

# Transparency, Ethics and the Future of Brand Communications

GMD Studios Research White Paper  
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## Executive Summary

As media and public criticism of some corporations increases in the face of an economic downturn, one concept echoes through many of those critiques: the demand for greater corporate transparency and accountability. These aspects of corporate reputation have important implications for brand communicators in the Internet Age, when media messages are less centralized and spread directly from one stakeholder to another.

This paper examines how brands can convert these challenges into an extraordinary opportunity by recognizing the interconnectedness of the twin tests of relevancy and legitimacy in established models of ethical corporate behavior. These concepts are further explored in the case studies of two iconic corporations experiencing very different crises: McDonald's and their health PR dilemma, and Ford Motor Company and their financial restructuring woes. Actionable advice is offered for adopting these methodologies and strategies in ways that have proven and measurable results.

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## **When Consumer Confidence Falters**

When times are good for a brand, it enjoys a positive feedback cycle in both traditional and new media as satisfied customers produce testimonials, and successes are lauded by the press. In an instant, that cycle can reverse, as unhappy customers convey doubt and rejection, the press swoops in to document the carnage, and new advertising defends against these negative perceptions. The Internet's democratization of expression and accelerated feedback cycles can make these cycles feel even more uncontrollable, leaving some brand communicators with unfounded fears.

Against this new communication landscape we find ourselves facing a global recession, where the missteps of companies and brands come under increasing scrutiny by all stakeholders, from customers to employees and from shareholders to media outlets. Never has the gap of trust between corporations, their employees and their customers appeared more insurmountable or the risks appeared greater.

In the face of this mercurial environment, some have started to re-conceptualize what branding means and the role corporate communications plays in that definition. Jonathan Salem Baskin, author of Branding Only Works on Cattle, suggests that it "is the real-time interplay of behaviors - yours and your customers, your friends and your critics." Ty Montague, Chief Creative Officer of JWT North America, argues "a brand is the sum of promises made and promises broken by a company to its customers." These definitions borrow concepts from the field of experience design and recognize that brands aren't an inert symbol but emerge over time as an interaction between a company and the public.

Caught in the grip of a widening spiral of lack of consumer confidence, corporate communicators are pressured by global conditions to re-evaluate how they engage their stakeholders and society in a meaningful conversation. The marketplace isn't just expecting a new kind of honesty and transparency from the corporations they do business with, they are demanding it. They are shaping their own definitions of the brands they interact with, based upon the real experiences they are having (rather than just the "brand messaging" from that company.) Fortunately, this kind of innovation can build upon a wealth of research and experience in how corporate transparency can create meaningful communications for fostering virtuous cycles instead of destructive ones.

**"The marketplace isn't just expecting a new kind of honesty and transparency from the corporations they do business with, they are demanding it."**

## Legitimacy and Relevance

There are two core tasks that face brand builders and public relations professionals. An institution “must constantly meet the twin tests of legitimacy and relevance by demonstrating that society requires its services and that the groups benefiting from its rewards have society’s approval.”<sup>1</sup> While generalizations usually sacrifice nuance, public relations and press relations tend to concern themselves more with the test of legitimacy, while advertising and marketing tend to focus more on the test of relevancy. In the era of connected communities, the line between these tasks are separated by a hair’s breadth – social media bloggers and journalists are just as likely to hold corporations accountable for the ethics of both.

Business ethicists studying legitimacy theory propose that there is a five-phase spectrum of how corporations deal with issues: the immoral, reactive, compliance, integrity, and totally aligned organization modes of ethics.<sup>2</sup> The first modes leading toward an organization totally aligned with ethics and transparency can be described as:

“In the immoral mode, the focus of a company is the ‘bottom line,’ which overlooks and alienates the company’s stakeholders. As a result, stakeholders convey their frustrated expectations, and corporations try to protect themselves against the dangers of unethical behavior (the reactive mode) [...] A company’s desire to have a good ethical reputation characterizes the compliance mode; the focus is a rule-based approach to ethics. In the integrity mode, the firm becomes proactive in the promotion of ethical behavior and engages all of its stakeholders; the company begins to ‘walk the ethics talk.’”<sup>3</sup>

