, but there are circumstances where compartmentalization is essential. It's important not to mistake emotional transparency with emotional liability.
- **Rapid technological advancement makes acting with integrity more important than ever.** It's natural to feel uneasy about the future where technology is concerned, but Kim has optimism about the human role in this evolution — especially when it comes to how we leverage AI.

Turning Social Listening into a Crisis Management Powerhouse

Jerrod Lew,

Manager, Crisis & Issues,
Philip Morris International



Challenge

What constitutes a crisis isn't the same for every company, and traditional metrics, like how many followers someone has, have less bearing on how crises spread. Brands need to adapt to new ways of approaching crisis management if they want to succeed.

Solution

A crisis doesn't always relate to a "high number" of mentions or engagements, so a shift to a context-driven approach is paramount to successful crisis management. Templatize consistent social listening and proactive monitoring using AI for faster data analysis and effective storytelling at speed.

What's the Play?

- **Create a crisis matrix** that identifies your organization's risk types and their definitions.
- In this matrix, **sort issues by low, medium, and high priority** to ensure you can react appropriately for each specific situation.

Manipulated Narratives: Navigating the Reputational Maze of Misinformation

Dan Brahmy, CEO, Cyabra

Dave Fleet, Managing Director,
Head of Global Digital Crisis, Edelman



Challenge

Misinformation and lies travel six times further and faster than the truth — and it's impacting brands. Dave Fleet, Edelman's Head of Global Digital Crisis, shared that 63% of people struggle to determine if information is credible, and 70% think journalists actively try to mislead people. Whether it's deepfakes, bad actors, or the weaponization of social issues, organizations need to take proactive steps to combat the growing misinformation crisis.

Solution

Stopping misinformation starts with understanding your brand's narrative landscape, so you know what people could try to weaponize. Organizations also need to train employees cross-functionally to enable a fast, robust response that reaches as broad an audience as possible.

What's the Play?

Be proactive, know your vulnerabilities, and monitor for emerging threats. That means following the ABCs of disinformation:

- **A. Identify manipulative actors:** Who is organizing it? Is it state-sponsored? Are they individuals who are unhappy with the company?
- **B. Expose coordinated behaviors:** Software is behind more attacks; it's not individuals using 17 different accounts anymore. Adapt your combat strategy to address this tactic.
- **C. Detecting harmful content:** Contextualize what is happening to identify the most effective ways to push back.

From Curious to Confident: How to Build AI into Your Daily Workflow

Stephanie Cohen Glass,

Senior Director, Communications
Strategy & Insights, Microsoft

Are you using AI?



Challenge

Burnout is becoming a critical issue for teams as they try to satisfy the needs for growth.

Just look at the following stats:

- **80%** of the global workforce lacks the time or energy to do their jobs
- **50%** of leaders say productivity must increase
- **82%** of leaders are expected to use AI agents to meet demand for workforce capacity

How do teams reconcile the pressure for productivity with the increasing lack of energy? By allowing AI to automate certain steps for more efficiency and accuracy.

Solution

AI has the power to make you more confident, positive, and excited about your role, so give it a shot! Implement it into your workflow as a powerful assistant, and you might be surprised by the results. Using [Microsoft Copilot](#), 86% percent of teams noticed an increase in productivity, and 78% saw an improvement in the quality of their work.



Maximize your AI workflow and [strengthen your prompts](#) with these suggestions.

What's the Play?

- **The way forward is to just get started.** Begin to build the muscles it takes to implement AI into your day-to-day.
- **Look at your specific use case and focus on that.** Seek training to help you specialize instead of using a blanket AI approach.
- **Focus on using available resources** and encourage learning and experimentation.

Tools like [Microsoft Copilot](#) and [Mira from Meltwater](#) are essentials that help make your daily tasks easier by managing your inbox, checking for news coverage, and writing drafts incorporating summarized insights.

Strategic Communications: How Crocs Crafted an Authentic Brand Narrative

Melissa Layton,

Vice President, Global Communications, Crocs, Inc.

