

# Predictions for 2019 from Worldcom Public Relations Group Partners

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Every year Worldcom draws on the knowledge of its 2000+ consultants to predict the environment that will face its clients in the year ahead. Inevitably, as a global partnership, many of these predictions have an international flavor. If you want to get a picture of what the communications landscape may look like in your own country, we have teams in over 115 cities around the world ready to talk to you.

We have the pleasure to present our predictions for 2019. We hope they help increase the certainty of your success in the year ahead.


## Brands will be caught in the polarization divide

2018 has been a year where increasingly polarized views have gathered ground between individuals, families, political parties and governments. This will cause challenges for brands who will be expected – by their customers – to be seen to support their own polarized opinion.

Consumers, who are tired of a polarized information diet, will search out people who prefer to seek consensus.

## Privacy legislators will show their teeth

2018 was a landmark year for Privacy legislators which shifted the landscape for marketers forever. Just as organizations get used to focusing more on inbound than outbound marketing, the legislators are likely to *'show their teeth'* by making examples of organizations who fall foul of the new rules. The brand and financial impact will be considerable.



# The changing social media landscape and the impact it may have on you

**Facebook** will continue to be the straw that stirs the drink for advertisers, but youth will win out in the end. Facebook is growing older, but its Instagram platform trends younger. To succeed, brands will need both organic and paid strategies. They will also need to be more impact-driven, rather than being consumed with outputs like impressions, reach and followers.

**YouTube** will become increasingly important as brands try to use the power of video to their advantage.

Ad spend will switch from Facebook to **Instagram**. Instagram has overtaken Snapchat as the most used social platform by teens (85% use it at least once per month), and the departure of its founders means that Facebook has freer rein to tinker. If Instagram embraces advertisers in the same way as Facebook, content creators will be able to monetize their content while optimizing performance.

**Twitter** will solidify its status as the go-to platform for sharing real-time information. As well as being President Trump's favorite platform, Twitter really is the world's largest megaphone. There's no reason to believe that anything will replace it as the quickest place to share information, especially as for the first time, the platform has shown glimpses of addressing its biggest issues (harassment and user un-friendliness).

**Pinterest** will become an increasingly important platform for advertisers. As other platforms are becoming harder for businesses to use, Pinterest is getting BETTER. Pinterest stated that *"more than three quarters (78%) of people on Pinterest say content from brands is useful - much higher than on other platforms."* Users feel bombarded by brand content on Instagram and Facebook, platforms that are mainly social and inspirational, not necessarily actionable. Pinterest, on the other hand, has always been a friendly home for brands because users are searching for that bottom funnel content (in addition to inspiration of course)! Pinterest will make sure it has all the features available to advertisers on other platforms.

1. VIDEO. Pinterest video has expanded to widescreen, vertical, and square. Whatever your need, Pinterest has it. Brands will utilise short video content that lives around the users' organic content.
2. ANALYTICS. Pinterest will strive to give the same level of analytics as Facebook
3. SHOPPING. Pinterest will make it easier for users to shop and easier for advertisers to sell. 2019 will see many very innovative shopping experiences from Pinterest.

5. **LinkedIn** will move further from pure work-related content in the direction of business-lifestyle content.



# Measuring employee engagement will become an essential business KPI

Organizations who want to win the battle for talent will invest in employee engagement platforms that drive leadership behaviour. These platforms will provide an engagement score based on regular feedback. More importantly, they will provide actionable insights that prove to employees that their leaders want to run people-focused organizations.

## People-focused organizations will win the battle for talent

Employee experience - really rewriting the contract between employers and employees - will be ever more important as low unemployment in most of the developed world continues to breed massive competition for talent.

As our **Confidence Index '18** report showed, attracting and retaining the best talent was a top issue in 2018. In 2019, retention (often discussed but frequently not addressed) will take center stage. The key here is realizing that the oncoming generation of workers has never known a time when they weren't listened to and asked to contribute. As the last of the command and control managers and leaders rotate out in favor of the so-called Millennials, recasting the rewards, recognition and compensation structures will get new pressures and new solutions.

Intrinsic to these changes will be a rising sense that employee communication must change from the top-down, internal-news focus of the past to delivering highly relevant content focused on operational excellence. This will happen alongside a drive for building strong relationships with employees through effective communications that go beyond consuming text. Video will become more pervasive, audio podcasting will enable fun, snackable content consumption on the go, and internal apps will facilitate not only distribution but participation in the flow of communication in the enterprise.

The challenge of finding and retaining young workers will become even harder. This will result in an increase in the cost per worker.

## Fake news and rebuilding trust

Based on the rhetoric and media coverage of mid-term elections in the U.S, the Fake News crisis will get much worse before it gets better. Some media companies continue to employ click-bait tactics that position misleading headlines and opinion pieces alongside what can now be referred to as "traditional journalism." While there are plenty of exceptions, the best route for communications and marketing executives to take is: self-publish and self-select – oh and tell the truth.

Sponsored content appearing in media outlets will no longer be effective because consumers will demand that media be transparent and objective.

# Artificial intelligence will become increasingly influential in marketing

Data analytics supported by machine learning will become increasingly influential in marketing strategies. Organizations who adopted this approach early will have the advantage of being able to be predictive about market reactions to potential campaigns. Organizations that have a 'creative first' mentality may come under increasing pressure from those that are analytics-driven.