### Five Modes of Corporate Ethics

#### **1. Immoral**

*“Profit is our only goal.”*

#### **2. Reactive**

*“We must fix this perception problem.”*

#### **3. Compliance**

*“We want to have a good reputation.”*

#### **4. Integrity**

*“Let’s prevent problems from happening.”*

#### **5. Totally Aligned**

*“Ethics are part of our self-identity.”*

1 “The Unstable Ground: Corporate Social Policy in a Dynamic Society” A.D. Shocker and S. Prakesh Sethi, 1974.

2 “Modes of Managing Morality: A Descriptive Model of Strategies for Managing Ethics,” Gedeon J. Rossouw and Leon J. van Vuuren, Journal of Business Ethics, 2003.

3 “Corporate Transparency: Code of Ethics Disclosures,” Richard A. Bernardi and Catherine C. La-Cross, CPA Journal, 2005.

While legitimacy theory is at least familiar to many PR professionals, most brand marketers haven't given it much thought, as they've focused their attention on relevancy. Traditionally, journalists have been the important third leg of this triangle of corporate communications, dissecting the facts and corporate messaging from the point of view of a concerned society. In the age of social media, though, these techniques and roles have fallen into chaotic re-arrangement, and the issues of legitimacy and relevancy have become ever more intertwined.

The transparency expected by a mediascape that is continuously driving toward less centralization and differentiation forces public relations, journalism and brand marketing to work together, learning to adopt each other's strengths. These processes can be practiced by corporations at any point along the progression of corporate ethics, but work best when they adopt the strategies one step further along the progression than the typical reaction might be. These are corporate communications that are just as likely to transform the communicator as they are their intended audience.

## **Reacting to Criticism: McDonald's**

Using the five corporate ethics modes as a guideline, some current day examples can be highlighted to show how a corporation can advance through them based upon how external circumstances are affecting their brand. A look at the PR challenges McDonald's has faced throughout this decade provides a perfect glimpse into how these modes come into play, and what happens when legitimacy and relevance are not treated as equally important.

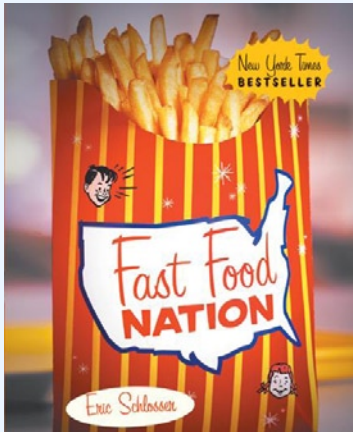
It's impossible to examine the McDonald's dilemma without discussing the obesity epidemic in the US as a whole. Going back to the 1960s, just over 4% of American children aged 6-17 were overweight. Forty years later, that number has more than tripled, to over 15%. Additionally, about three out of four overweight teens grow up to become overweight adults. Along with the rise in obesity come dramatic increases in diseases like diabetes and heart disease, placing an undue toll on an already struggling health care system.<sup>4</sup>

In 1999, Rolling Stone Magazine began serializing a book by investigative journalist Eric Schlosser, which examined the local and global influence of the United States fast food industry. Published in 2001, Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal was particularly unkind to the McDonald's Corporation, even attacking their marketing methods to children. Schlosser

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<sup>4</sup> Data excerpted from testimony given before the United States House of Representatives on July 16, 2003 by Surgeon General Richard Carmona on "The Obesity Crisis in America"

revealed how they modeled their tactics on The Walt Disney Company, creating enticing characters like Ronald McDonald and Grimace, believing that this would attract children as well as their parents. Even better, it would instill brand loyalty into adulthood, which Schlosser characterized as an exploitation of children's trusting nature.



NYT bestseller [Fast Food Nation](#), published 2001.