Moderator: Samantha Davis Crocker,

Senior Enterprise Account Executive, Meltwater



Challenge

A one-person PR team with a small budget was tasked with covering over 80 markets worldwide, facing a brand that had great awareness but lacked relevance. Sure, people knew Crocs, but the product was polarizing: consumers were united in their strong dislike of how the shoes looked. How do you create a brand narrative in that situation?

Solution

Accept your own reputation instead of trying to fabricate a different one. Crocs leaned into their perceived faults and turned them into assets by simply appreciating and owning their own quirkiness. They went from being the butt of the joke to still being the butt of the joke, but in Vogue Magazine!

What's the Play?

- Always **return to the core of your brand story** and use it to fuel innovation.
- **Find influencers** and use those voices to bolster your brand, helping you earn a place at the industry table.

Communications Panel: Data-Driven Strategies for Effective Media Relations

Lisa Zlotnick,

Head of Brand PR, SHEIN US

Colleen McGroarty,

Insights Lead, Corporate Communications, Accenture

Moderator: Nicole Schuman,

Managing Editor, PRNEWS



Challenge

PR has changed. As we shift away from impressions as a primary metric and move beyond Unique Monthly Visitors (UMV), what is the new north star to learn whether or not your message is resonating? What happens when executives ask for metrics that are less relevant to a particular campaign?

Solution

It's up to comms pros to steer executives in the right direction when it comes to success metrics. Our panelists discussed the merits of **looking deeper into sentiment response** and honing in on the nuance of this metric. Is there sarcasm involved? Excitement? Is the way the message is resonating reflected in the media?

What's the Play?

- Know at the outset **who you are trying to reach**. There are times when a trade publication might be a better choice than a large outlet.
- Share of voice (SOV) **shouldn't be the default end goal** — sometimes it's not possible, so why measure against it?
- If executives are having trouble looking beyond SOV, **get more context** around the data point they're hoping to demonstrate so you can help steer them toward a more relevant metric.

Navigating Career Advancement in Communications: Insider Strategies for Securing Your Next Role

Brooke Kruger,

Founder and Communications Recruiter, KC Partners



Challenge

Comms hiring has thankfully returned to a steady pace, but the market is extremely competitive, and hiring processes have only grown more rigorous. That's why Brooke Kruger, Founder and Communications Recruiter at KC Partners, gave Meltwater Summit attendees a deep dive that covered current comms hiring trends and offered valuable tips for applicants.

Solution

Agility, flexibility, and preparation are more important than ever. Be knowledgeable and ready for each step of the hiring process before getting started. The market is active but competitive, so you have to have your act together.

What's the Play?

Before the hiring process begins, make sure you know what it involves so you can understand what you're getting into:

- **The return-to-office policies are here to stay.** Many employers are now using in-office availability as a way to screen out candidates.
- **Foster a relationship with your references.** Keep them in the loop with your professional updates so they can advocate for you when the time comes.
- **Simple, traditional resumes work best,** so don't overdo it.
- Use **clean, concise cover letters** that showcase what makes you tick and why you're a perfect fit.

The Future of Media: AI & the New Rules of Engagement

Barbara Peng,

Chief Executive Officer, Business Insider

Kat Downs Mulder,

Senior Vice President and General Manager, Yahoo News

Sarah Personette,

Chief Executive Officer, Puck



Challenge

Only media organizations that are able to harness AI will come out on top — it makes teams more impactful, efficient, and effective. But maintaining a competitive edge in terms of bringing AI into your media company will only happen for “first movers”. Teams are currently operating in a short window of time where they can establish themselves as market leaders in the AI adoption space.

Solution

Approach AI from a perspective of how it can serve your customer and improve your products. For example, Yahoo uses it to aggregate stories that might be more useful and relevant to readers, and connect users to more personalized content — which has led to higher engagement.

What's the Play?

You need to be thinking about building the skill sets of the future. Approach AI adoption at three levels:

- **The individual level** to encourage adoption, usage, and know-how.
- **The team level** for automation and workflow efficiency.
- **The company level** to build AI solutions and features into your products that better serve your audience.

