

# Sales, marketing & PR tips to impact UK public sector in 2021





As the COVID-19 pandemic forces regional and potentially a new 3<sup>rd</sup> national lockdown in England, all UK public services are pursuing digital strategies with greater purpose.

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“Rather than COVID-19 holding back progress, it has put a rocket booster under the digital ambitions of UK Government.”

TechMarketView



In November 2020's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR 2020), the Chancellor Rishi Sunak, announced the continuation of funding for digital programmes and deployments in the NHS.

According to a [Computer Weekly report](#), the NHS will receive £559m to "support the modernisation of technology across the health and care system."

CSR 2020 also confirmed an increase to the schools' budget by £7.1bn by 2022–23, compared to 2019–20 funding levels.

The UK defence market also received a tech funding boost with key areas of investment being AI and cyber defence. The review set out at least £1.5bn extra – and £5.8bn total – spending on military R&D which PM Boris Johnson said would be "designed to master the new technologies of warfare". There will also be a new R&D centre set up with a dedicated focus on artificial intelligence, he added.

The UK public sector is a booming tech market. Here are 10 important sales, marketing and PR tips for tech companies looking to get involved in the UK public sector and make a massive impact.

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**"2021 will be quite a formative year. I think public sector bodies will leave emergency mode and start planning for the future. Next year will be the time for innovation; to work on innovative ideas and a chance for suppliers to help the public sector to shape the future."**

**[Jessica Figueras](#), tech strategist**



# 1. Understand the market

The NHS is a really dynamic market changing by the hour, it feels. In December, NHS England announced its support to abolish Clinical Commissioning Groups by 2022. These organisations were introduced only eight years ago to replace Primary Care Trusts, and have undergone considerable mergers during their potentially short lifespan.

The schools sector also has a very complex buying process. Historically, local authorities owned a lot of the buying power and they often have a preferred supplier list that schools can reference. Today it's more likely you will be working with an in-school IT manager, headteacher or, in the case of a Multi-Academy Trust [MAT], a business manager.

FE Colleges and especially the larger universities may even have an IT manager per department. It's really important to map out your market and work out where your first step needs to be.

## The market in numbers

- **23** Ministerial Departments
- **20** non-Ministerial Departments
- **135** Clinical Commissioning Groups [down from 211 in 2013]
- **217** NHS trusts [acute hospital, ambulance, mental health trusts]
- **43** Police forces in the England and Wales
- **343** Local Authorities
- **1,170** Multi Academy Trusts
- **20,832** primary schools
- **19** middle schools
- **4,188** secondary schools
- **2,408** independent schools
- **1,257** special schools
- **352** pupil referral units (PRUs)
- **284** Further Education colleges in the UK
- **143** Universities in the UK



## 2. Understand contract ends dates, spend and buying data

Once upon a time, a public sector organisation could contract with a tech company for 10 years or more, but this is no longer the case.

Over the past few years there has been a considerable shift towards shorter contracts to help drive innovation and competition amongst suppliers. Contracts might be as short as one year with a one-year extension clause.

Equally, the public sector is moving away from working with big, monolithic suppliers to more nimble SMEs. Some parts of public sector are more successful at doing this than others. The education sector is a good place to start for suppliers. According to [Tussell](#), the UK EdTech market is unconsolidated and half of contracts are won by SMEs.

It's possible to track all of this data yourself, i.e. contract start dates, end dates and previously successful suppliers, but also data insights companies like [Tussell](#) can make life much simpler.

### SMEs currently win

- **48%** of education contracts
- **43%** of NHS contracts
- **28%** of local government contracts
- **23%** of central government contracts
- **21%** of justice contracts

- Total justice sector technology spend 2016–2020 = **£3.0bn**
- EdTech market is consistently worth about **£160m** per year
- IT market in local government is worth on average **£110m** per month in revenue
- Police forces in England and Wales spent **£845m** on technology in FY18–19



## 3. Join supplier frameworks

The UK public sector mostly buys technology via frameworks [an agreed list of suppliers]. But, being on a framework is no guarantee of business. The most prominent public sector framework in the UK is G-Cloud, but with 5,224 suppliers on the most recent 12<sup>th</sup> update [up from 4200 on G-Cloud 11 and 3474 on G-Cloud 10] you need to be potent at marketing to be seen.

Nonetheless, being on a framework is essential and it improves the odds of success. There are more relevant frameworks for each sector. The Crown Commercial Services website lists over 20 current, active technology frameworks.

Keep track of the Framework launches, submission dates and end dates to make sure you don't miss out. Companies like [Advice Cloud](#) can help you to win a place.

