

The year that was in PR and what to expect for 2022

By [Themba Msimango](#)

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Covid-19 disrupted many industries and Public Relations (PR) was no exception. It is great to see that the optimism in the PR industry is improving and recovering. This shows resilience and adaptability to the ever-changing environment.



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PR has finally earned its seat in the boardroom, a case in point. During the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, companies relied heavily on communications for their internal and external messages.

According to the global voice of the public relations and communications industry, the International Communications Consultancy Organisation (ICCO), the overall optimism for the PR industry was notably higher than in 2020 up from 6.4 out of 10 to 7.3, and above 5 in every world region. Expectations of a more profitable year have increased by almost 50%.

The [ICCO World PR report for 2021–2022](#) shared the top five PR skills that future practitioners need to have:

- **Strategic consulting** – This is the lifeblood of public relations. Understanding and aligning PR strategy and objectives with the strategic direction of your clients is the glue that binds all things together. It is not about just getting PR clippings but aligning client objectives to PR results.
- **Measurement evaluation and analysis** - While AVEs are alive and kicking, their extinction continues. The debate for AVEs continues and PR practitioners are now challenged to look for better ways to measure their PR efforts. It is

great to see that our professional body in South Africa, the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA) has adopted the Barcelona Principles as the measurement and evaluation for the PR industry.

- **Research, insight and planning** – As the digital environment continues to evolve, doing and developing content that speaks to different behaviours and needs will be more important. For example, using data and analytics to offer financial solutions and content for different client needs. The ‘spray and pray approach’ is no longer a good model.
- **Crisis counsel** – Leaders are now taking reputation management seriously, now more than ever before. PR practitioners must continue to educate and offer strategic counsel and analysis about brand promise and customer experience, ethics, honesty and any other reputational measure that can have a negative impact on a brand.
- **Creativity** – As PR continues to evolve, doing press releases is no longer enough. PR practitioners are now using a wide range of tactics to communicate with their stakeholders and technology is playing a huge role in this process. We have seen the growth of video footage, sound bites and delivering messages online more than ever.

The ICCO World PR report for 2021–2022 highlights important things and indicators of where we can adapt to meet the needs of our stakeholders and lead them into the next era of PR. Professional bodies, PR firms, scholars and academic institutions need to work together to train future practitioners.

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