Although [Fast Food Nation](#) remained on [The New York Times](#) best-seller list for over two years, McDonald's marketing showed no reaction to the concerns outlined in the book. In fact, they rolled out several new TV spots in 2001 - including one called "Sharing" in which a daughter and her father bond over eating McDonald's food while sharing it with the Ronald McDonald character on a bench. The company also aggressively went after the teen market by hiring the likes of Britney Spears and NSYNC to star in big budget commercials, as a further attempt to demonstrate relevance, while also introducing the Mighty Kids Meal - a Super Sized version of the standard Happy Meal.

From a PR perspective, it is clear that the company was in full Reactive Mode, aware of external pressures but taking no clear measures to adjust accordingly. In a [New York Times](#) article about [Fast Food Nation](#) in March of 2001, McDonald's responded to Schlosser's book by faxing a written statement from spokesman Walt Riker, which read: "His opinion is outvoted 45 million to 1 every single day, because that's how many customers around the world choose to come to McDonald's for our menu of variety, value and quality."<sup>5</sup> While Schlosser was attacking the corporation's legitimacy, McDonald's was countering by arguing relevancy.

McDonald's soon realized that the problem was not going to simply disappear. Reaction to the obesity epidemic reached a fever pitch in July of 2003, when Surgeon General Richard Carmona testified before Congress about the obesity crisis in America, saying, "Our children did not create this problem. Adults did. Adults increased the portion size of children's meals, developed the games and television that children find spellbinding, and chose the sedentary lifestyles that our children emulate... We must teach our children to enjoy healthy foods in healthy portions."

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5 New York Times, March 21, 2001

In January of 2004, just 6 months after the Surgeon General's alarming testimony, Morgan Spurlock's documentary "Super Size Me" had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival. The film follows Spurlock for 30 days as he lives solely on McDonald's food, dining at the restaurant three times a day, and Super Sizing his meal each time he was asked. As a result, the filmmaker gained about 25 pounds, saw a 13% body mass increase, and experienced mood swings, sexual dysfunction, and even liver damage.

To this day, the Oscar-nominated "Super Size Me" shares a spot on the list of the top ten highest-grossing documentaries of all time, along with "An Inconvenient Truth" and "Fahrenheit 9/11".<sup>6</sup> In the wake of the film's release, which spawned even more bad publicity for McDonald's, the company discontinued the Super Size version of their sodas and fries, and added salads to the menu - but insisted the changes had nothing to do with Spurlock's film.



Instead of using the menu changes as an opportunity to engage in a meaningful conversation with the public, the company released a statement on their website saying that Spurlock had acted "irresponsibly by consuming more than 5,000 calories a day, more than twice the recommended level for adult males, and by purposely limiting his physical activity. That's why this movie makes no contribution to the important dialogue taking place today on nutrition and balanced lifestyles."

The following year, however, mounting public pressure along with a number of legal challenges convinced McDonald's to make even more changes, including adding additional healthier options to the menu, as well as nutrition labeling to their products in an attempt to increase transparency. It was at that moment that the company had fully entered Compliance Mode, characterized by a desire to improve their ethical reputation using a rules-based approach. The company was being asked by its customers to prove both its legitimacy and relevance simultaneously.

6 Data from "Documentary Movies, 1982-Present". Box Office Mojo. Retrieved 12/4/08

Finally, in 2007, it appeared that McDonald's had begun to see the light, at least when it came to having an honest conversation with their customers. With help from their PR firm Morgan & Myers, they launched a program called Moms' Quality Correspondents that was expanded further in 2008 by their new PR firm GolinHarris as the company began to shift into Integrity Mode. Using methods that draw from the worlds of publishing, documentary filmmaking, public relations, and electronic news gathering, they developed content which created a chain of discovery that allowed the audience to form their own opinion, instead of telling them what to think in advance. In turn, many critics began to become advocates - the strongest form of branding money can't buy.



An online ad recruiting for McDonald's Mom's Quality Correspondents, 2007.



McDonald's "Moms" explored such topics as "French fries from field to Happy Meal," 2008.