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Frameworks	Expires
Digital Training and Support	April 2021
Digital Outcomes and Specialists 4	June 2021
Technology Expense Management	July 2021
Technology Services 1	September 2021
G-Cloud 12	September 2021
Technology Products 2	October 2021
Traffic Management Technology 2	October 2021
Data and Application Solutions	Feb 2022
Automation Marketplace DPS	March 2022
HSCN Access Services DPS	May 2022
Network Services 2	August 2022
Technology Online Purchasing Content	November 2022
eSourcing Platform	February 2023
Cyber Security Services 3	February 2023
Crown Hosting	March 2023
AI	March 2023
Spark DPS	April 2023
Education Technology	June 2023
Gigabit Capable Connectivity DPS	September 2023
Quality Assurance and Testing for IT Systems 2	December 2023
Technology Products and Associated Services	December 2023
Digital Inclusion and Support DPS	April 2024
PSN Core Services	January 2025



## 4. Join COVID-19 supplier listings

During 2020, the requirement to sell via a framework was somewhat reduced by the introduction of supplier boards. Industry associations techUK and Socitm joined forces to build a repository to direct councils to offers of help from technology suppliers, a LinkedIn group was formed and even AWS launched a COVID-19 supplier forum.

## 5. Partner up with local, successful suppliers

One of the quickest ways to win business is to partner with an already successful healthtech supplier. Bramble Hub is one firm that acts as a prime contractor with a partner network of over 160 suppliers.





## 6. To win business in the NHS, being in the UK is important

You need to put skin in the game. The NHS has always been open to working with suppliers from anywhere in the world, but their risks are reduced when they can see you have a company registered here, you have a team based here and that there is a local contact for support.

## 7. Make the most of digital networking

The days of face-to-face networking may well be temporarily halted but there are plenty of virtual networking opportunities to be had. [Partnership Networking Events](#) ran a brilliant virtual healthcare expo in November 2020 to help suppliers and the NHS connect. There are also a number of LinkedIn groups to join.



## 2021 conferences, events and trade shows

<a href="#"><u>Cloud Public Sector Summit</u></a>	20 January	Online
<a href="#"><u>BETT</u></a>	20 January	Online
<a href="#"><u>Government ICT</u></a>	21 January	Online
<a href="#"><u>Police Digital Summit</u></a>	2 February	Online
<a href="#"><u>HETT</u></a>	8 February	Online
<a href="#"><u>Parliament &amp; HealthTech Conference</u></a>	23 February	Online
<a href="#"><u>Public Sector Innovation Conference</u></a>	2 March	Online
<a href="#"><u>Security and Policing</u></a>	9 March	Online
<a href="#"><u>Digital Health Rewired</u></a>	15 March	Online
<a href="#"><u>Digital Health Technology Show</u></a>	16 March	Online
<a href="#"><u>The Future of Health Show</u></a>	17 March	London
<a href="#"><u>Digital Health Congress</u></a>	30 March	Online
<a href="#"><u>DigiHealth UK</u></a>	13 April	London
<a href="#"><u>Digitech 21</u></a>	5 May	Online
<a href="#"><u>Digital Government</u></a>	13 May	Online
<a href="#"><u>London Edtech Week</u></a>	14 June	Online TBC
<a href="#"><u>HIMSS</u></a>	9 August	Online
<a href="#"><u>The Emergency Services Show</u></a>	7 September	Birmingham
<a href="#"><u>BAPCO Annual Event</u></a>	12 October	Online
<a href="#"><u>Public Sector Enterprise IT</u></a>	23 November	London
<a href="#"><u>GIANT Health event</u></a>	30 November	Online and London



## 8. Think carefully about messaging

The UK public sector can't be seen to take unnecessary risks with public money. Whilst being a 'disruptor', for example, may seem like a strong and bold message, it may also frighten away the very audience you are trying to attract.

High profile tech failures, such as the video consultation glitches suffered by users of software firm Attend Anywhere in May 2020, don't make for good reading either, and do little for the tech cause.

We feel there needs to be a balance struck. A business can be disruptive if it can also be shown to be:

- Proven
- Trusted
- Risk free
- A safe pair of hands
- Wanted / desired
- Measured.

There are also other nuances worth remembering. Whilst civictech is a common term around the world, in the UK the market is blurred and overlaps with govtech. On the flip side, in the UK we have a clear delineator between healthtech and medtech which can be blurred and overlapping overseas.



## 9. Create content that excites and engages

Your content is the foundation of any PR and comms campaign. Use content wisely to start and join debates, give a voice to senior executives and demonstrate success through customer stories and advocates.