“Test, learn, and experiment to fail fast and learn fast. There’s never been a better time — when everything feels like it’s both quietly and loudly changing right in front of us.”

– Sarah Personette,
Chief Executive Officer, Puck

Bend & Snap: What Happens After a Narrative Attack

Wasim Khaled, CEO, Blackbird

Ameesha Durham, Director, Digital & Content, Nestlé

Kara Taylor, Senior Director, External Affairs Intelligence, Capital One

Moderator: Chris Hackney,
Chief Product Officer, Meltwater



Challenge

Narrative attacks — or digital misinformation events intended to influence public perception and damage the reputations of brands, organizations, and individuals — are increasing in number. Still, many organizations are woefully unprepared for them, lacking the tools to detect and monitor mis- and disinformation.

Solution

Narrative intelligence technology (like AI-powered [social listening and analytics solutions](#)) is imperative for proactive, continuous monitoring of the surrounding narrative landscape — resulting in faster threat identification. When narrative attacks do happen, technology is instrumental for understanding their impacts in terms of reach, reaction, and reverberation.

What's the Play?

Our expert panel suggested multiple strategies for preparing for narrative attacks:

- Get the right tools and **train with them** so you know how to react when the time comes.
- Have **crisis plans prepared in advance** — preparedness makes it easier to surface opportunities within the storm.
- Have a **single source of narrative intelligence truth** to facilitate collaboration and communication.
- **Maintain a positive drumbeat throughout the year by** releasing positive news regularly, not just after a crisis occurs.
- **Foster employee advocates**; you'll need them to counter harmful narratives and misinformation later on.

The Evolving Role of Communications in Higher Education: Strategies for Building Trust and Communicating Value

Lydia Sermons,

Vice President and Chief Communications Officer, Howard University

Dee Dee Mozeleski,

Senior Advisor to the President and Vice President, The City College of New York

August Schiess,

Assistant Chancellor of Digital Strategy and Development, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Krissy Woods,

Director of Public Relations, Villanova University

Moderator: Kelly McKenna, CS Regional Director, Meltwater



Challenge

Higher education comms and social media teams face a unique challenge when it comes to balancing their messaging with their unique audience breakdown. Alumni have different needs and preferences from prospective students, while current students want to see content that might not be of interest to faculty. How do you reach all of them authentically?

Solution

Tapping into an influencer network allows higher ed institutions to more seamlessly connect to their contrasting audiences. Tapping into your student network is also a great way to meet students where they are — rely on those who can speak directly to their own age group.

What's the Play?

- Create **buckets of content that will resonate with different audiences** and that feel true to you.
- Connect people back to your university through **real-world alumni stories** rather than jumping on irrelevant trends for engagement.

The Future of MarTech Panel: How Software Providers Are Shaping the Next Era of Marketing & Communications

Rob Key,

Chief Executive Officer, Converseon

Jay Prassad,

Chief Executive Officer, Relo Metrics

Arnon Mashiah,

Senior Vice President, Enterprise Solution Sales, NICE

Wasim Khaled,

Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder, Blackbird.AI

Moderator: Mark Arduino, Partner Account Manager, Meltwater



Challenge

Data quality and security are a greater concern for organizations than ever before, especially given the complexity of AI-driven narrative attacks. How can organizations build safeguards in their data when there now exists a sophisticated framework behind the manipulation of emotion?

Solution

Companies need to take steps to increase user trust in data. With more unstructured conversations becoming structured, more advanced technology use cases are emerging, reducing complexities in automation.

What's the Play?

- Tap into solutions to **elevate data quality**, making it safer and more trustworthy, while also recognizing that automation isn't the enemy.
- Identify sentiment and emotions using AI to predict patterns, so you can fine-tune messages based on what customers are saying and feeling.
- You can also take it a step further by **anticipating needs and tailoring experiences**.

Executive Communications: The Highs And Lows Of Media Tours

Kristen Viersen,

Director, Communications, Burger King, US&C,
Restaurant Brands International



Challenge

Struggling with a brand perception problem can be a difficult road, especially if you're a legacy brand trying to shift your entire brand narrative. Media tours can go a long way toward generating positive buzz, but they take strategy and preparation.