The idea behind the Moms' Quality Correspondents program, currently supported by long-time national agency of record GolinHarris, was to give a small group of concerned moms from around the country behind-the-scenes access to McDonald's facilities, suppliers, and even the kitchens of the restaurants themselves. The moms were allowed to ask any questions they wanted, and were then charged with honestly sharing their experiences via online journals and Q&A with other moms, without censorship - or compensation. Building upon the success of the national effort, GolinHarris executed similar campaigns on a regional level in Canada, Baltimore/D.C./Richmond, and Los Angeles.

In November of 2008, The Washington Post published an article entitled “McDonald’s Courts Moms as Fast-Food Emissaries: Chain Enlists Its Toughest Customers to Talk Up Menu’s Healthful Side”.<sup>7</sup> Proof that the effort was effective, the article did the company’s PR work for them, stating:

“McDonald’s is gambling that even if the moms say negative things -- one said the food contains too much sodium -- the company will win points for transparency. The first bit of myth-busting came when the moms, followed by a video crew, crowded into the walk-in refrigerator at the Baltimore restaurant. There were eggs stacked in a corner. Kelle Evans, a single mother from Woodbridge, said, ‘What are these eggs for?’ Answer: McDonald’s makes Egg McMuffins with them. Evans was stunned.”

The many benefits of this new approach became apparent almost immediately, including the public seeing proof that McDonald’s is making an effort to be more transparent, evidence that they are listening and responding to customers’ concerns, turning critics into allies, and getting generally positive press coverage on their efforts – all for far less money than a traditional branding campaign would cost, and with arguably more effective results.

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<sup>7</sup> Excerpted from “McDonald’s Courts Moms As Fast-Food Emissaries: Chain Enlists Its Toughest Customers to Talk Up Menu’s Healthful Side” By Michael S. Rosenwald, published in The Washington Post on Thursday, November 20, 2008



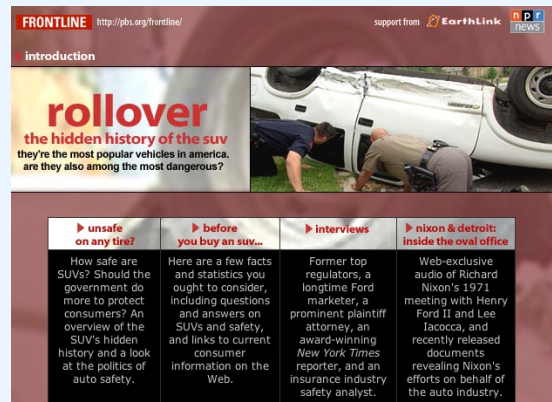
## Getting Ahead of Crisis: Ford Motor Company

Ford Motor Company, another iconic brand in crisis, is no stranger to public criticism. Ford has faced a wide range of problems throughout its hundred-year history, from charges of exploitation of workers and collaboration with dictatorships, to accusations of violence against union organizers in the 30's and 40's. In the 80's and 90's, Ford's reputation began slipping drastically, as lackluster designs and poor fuel efficiency proved no match for Honda and Toyota. The company's most recent problems may prove to be their most challenging yet, as the past decade has been fraught with product issues and fiscal disasters, causing their brand image - and their stock - to reach new lows.

In February of 2000, the news department of the CBS affiliate in Houston uncovered a connection between Firestone tire malfunctions and Ford Explorer accidents, a deadly combination that appeared to be the cause of 30 fatalities. The story went national, setting off a wave of negative press coverage. After 18 months of unrelenting pursuit by the media, in the summer of 2001, Ford was mired in a public relations nightmare as more Firestone tire recalls and continued problems with the stability of the Ford Explorer caused a sharp drop in shareholder return. The media couldn't get enough of the story - corporate wars broke out between Ford and Firestone, each publicly blamed the other, while rollover injuries and deaths continued to increase. While Ford continued to reactively address the data behind each of these incidents, they were losing the battle of customer loyalty even as they were preparing the 2002 Explorer for launch.

Negative press coverage reached a peak in February of 2002, when PBS aired an episode of Frontline entitled "Rollover: The Hidden History of the SUV", in which Ford executives were portrayed as greedy and callous for choosing less expensive engineering tweaks over a total vehicle redesign. In an interview for the series, Keith Bradsher, former Detroit Bureau Chief for The New York Times, said:

"Ford basically designed itself into a box when it came up with the Explorer in the late 1980s. And then it struggled for a decade to get out of that box... but it couldn't really fix the basic stability problems. Explorer was designed on a shoestring."



