

CES 2021: Everything is connected now. But can it all communicate?

If 2021 has brought us to just one irrefutable truth, it is that we are all connected. News and events that are happening half a world away now can reach every corner of the globe in an instant. CES 2021 was the ultimate example. There's no irony lost on the fact that the global stage for innovation—the most influential tech event in the world—took place in a virtual environment this year and opened with remarks from Verizon's CEO, who gave viewers a glimpse into the future of connectivity. That future, as he stated, has indeed arrived sooner than expected not only as a result of the global pandemic but also as technologies have been invented to support a connected world. In fact, there was hardly a gadget introduced that didn't rely on connectivity.

Getting those technologies to communicate, however, is still a real challenge — one that public relations and communications professionals understand all too well. Part of a solid strategy includes anticipating clients' needs and having the ability to communicate their stories in a way that's relevant, timely, and far-reaching.

For example, [Cision PR Newswire](#), which served as the official news distribution partner for CES, demonstrated the impact of such a strategy by not only hosting a virtual press room but also providing tools and materials housed in one place to simplify the hunt for new product and tech information. Recognizing the necessary tools to pull this off was one thing, but understanding what would be helpful to exhibitors, attendees and journalists were another.

By now, most of us have somewhat mastered the new tools of the trade as we continue to connect clients to media, influencers, markets, and business opportunities remotely. Inarguably, open-source tools like Buzzsomo, Critical Mention and Cision, which work seamlessly across all operating systems and platforms, are most productive.

As a global communications firm, we see that the same open-source concept is essential for verbal communication but not always possible, as we often deal with multiple languages and accents of people living in different parts of the world. This can be problematic when the story and facts must be interpreted precisely.

This year at CES, there was a variety of new innovations for breaking through the language barrier, including Pocketalk, TimeKettle and Kotozna, which is a service used via a smartphone app that provides real-time auto-translate features to texts, messages and voice inputs. There was also a solution showcased that can run online and offline (great for highly confidential conversations), called Fluent.ai, which uses artificial intelligence and machine learning for highly accurate and intuitive speech understanding in any language. Particularly for businesses entering new global markets, language barriers present tremendous challenges. Consider that in a country like India there are approximately 22 languages and thousands of minor languages and dialects. Having the capability to communicate is the difference between growth and stagnation. In fact, any technology that enhances communication is a boon at a time when we have never been farther apart.

One San Diego company, IKIN, exists to do just that by enriching the human connection experience through holograms. Exhibiting at CES, the company is developing a smartphone accessory, RYZ™, that turns content on the device into 3D holograms. And, it's an open-source platform "fully compatible with the most popular engines, toolkits and operating systems."

There's no doubt 2020 and the start of 2021 have been riddled with challenges across every industry and profession, with the greatest challenge communicating at a distance—not necessarily by choice but necessity. What's so important about an event like CES is that it shows us possibilities even when things seem impossible.

Participating in CES together at our headquarters in Southern California was something we have never had the chance to do. Traditionally, a few select team members are sent to the event, returning with a wealth of information and knowledge, as well as client success stories. Having the opportunity to include the entire team this year was invaluable, particularly for new junior staff and interns learning the ropes in tech PR, which is a highly specialized field in the industry. The last 12 months, in fact, have been invaluable. Staying connected is essential, but it's how we communicate that has brought us closer to our clients, media and influencers, as well as each other.