



Research Capabilities

(Updated June 2020)

Symphony is the ability to detect patterns, synthesize information and create something completely new as a result.

Our talent is harnessing this ability to help our clients achieve their business objectives through a research-based approach to communications.

We firmly believe that the quality of our inquiry matters - and that good strategy requires deep understanding. That's why we work hard to ask the *right* questions and gather as much data as possible to inform the strategies we recommend to our clients.

*Because if you're asking the wrong questions,
you'll certainly end up with the wrong answers....*



OUR APPROACH



We study market trends, what your competitors are saying, and the attitudes and behaviors of your target audiences by conducting custom qualitative research. [Qualitative methods](#) such as surveys, ethnography, and competitive analysis allow us to better understand what people want, the norms and values of a particular culture, and the meaning of the messages that we find in the public domain. And sometimes companies need to turn the magnifying glass on themselves and retain us for an internal communications audit to identify ways to improve their employee communication and clarify their corporate mission.

In addition to establishing a [research-based foundation](#) for our clients at the beginning of our engagements, Symphony uses research to guide every stage of a communications campaign. We consistently monitor how our tactics are performing, what narratives are emerging in the market and how our clients' customers are using their products and services to determine whether to stay the course or make adjustments, as needed. Proactive communication, trust and transparency are a big part of this process, so we strive to maintain close, collaborative relationships with our clients, every step of the way.

All of these efforts add up to smart, well-informed strategies that ultimately generate [better outcomes](#).

CAPABILITIES OVERVIEW



Symphony offers clients the following research capabilities:

- Competitive Analysis
- Communications Audit
- Ethnography
- Survey
- Focus Group

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS



How it Works: We analyze your competitors' key messages, positioning, PR and marketing campaigns and generate strategic recommendations for your company.

Benefits: Better understand your competitors' positioning and marketing strategies. Identify the "white space" you can fill to gain market share. Leads to a differentiated positioning and more compelling narratives. Recommended as part of a pre-launch and pre-pivot strategy.

COMMUNICATIONS AUDIT



How it Works: We analyze your current internal and/or external communications and provide feedback for improvement. We offer two types of audits:

- Internal – Identify ways to improve internal communications, strengthen your culture and clarify your mission and vision.
- External – Ensure consistency between brand identity and public/external communication.

Benefits: Gain fresh, outside perspective on your own positioning, marketing and internal communications efforts. Identify strengths and areas for improvement. Improve consistency and increase effectiveness of your messages.

ETHNOGRAPHY



How it Works: Inspired by anthropological studies, we use ethnography to identify the norms, values, symbols and beliefs of a culture or target audience. We then synthesize this data with your business objectives to generate strategic recommendations.

Benefits: Best used to refine marketing strategy, product development and product-market fit. Especially effective for understanding how brands can connect with target audiences in online communities.

SURVEYS



How it Works: We create insightful questions, identify the appropriate sample, field the survey using [Qualtrics](#) and then provide an analysis of the results.

Benefits: Understand your target consumer's general attitudes, preferences and behaviors. Generate compelling data for use in marketing and PR campaigns. Gain insight into employee morale and test new engagement ideas.

FOCUS GROUP



How it Works: We recruit participants, create the questionnaire, conduct the focus group and provide insights and recommendations afterwards.

Benefits: Gain a deeper, more nuanced understanding your target consumer's attitudes, preferences and behaviors. Learn what guides their decision making, how they use products/services and what they think of yours.

TIMEFRAMES & PRICING



Below are the average timeframes and price ranges for each research method. When multiple methods are combined (e.g. a communication audit that leads to a focus group and a survey) pricing will be adjusted accordingly. Note that these are just ranges and that the requirements and scope of every research project is unique.

Method	Timeframe	Price Range
Competitive Analysis	2-3 weeks	\$5,000 - \$10,000
Communications Audit	1-2 months	\$7,500 - \$15,000
Ethnography	3-4 weeks	\$5,000 - \$7,500
Survey	3-4 weeks	\$3,500 - \$5,000*
Focus Group	2-3 months	\$7,500 - \$10,000*

*Out of pocket costs for facility rentals, panels, participants, etc. are incremental

symphony[✦]

Appendix

- Case Studies
- About the Founder



After Media Temple had crystallized its new offering in 2019, Symphony helped the company recalibrate its operations, reframe its vision and mission, and manifest new cultural guideposts into the everyday experiences of employees. First, Symphony conducted qualitative research, including dozens of employee interviews, to discover and understand the limitations and strengths of the Media Temple culture. Next, we reflected our learnings and our findings from a communications audit of the company's current language back to the leadership team during an in-depth discussion and brainstorm that generated key messaging frameworks for consideration. And finally, after crafting a new vision, mission and values for the company, Symphony created a comprehensive new internal communications program that would reinforce this culture refresh in everything from employee performance reviews to weekly meetings to a new corporate social responsibility platform.



Coverage Highlights

[Kaiser Health News](#)

[American Journal of Managed Care](#)

[Health IT Analytics](#)

[Becker's Hospital Review](#)

[Los Angeles Business Journal](#)

[MedCity News](#)

When Canary Health engaged Symphony PR in January 2016, it had developed a leading digital health self-management program, but the company suffered from low awareness and a fractured message to the industry. As a first step, Symphony conducted a communications audit and market analysis to inform its recommendations for a re-positioning of the company, which included emphasizing Canary Health's solutions for multiple chronic conditions, as well as its exclusive relationship with the Stanford University Patient Research Center. Building on Canary Health's CDC-recognized Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP), Symphony elevated these two key differentiators and created a comprehensive new messaging platform for communicating Canary Health's unique value proposition. Through a series of strategic press announcements, an industry analyst tour, an overhaul of the website, and other influencer marketing tactics which utilized this new messaging platform, Canary Health quickly became recognized as a leader in digital health self-management. As a result, Canary Health doubled its share of voice in the digital health category and increased its media coverage volume by 900% in 2016. The company's executives also were frequently sought out by major news outlets for commentary on developments in the digital health industry, demonstrating a much stronger thought leadership position for Canary Health over the previous year.



Emily Scherberth Barnes
Founder & CEO
Symphony PR & Marketing, Inc.



Emily Scherberth Barnes is a seasoned communications veteran with more than two decades of experience as a business strategist, qualitative researcher, storyteller and results-driven PR practitioner. She has guided dozens of startups to launch and helped a wide range of companies craft compelling and differentiated narratives that engage the media and inspire action among their target audiences. After performing award-winning work at well-respected agencies like Fleishman-Hillard, MSLGroup and Allison+Partners for high-profile brands such as Yahoo!, Match.com, Nike, General Motors and YouTube, she founded Symphony in 2008 to serve disruptive companies and organizations in transition. She holds a B.A. in Communication Studies from Loyola Marymount University and a M.A. in Communication Studies (Rhetorical Theory) from California State University, Northridge. Emily is also an adjunct professor at California State University, Fullerton where she teaches upper division courses on market research, PR and integrated communications.