PBS Frontline covering "Rollover" on-air and online in 2002.

Environmental concerns added to the mounting public disdain of the company. In 2003, Ford abandoned its goal of improving mileage on SUVs 25 percent by 2005, stating that it would instead improve the mileage of all its vehicles – but the plan had no specific targets or goals. In the following years, a war in Iraq and concerns about global warming were prominent ongoing news stories, and public sentiment shifted increasingly against Detroit’s big three automakers and toward energy independence.

By the end of 2005, the outlook was bleak, and newly appointed Ford Americas President Mark Fields formulated an ambitious plan to return the company to profitability, called “The Way Forward”. Fields attempted to bring a new level of transparency to the way the company operated, both internally and publicly, and began a mea culpa of sorts – admitting that poor product design and bad management, along with some external factors, had marred the brand and put the company on the brink of extinction. In 2006, Ford was convinced by JWT, its long-time ad agency, that it must apply that same blunt approach to its marketing, and should clearly demonstrate that it was capable of listening and responding to the concerns of its customers and the public in general. The slow shift toward Integrity Mode had begun, and Ford began preparations to launch a new campaign called “Ford Bold Moves”.

It was decided that the best place for this new communication approach would be online, as the Internet allowed for a two-way conversation, the managing of a message, the ability to measure tonal shifts in the overall dialogue and to react quickly. Developed in partnership with GMD Studios and @radical.media, FordBoldMoves.com included

a 30-webisode documentary series, dozens of articles by leading automotive journalists, and daily blog entries – all designed to provide a behind-the-scenes look at a company in crisis, warts and all, as they attempted a complex and intensely challenging turnaround.

Ford executives were nervous about the project, and there was some resistance to having cameras filming normally private and often contentious meetings. The presence of cameras, whether the footage would end up being used or not, frequently altered the tone of those meetings. The documentary film approach was unfamiliar to the executives, but a reminder

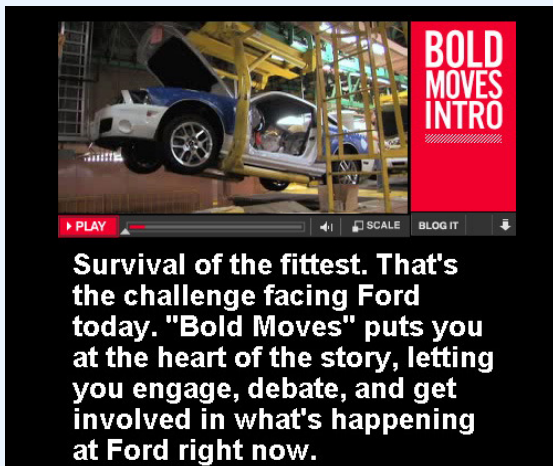


Example of unconventional advertising for Ford Bold Moves featuring Mark Fields in 2006.

of the power of editing and the company's control of the final product put most at ease. Since this was an unfamiliar approach to marketing, using a relatively new medium, Ford would need to learn how the process would function most effectively over time.

Marketers often incorrectly use the Internet simply as a medium, when it is more natural to treat it as a community – one in which the context is just as important as the content. Since the Web was already talking about Ford, as it does about most brands, the company's participation in that conversation was crucial in regaining public trust. Ford's new candor was considered by many to be remarkable and surprising, including the fact that executives were responding directly to readers' comments in the daily blog section.

From the start, the videos made it clear this was no ordinary marketing effort. In Episode 1: "Change or Die", Mary Lou Quesnell, Ford's Director of Brand DNA, stated, "Maybe we didn't care for the brand as we should have, and we might have gotten bored, trying to make it something that it wasn't." Later, in Episode 6: "The Future of Fuel, The Future of Ford", Environmental Activist Jennifer Krill says, "Ford has the worst fuel efficiency of any automaker in America." This was advertising?