Solution

In order to really affect brand perception, you need to think ahead. Wait to schedule a media tour until you have some wins under your belt and are able to show what's already working, not just what you have planned. You should be prepared to demonstrate that your efforts as a company are driving results.

What's the Play?

A media tour is your strategic chance to reintroduce the brand to the public with a charismatic spokesperson at the helm — to help you ride the momentum, maintain cultural relevancy, and inspire future coverage.

For a successful tour, preparation is key, even for experienced interview-takers:

- **Keep it tailored.** Prepare executives according to their strengths and what they're good at. Help them be true to themselves in interviews.
- **Teach the basics.** Remind interviewees to speak in layman's terms, emphasize key messages, and use concise sound bites where possible.
- **Define key messages.** Establish a headline that is the most important takeaway the reporter should remember. Use clear data points whenever possible to help illustrate and contextualize your message.
- **Familiarize yourself with the outlets.** Look at a high-level bio for the reporter, but also find tidbits that help personalize who you're talking to.
- **Practice with a variety of questions.** Coach executives to be the ones guiding the interview. Open with your talking points, don't wait for the reporter to ask.

Communications Analytics Maturity Model: How to Advance Analytics in Large Organizations

Brittany Paxman,
Managing Partner, Point 600



Challenge

Comms teams are under immense pressure to do more with less. The insights provided by communications analytics have the power to help time-pressed PR pros, but the initiatives often lack direction. How do overworked teams make comms analytics work for them?

Solution

Brittany Paxman walked through the “Maturity Model Methodology,” identifying 6 Ps for Communications Analytics Maturity: prioritize, parse, populate, processing, package, and perform.

What’s the Play?

- **Prioritize:** Align KPIs with business performance — don’t come up with KPIs after the fact.
- **Parse:** Get organized with your data and create processes.
- **Populate:** Ensure everyone has appropriate access to the right data sets, such as polls, internal surveys, and emerging channels.
- **Processing:** Analyze and explore your data.
- **Package:** Put it into a report.
- **Perform:** Making decisions based on the data. These can be small changes for better performance, they don’t have to be massive business moves.

“Prioritize the KPIs you’re looking to achieve, before stepping into data analysis. Don’t report on them after the fact to fit the results. You don’t want a pre-defined story.” – Brittany Paxman, Managing Partner, Point 600

Competing for Coverage: How Human Rights Watch Secures Coverage Like a Celebrity Brand

Allison Deger,

Associate Director of Communications, Human Rights Watch



Challenge

Landing, monitoring, and measuring earned media coverage is time-consuming and can easily become convoluted and disorganized in today's unwieldy media landscape. Earned coverage appears in reports, digital editorial features, interviews, podcasts, and more, so maintaining an organized and streamlined approach to reporting is essential.

Solution

Allison Deger, Associate Director of Communications at Human Rights Watch, conducts earned media reporting after every output they release using Meltwater. She keeps track of process and impact throughout each cycle, from identifying which journalists to pitch across regions to monitoring mentions when earned media coverage spikes.

What's the Play?

Along with regular reporting, **use benchmarking** to put those numbers into context and build campaign frameworks you can use again and again.

- Benchmark earned media coverage against similar releases, products, and organizations
- Nonprofits and public sector organizations need to think creatively about how to achieve earned media goals. For instance, try to get mentioned during big events, such as the Met Gala, which has a lot of clout and influential voices to create a greater impact.

The Meltwater Difference



Meltwater Summit 2025 was packed with takeaways, but if there's one to really keep in mind, it's this: AI isn't optional anymore — it's become essential. That's why we're so proud to introduce Mira Studio,

your new agentic AI teammate purpose-built for PR, communications, and marketing professionals.

Unlike other AI tools, Mira is trained on the work you do every day — and powered by Meltwater's unrivaled social and news data. Whether you're uncovering insights, crafting reports, or responding to situations in real-time, Mira works with you to make every task faster, smarter, and more impactful.

Empower your team and increase productivity with an AI approach that's fully integrated into your workflow.

See Mira in action

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