



Effectively Using PR To Turn Up The Volume On Your Brand

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The greatest sin in the public relations realm is the sin of doing absolutely nothing and then wondering why the media isn't paying attention to you (or, in the case of a crisis, are eating you alive). As a business owner or manager, you can arm yourself with a copy of *Full Frontal PR* (<http://www.fullfrontalpr.com>) or *Public Relations For Dummies* (<http://www.dummies.com/WileyCDA/DummiesTitle/productCd-0471772720,subcat-INDUSTRY.html>) and engage in "do it yourself" PR or you can contract with a PR consulting firm to assist you in the adventure. Whatever the case, it's up to you to make use of proven PR tactics to help build awareness and credibility for your brand.

Here are 15 tips to jump starting your PR engine:

1) Focus On Your Newsworthy Attributes

The news hook is an important information trigger that actually interests news editors and reporters, not something contrived or self-serving that you think should interest the media. These news hook triggers are important to the news media, because they are typically what interest and attract additional readers and viewers to the particular outlet. You'll have far greater success getting news coverage for your company or organization if your announcement is based on a proven news hook, rather than being full of puffery and information only of interest to you. Learn more about news hooks at my website:

<http://absolutelypr.com/wsn/page9.html>.

2) Keep Your PR Tools Up-To-Date

The basic tools for being reporter friendly are: well-written news releases, graphic-rich e-mails with tracking capability and attention grabbing subject lines, media/press kits (both online and hardcopy), fact sheets and Q&A documents, backgrounders and history documents, bios of key employees, milestone recaps and timelines, photography (high resolution required for print reproduction), and technical documents such as white papers and case studies. The more information you are able to provide an interested reporter, the more likely your encounter will result in thorough, accurate and engaging coverage.

3) Utilize Newswire Services

Newswires – effectively selected, written and timed – turn up the volume on your media announcement. Specialized news releasing services -- such as PR Newswire, Business Wire, PR Web, PR.com and PR Leap (and many more found at [Newswire Services](http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&lr=lang_en&ie=ISO-8859-1&cat=gwd%2Ftop&q=Newswire+Services&btnG=Search) -- http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&lr=lang_en&ie=ISO-8859-1&cat=gwd%2Ftop&q=Newswire+Services&btnG=Search) – can give your news release added exposure to both the media (including trade press and national news syndicates) and potential customers searching the Internet for your type of products or services. There are also a number of "free" news posting options, including PR-Inside.com, dBusinessNews.com, scribd.com and NewsRx.com, to name a few.

4) Don't Forget Media Training (practice, role play, talking points)

Practice makes perfect, as the old saying goes, and media training is simply that. Your key executives are coached and rehearsed in advance for phone, face-to-face meetings and both live and taped interviews with reporters. You think about the questions (both the comfortable and uncomfortable ones) in advance and practice, practice, practice until you are skilled at the process. A larger budget can engage a coach with extensive experience and other impressive credentials. A smaller budget could simply be you, equipped with a tape recorder and/or video recorder from the discount store, role playing the process by yourself.

5) A Crisis Calls For A Strong PR Platform (And Often, Some Assistance)

Crisis management is a necessary and important PR tool whether or not the crisis has been caused by your company/organization or inflicted by a third party (remember the lady tossing the finger in the chili at Wendy's? Here's some backgrounding: [Finger In Wendy's Chili - A PR Nightmare](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/01/18/national/main1218315.shtml) (<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/01/18/national/main1218315.shtml>)).

Crisis management tactics help you to rapidly respond proactively to the problem or concern. Often called "damage control" or "spin control," the very reputation and ability to profitably conduct business in the future depends on the proactive steps taken during and immediately following the crisis. If there's anytime you should consider professional assistance in your PR effort, it would be if you find yourself in the middle of a crisis. A skilled practitioner can help you to respond fast and to know all the options available to you "under pressure." PRFirmFinder.com offers assistance at <http://www.prfirmfinder.com> to help connect clients in need with PR consultants who can assist.