Online video documentaries explored Ford's turn-around efforts in 2006.

With controlled honesty and transparency, it became possible to discuss potentially negative perceptions of a brand, in order to participate actively in the dialogue, and to ultimately present a positive solution. With traditional ad copy, the writer is anonymous, and there are multiple layers of editing. When using journalists or experts, the words are attributed to a person who has a perspective, not an amorphous corporation, and who are writing or saying what they actually believe. People recognize this authenticity instantly and intuitively.

Managed as custom publications, these methods allow for companies to publish content presented as opinion, while giving them the option to kill the piece or let it run, but not to substantively change it. This allows for a certain kind of freedom for both the agency and the client, because it is understood that no one will get bogged down in editing individual words. Since advertising law and content law are very different, learning to use both of these tools makes it easier to implement these kinds of strategies.

The effort by Ford addressed the questions of both legitimacy and relevance simultaneously, which is especially crucial in a difficult or negative environment. Ford exposed the process of fixing the troubled company, earning points for legitimacy, while it also made a clear case that their products were relevant to society by demonstrating dramatic improvements in quality and fuel efficiency. In late 2008, Ford was the only US automaker that didn't request loan support from the government, in no small part because they had been addressing these issues from the perspective of the Integrity Mode since 2006.

In the end, efforts like those of McDonald's and Ford are geared toward re-establishing trust. In the case of McDonald's, they used moms to make their case to other moms, since being spoken to by "someone like you" can be the most effective means of communicating a message. In the case of Ford, they recruited experts on various subjects to speak objectively on many topics of concern, offering a trustworthy perspective from people who were not employed by the company, and were empowered to speak freely. Both of these approaches are useful, and neither is mutually exclusive.

## **Transparency in PR and Brand Marketing**

Corporate transparency, borrowing from the techniques of journalism and citizen journalism, doesn't need be seen as oppositional to the goals of PR and brand marketing. While many of these efforts begin as a form of crisis management (Reactive Mode), they can help advance a corporation's perspective through the ethical modes or even help avoid a public relations crisis before it starts. "Transparency is even more powerful when implemented before a company is in crisis," notes Dan Bedore, National Manager of Public Relations for Hyundai.

These techniques represent an expanded palate of options for corporate communicators, whether engaging consumers as journalists or professional journalists as corporate communicators. In most cases, these techniques can also be practiced for less than the cost of a traditional thirty-second spot (let alone the media budget dedicated to distributing that spot.) Most of the successful implementations share certain traits:

- **Listening is as important as speaking.** It can also be more challenging, as you need to learn to listen to a large portion of the Web and notice the themes reverberating between those speakers. Whether you rely upon notification methods (such as Google Alerts) or buzz intelligence (such as New Media Strategies' "consolidated feeds" reports) or any method in between, the immediacy of

feedback is the most crucial. Then find ways to acknowledge publicly that you've read and value the feedback of others, and you'll find a meaningful dialog easier to establish.

- **Authors aren't anonymous copywriters.** Unlike press releases or advertising copy, who writes something is an important part of how the community experiences it. In the McDonald's example, they turned to "Moms like you" while in the Ford example they turned to professional journalists from related fields. Don't task a writer with representing the view of the corporation, let the writer represent their view of the corporation and the issues.
- **Diversity of perspectives is a desired outcome.** No two people will ever have exactly the same view of any corporation, issue or situation. Embracing your critics and evangelists equally might seem like a way to "lose control of the message," but treating diversity of opinions with respect creates an environment that blunts the edges of criticism. Those conversations will happen whether you choose to acknowledge them or not: accepting their variety moves your corporate communications beyond the reactionary.
- **You're speaking to stakeholders, not just customers.** Especially in networked media, your customers are already interacting with your employees, your shareholders, your suppliers and a multitude of other stakeholders in your corporation's communications. Learn how to communicate in a way that engages all of those stakeholders simultaneously. In general, you'll find their concerns and critiques more similar than they are different. Frequently, you'll even find individuals don't fall easily into just one of those categories - your employees, after all, are also frequently customers and shareholders as well.
- **The context of communities is reputation.** Gaining a reputation for respecting critics and evangelists alike, just like gaining a reputation for not being afraid to practice a level of corporate transparency, can change the context of how people react to all of your communications - and how they react to those critics and evangelists.