Customer references are often the life blood of any comms' campaign:

### The customer story development process

- Is the project live?
- Is the customer happy?
- Interview the sales or business development person closest to the story.
- Interview the customer to get their input too – in their own words. VERY rarely does a good story develop without the early involvement of the customer.
- Create a complete first draft for approvals. Don't rely on the sales person to do this for you – take ownership.
- Have a single person handle the full edits and approval process from start to finish.
- Make sure the customer's press team understands what is happening, and when – don't side step the press team, if you try, it could be the end of the possibility to collaborate.
- If the project size is significant, expect to be asked to include a quote from the local counsellor and not just the customer lead.
- If the project could be viewed as especially political, expect that delays may happen and more reassurance needed.
- Set everyone at ease by working on a small piece of content initially – like a press release – and scale up depending on the capacity and willingness of the customer.



# 10. Get yourself out there

Design Paid-for, Earned media, Shared media and Owned media [PESO] campaigns that can deliver your stories and content to a public sector audience through multiple channels. Aim to increase awareness of your business whilst demonstrating knowledge and understanding of how you can help meet public sector challenges. After all, the public sector is unlikely to buy from an unknown and untrusted brand [even if you are listed on a framework].

Now, how you communicate a story doesn't have a single answer. Under the banner of PESO [Paid, Earned, Shared and Owned media] the options available are quite wide. Here's a working example:

You have fabulous hospital customer that is willing to be a reference for you [that's the asset]. You've set aside budget and hours [the input] and decided to create:

- A written press release to secure Earned media [press coverage] with a view to creating more awareness, understanding and trust in what you do.
- You write a small story for posting to your website, LinkedIn page and blog (Owned media), which helps with SEO and inbound leads.
- You work with the customer to create a video that both parties can use on Shared media [mostly likely LinkedIn and Twitter].
- And, then, to really drive lead generation, you create a paid LinkedIn advertising campaign to specifically target the desired job titles and drive back healthcare leads to a bespoke landing page and detailed case study.
- Ultimately, the PESO activities chosen [even if it's all of them] should be linked back to the specific need of the audience. If you need broad awareness of the business or solution, make use of Earned media. If you want engagement and interaction, use social media. If you want to deliver specific leads, think about social media advertising and also paid campaigns with the titles that your audiences are engaging with.



## About us

Mantis provides PR and communication services to technology companies selling to the UK public sector. Our services span content creation and outreach via earned, paid for, shared and owned media. We are passionate about working with clients that want to make a difference to society and change lives.

Everyone at Mantis firmly believes that technology can provide a better future for us all, improve society, save lives and empower citizens. We have worked with companies of all sizes – startups, SMEs and multimillion pound organisations. As well as with the majority of NHS trusts, local authorities, emergency services, central government departments and industry associations to help tell our clients' stories.

We are experts in a very specific field – creating messages, storylines and content about the technology, services and ideas that the public sector is using.

### **Mantis team**

Each campaign team is picked for every client by our GM, according to skills and experience. We focus on what's important to you. Clever content? Media relations? Strategic counsel? Events expert? Someone local to you? We provide the most suitable.



## Our services

- **Customer stories.** We become your agent for customer content creation. We develop the relationships, discover new stories, and turn happy customers into fantastic advocates across written and spoken media.
- **Earned media contact.** We create news and thought leadership using the narratives that you have to create solid outcomes in the technology, public sector, national and broadcast media. We help you set the strategy that will have the most impact.
- **Paid media campaigns.** We believe paid media campaigns can have a place in our impact-focused strategies. We manage your content marketing needs and create intelligent, outcome driven copy that drives leads to your digital presence.
- **Owned content.** We create web and digital content for sites and specific content hubs, as well as print copy. We manage blogs, set content strategies, and offer help in the creation of message and tone for all corporate material.
- **Shared media.** We'll work with you to plan and manage the content for your social channels, creating engagement that makes the impact we've planned for.
- **Events and panels.** Our team loves organising bespoke events in our specialist areas, from closed door roundtables to panel discussions and conferences.
- **Influencer relations.** If your target buyer market is small and you think traditional PR won't show value, we can create micro-influencer and personal content marketing campaigns which get the desired results.
- **Advice and counsel.** Our senior team is a strong presence on all our campaigns and we provide Board level consultation on communication strategy and crisis management issues.

### Get in touch

To get in touch with the Mantis team to discuss the support you need with PR and communications, please contact Rebecca or Caitlin on [salesandmarketing@mantispr.co.uk](mailto:salesandmarketing@mantispr.co.uk)