
Anybody can draft a press release and punt it out to a journalist database, but this isn't good PR. In fact, this isn't PR at all – It's just spamming. It's easy to underestimate the strategic thinking behind a PR programme, but taking the time to think about the whats, whys and hows will help you shape your communications campaign into an easily executed programme. The following tips will guide you in creating an effective basic PR strategy that will take more preparation in the first instance but will deliver better results.

STEP ONE: What is your dream piece of coverage?

This is a question I ask every one of our prospective clients. Their answers tell me a lot about their expectations and understanding of the media landscape. How do you know that you need a PR programme if you don't yet know who you want to know about your profile, product, event or service?

ACTION:

Write a list of the titles you would like to be seen in.

STEP TWO: What do you want PR to achieve?

I'm going to already assume that if you are reading this, then you know what PR is. So what are your business objectives for getting PR?

- Do you need to raise investment or funding?
- Are you promoting a launch night or event and you would like to attract a crowd?
- Have you created something new that you want to sell or tell people about?
- What is unique and different about your business in one sentence?

ACTION:

Write a list of the different stories you want to tell.

STEP THREE: Matchmaking

By now you should have a list of publications and a list of stories. At this point it's important to remember that you may need to manage your expectations and, more importantly, your ego. Take the time to research different publications. Prepare. Do the titles you want to be in have regular columns or articles that cover the stories that you want to tell? Study each page of print or different sections online and make sure that this is a relevant topic.

ACTION:

Purchase the publications you would like to be in, or read online publications extensively. Tear out relevant articles or print out similar columns and file so that you could use as a reference tool each time you pitch.

STEP FOUR: Media database

Creating a database of journalists is THE most valuable tool for any great PR. Yes, meeting people in person can be very effective and we do build good relationships with the journalists we work with in person, but media rarely have the time to go for coffees or long lunches. So the fact is that over 90% of press coverage we secure is written by journalists we have never even met.

We've included a media list template here ([INSERT LINK](#)) to help you get started.

ACTION:

Add the titles from Step One into an excel database, using the following headers: First name, Surname, Job title, Publication, Email address and Twitter handle. Next, add a 'Category' column for the story that you want to pitch e.g. Business, News, Launch, etc. We always recommend including a column for notes – this could be observations about recently published articles, or a link to specific coverage, or the name of a journalist's column. Finally, add a column to show the date you last made contact, this helps with remembering what stories you have pitched and when to follow up.

STEP FIVE: Journalist emails

Hold on a minute, you might be thinking. How do I even get the journalist's email address? Well, depending on your budget there are several ways you can do this. You might choose to pay for a journalist tool such as Gorkana, Cision, Response Source or Meltwater, but these can be expensive. If you decide they are too expensive, here are our inside tips on how to obtain email addresses:

ACTION:

Either: Pay for a journalist tool.

Or: [Journalisted](#) is a great free tool. Type in the journalists' name and if they are registered Journalisted will show you their email address and recent articles. You can also look inside each magazine or newspaper for a contact page which provides a list of journalists and the publication's email format, as well as checking the 'Contact us' pages for online publications. Lastly, Twitter is a FANTASTIC free tool for PRs, because most media are on there. Search for them online and you will find that many put their contact address in their bio.

STEP SIX: READ, READ, READ

I cannot stress this enough: you need to read your target publications and/or news sites every day. Before you even consider pitching to any journalist, know what they write about – your idea may very well be brilliant but if you email a journalist to say ‘this is a great story – write about this’ and it’s nothing to do with anything they normally cover, then you can guess what will happen. That’s right – nothing.

ACTION:

Buy subscriptions, sign up to emails and know your media titles inside out. Create a Twitter follow list of key journalists from relevant publications and pay attention to what they’re talking about.

STEP SEVEN: Reactive pitching

Just from studying media’s Twitter feeds, you will find that they will often use Twitter to request help for stories. We always try to provide help and contacts wherever possible – even if it isn’t for our own clients. It’s an excellent relationship-boosting exercise and a lot of the success we have is through reactive pitching to journalist requests.

ACTION:

Follow [#journorequest](#) or [#bloggerswanted](#) every day to get an idea of the sort of stories media are looking for. If you come across a story you can comment on, make it easy for the journalist – email them to say how you can help. Don’t just tell them to contact you. They won’t have time to ask why.

STEP EIGHT: Asset Library

Now that you have a good understanding of what the media are talking about and their tone/style of writing, you need to create your asset library. We include information, guidance and templates in PR 202. You can also look online for hints and tips but essentially you will need:

ACTION:

- An image library including: high-res (300 dpi) and low-res (72 dpi)
- imagery
- Biography
- Press Release

-
- Boilerplate (the 'About us' section that is the same on all of your press releases)
 - Feature pitch (with a paragraph telling the wider trend story to secure a larger article beyond news)

STEP NINE: Proactive Pitching

When pitching your story, the press release is useful to convey facts. However, it is your feature pitch or covering email that will play the most important part. Take your time to get them right.

We include the section of the publication we want to pitch in the subject line e.g.

'Subject: Pitch for Technology page: new app XX for the 'app of the week' column' so the journalist instantly sees that we know exactly which section of the title the pitch corresponds to. Make their lives easier, it will help them to see the merit of your pitch.

In our pitch emails we get straight to the point by telling the journalist why the story is relevant to them. We'll often embed low-res imagery in the email. Then the press release should be cut and pasted underneath the pitch email (avoid word or PowerPoint attachments as journalists just won't read them). Remember to log the date you approached them in your media database from Step Four and if you receive a response and/or feedback make a note of that, too.

STEP TEN: Avoid bad practice

If you don't have time to do all of the above then please adhere to the list below:

- Never send out a blanket email on a bcc. If their name is not on it, many journalists will delete your email without reading it
- It's ok to follow up with a journalist, but give them a few days or a week and only chase once. If they are interested they will respond
- Don't publicly call out a journalist on Twitter. If they are requesting information via Twitter it's ok to pitch publicly but outside of that don't use it as a pitching tool
- Avoid being too empathetic in your pitch email. Of course you want to tell them why your story is so great and how they must write about it. But the journalist is writing for their readers, not for you

SUMMARY

The above is a quick step-by-step guide to help you get basic print and/or online coverage, but there are so many other ways to get press exposure, including research stories, ambassador campaigns, thought leadership, picture stories, broadcast and podcast interviews. If you would like to learn more about these different techniques, then join our two hour intense masterclass PR 202, a small seminar for ten students taking place on Thursday 27th October. Alternatively, you can book PR 303, an intense three-hour one-to-one session including follow-up assistance and advice over a three month period.

CRIB SHEET

1. Write a list of the titles you would like to be seen in
2. What is/are your key story/stories?
3. What are the names of the columns or features you want to be featured in?
4. Create your own media list ([click here for template](#))
5. Search Twitter, online and print publications or [journalisted.com](#) and add your journalist addresses
6. Set up online and print subscriptions for relevant titles
7. Follow [#journorequest](#) and [#bloggerswanted](#)
8. Create your PR asset library
9. Write a bespoke pitch email
10. Don't spam or stalk journalists and remember your story needs to appeal to their readers, not stroke your ego