## The “Brand Journalism” Perspective

As participants in both the content publishing and advertising production communities, GMD Studios’ perspective on transparency and brand communications is often described as brand journalism.

“There has always been a pressure online from advertisers for publishers to become more advertorial, pressuring editorial content to become more like advertising, but we’ve always been advocates of the opposite,” describes GMD Studios CEO Brian Clark. “There are many reasons to advocate that advertising is more successful if it becomes more editorial and journalistic in nature, especially when the goals relate to engagement and perception shift.”

GMD Studios advocates that this perspective – bringing journalistic approaches into brand communications – works equally well in any medium. “We’ve guided brands executing these tactics in blogs, websites, print magazines, and video in various combinations,” explains GMD Studios General Manager J.D. Ashcraft. “The processes for conceptualizing and managing these kinds of projects are extremely similar, no matter which combination of media you end up utilizing.”

Among GMD Studios’ key advice for companies and agencies considering brand journalism approaches:

- **Adopt the methods of custom publishing.** As a multi-billion-dollar industry in the US, custom publishing – professional content publishers developing editorial content directly for brand marketing and customer loyalty – is one of the fastest growing segments of marketing, second only to online advertising. It also brings with it familiar ways of managing publishing processes and content liability that can increase flexibility over traditional advertising.
- **Manage the efforts as a publishing committee.** As publishers, corporate communicators are best involved in two areas: setting the publishing calendar, and providing a final “publish or do not publish” approval on the produced content. Setting up a publishing committee with representatives from advertising, public relations and legal to work with the contract publishers maximizes both the flexibility and turn-around speed of the editorial efforts.

- **Employ varied content approaches based upon strategic needs.** The processes of custom publishing work equally well for creating text, audio, video or multi-media hybrid content. Documentary video, for example, can provide an immediacy of shared experience, while editorial articles by issue experts can unravel complex concepts. Mixing and matching the best of these approaches allows for content strategies to meet nearly any strategic goal.
- **Treat limited media spends as an opportunity to syndicate.** Since most advertising real estate sits alongside content, using that space as opportunity to push syndicated content plugs directly to where the audience already congregates produces engagement and response rates far superior to traditional brand advertising messages. Provocative questions, compelling headlines, and newsworthy issues should take precedence over logos, brand slogans and product promotion, drawing the audience into a larger conversation.
- **Establish methodologies for proving results.** While reach metrics (from “page views” to “circulation”) are generally useful measurements of traditional PR and brand advertising buys, content strategies are best measured by more specific metrics of engagement. Custom publishing approaches are particularly useful for perception shifts (measured by tonality of overall buzz about a brand), consideration (measured by pre/post surveys) and loyalty engagement (measured by evangelization or “key buying indicator” methods.) Establishing these goals and methodologies early in the custom publishing process allows the content strategies to focus on those results.

## **About GMD Studios**

Founded in 1995, Orlando-based GMD Studios is one of the world's leading experimental media laboratories and brand production teams. GMD Studios' work focuses on how networked media impacts collaboration, community and engagement to produce proven results for communicators, entertainers and product developers.

Working with advertising and PR agencies and their clients, GMD Studios helps guide innovative solutions to brand challenges utilizing community, entertainment, publishing and experiential techniques. The resulting campaigns integrate a wide variety of media and communication styles and utilize proven processes for conceptualization, production and measurement.

GMD Studios' work for clients includes award-winning campaigns and projects for such companies as Alltel, Audi, Ernst & Young, Ford Motor Company, Fox Television, General Motors, the Independent Film Channel, Levi's, MSNBC, New Line Cinema, Paramount Pictures, PBS, Scholastic, Sega, and Sharp Electronics.

For more information about GMD Studios, please visit [www.gmdstudios.com](http://www.gmdstudios.com) or email [inquiry@gmdstudios.com](mailto:inquiry@gmdstudios.com).