## Global/political uncertainty

2018 was dubbed by many as the year of uncertainty. If anything, 2019 will be even worse. Uncertainties around global trade wars, economic stagnation, the future of the European Union and attitudes to migration will gather pace.


The EU Parliament elections in 2019 will dominate the European media landscape for months. PR campaigns will have to be scheduled more carefully in order to ensure visibility against the 'noise' around election fever.

Brexit will continue to cause issues well beyond the borders of the UK and the EU. Organizations of all types will need to develop business and communications strategies to respond to a variety of potential outcomes.

## Diversity will be a mainstream issue

Diversity has been a topic that has been gathering momentum over the last few years. 2019 will see it become mainstream for every organization from a communications perspective. The entire spectrum of communications and marketing will be expected to represent diverse voices and minorities, in messaging, talent, and production.



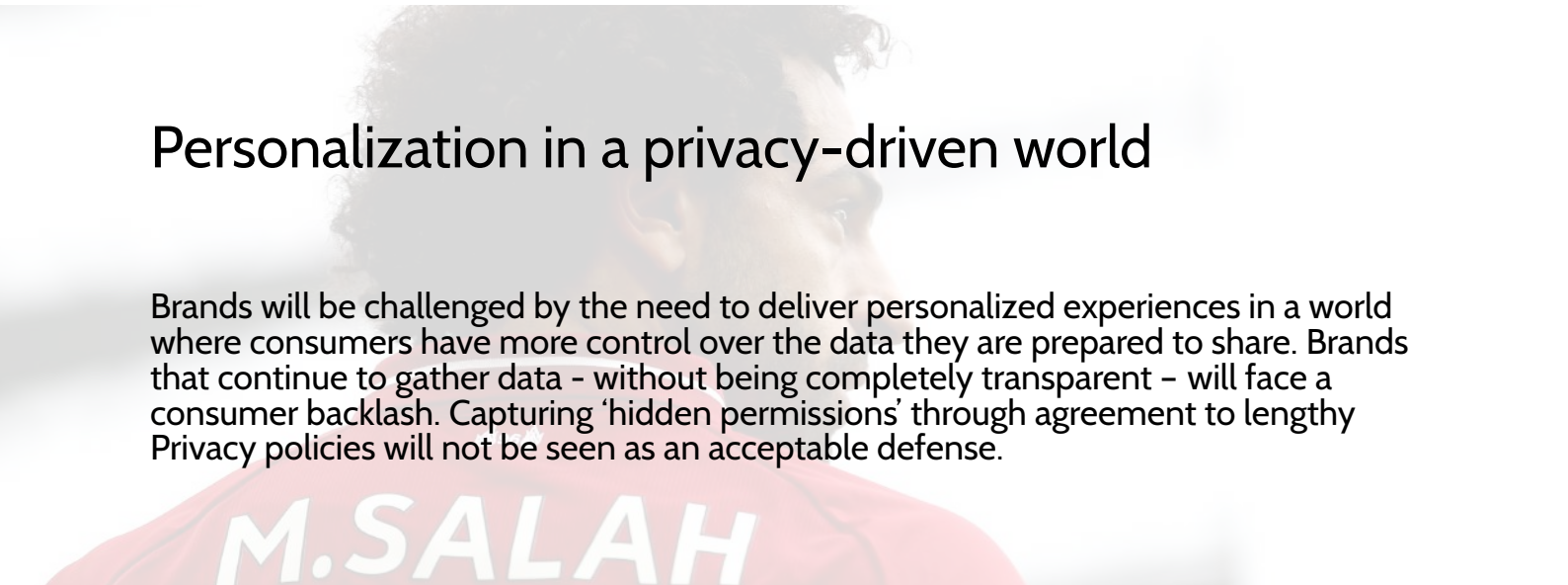


## The rise of values-driven organizations

Campaigns like #MeToo encouraged consumers to expect brands to be vocal and action-oriented about social issues and politics. In 2019, these new expectations will make it harder for organizations not to 'take sides' as each new high-profile issue surfaces and gathers support.

## Digital measurement will be challenged

Discussion about online reach will intensify as organizations begin to challenge the link between advertising pricing and the numbers about reach that have no independent proof.



## Personalization in a privacy-driven world

Brands will be challenged by the need to deliver personalized experiences in a world where consumers have more control over the data they are prepared to share. Brands that continue to gather data - without being completely transparent - will face a consumer backlash. Capturing 'hidden permissions' through agreement to lengthy Privacy policies will not be seen as an acceptable defense.



## The changing dynamics of healthcare stakeholders

Communication in innovative health care areas such as e-health and robotics, will be shared between patients and other key stakeholders, such as: Medical specialists (e.g. geriatricians), policymakers, politicians, purchasers, directors in the care and cure sector.

# Financial Instability

A potential weariness about the global economy, due to a lengthy bull market, may cast shadows of doubt on sustained growth. Marketers will need to limit the marketing experimentation they've used and settle on channels that truly drive revenue, even if the financial market pause is only short-lived. Careful, KPI-based planning and effective use of digital tracking, with a strong analytical core, will be important for CMOs should headwinds, like raw material cost or decreased housing demand, threaten marketing budgets.

Why not assess your Communications performance by using Worldcom's free communications self-assessment tool <https://worldcomgroup.com/resources/communications-self-assessment-tool>

We are grateful to the following Partners for their contributions. If you would like a local view of what 2019 may hold, please contact them direct.



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