6) Share Your Expertise Via Bylined Articles

Bylined articles like you're reading now are when you write articles for the print media (usually at the invitation of the editor) about your area of expertise. Articles can range from a 250-word squib to a 2,000-word feature. A short paragraph at the end of the article recaps the author's credentials, explains his/her company or organization title and affiliation, and provides the reader with phone and website contact information.

7) Effectively Strategize Events, Promotions & PR Stunts

Events and other special activities may provide excellent face time with your customers or other important constituents. And, they may raise valuable funds for your special cause, but are events and other contrived activities newsworthy? Maybe. Maybe not. So, if you're planning on sponsoring an event or creating a special activity strictly to gain news coverage, think again and make sure your strategies and tactics are focused and targeted appropriately. For news coverage to result, you need to make sure your event or activity includes plenty of interesting news hooks. A good read on creative PR stunts and promotions is [Can We Do That!: Outrageous PR Stunts That Work - And Why Your Company Needs Them](http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-047004392X.html) by Peter Shankman (<http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-047004392X.html>).

8) Avoid Unnecessary Phone Calls & Be Responsive and Timely

Unsolicited phone calls and instant, text and podcast messages are annoying. They are especially annoying if you are a news editor or reporter who can receive literally hundreds of communiqués a day (all the while juggling numerous deadlines and interviews). Use intrusive communication tools rarely and wisely (or preferably not at all) if you want news editors and reporters to be receptive to you and your company's ongoing media messages. A well-written e-mail is by far the most preferred contact method of reporters and editors, who will call you if they are interested. Phone calls should be reserved for truly breaking news situations and used to solidify details once a reporter has contacted you for additional information or an interview. Most importantly, if a reporter calls you and needs an interview, jpps or background information, do it immediately because he/she is most likely on deadline.

9) Become Skilled At E-mail Campaigns

As said before, e-mail is, on the whole, the most preferred form of communication for reaching the news media. Once selecting targets wisely, make sure to use a program that lets you know who opened or clicked through to your announcement. This valuable information will help you in building other targeted lists and contact programs in the future. Where do you get the e-mail addresses? Check the contact section of the media outlet's website or subscribe to a media contact data source such as [Cision's MediaSource](http://us.cision.com/Research.asp) (<http://us.cision.com/Research.asp>), [Burrelles Luce MediaContacts](http://www.burrellesluce.com) (<http://www.burrellesluce.com>) and [Bulldog Reporter's Media List Builder](https://listbuilder.bulldogreporter.com) (<https://listbuilder.bulldogreporter.com>) .

10) Make Use Of Leads Services

A leads service is a special PR tool that allows reporters on deadline to reach out to companies and individuals for information and interviews. Examples of these services, available by subscription (both free and paid options), are PR Newswire's [ProfNet](https://profnetwork.com) (<https://profnetwork.com>), HARO (<http://www.helpareporter.com>) and [PRSourceCode](http://www.prsourcecode.com) (<http://www.prsourcecode.com>). Here's an example of a recent Profnet Query: *"I am writing a story for a national business publication roughly titled 'Sales 2.0.' The article looks at how some of the new tools such as LinkedIn, Jigsaw, and other Web 2.0 tech stuff are changing the way companies prospect for sales, contact and woo sales, close sales, and then keep customers happy. I am still lacking people who can discuss lead generation technologies, ideally ones that are not part of Salesforce.com, but would be interested in anything at this point. Also, I would be interested in customer management or upselling technologies. I am only interested in talking to small and medium-sized businesses (with 1,000 employees or less)."*

11) Keep Track Of Coverage

Clippings, or cuttings as they are called in the UK, are copies of articles that have appeared in press, online or broadcast. Google and Yahoo news alerts can give you a heads-up when a print or online story runs and services such as [BurrellesLuce Press Clippings \(http://www.burrellesluce.com\)](http://www.burrellesluce.com) and [CompetitivEdge \(http://www.clipresearch.com\)](http://www.clipresearch.com) can help with print tracking, while services such as [DigiClips Broadcast Monitoring \(http://www.digiclipsinc.com\)](http://www.digiclipsinc.com) can provide broadcast coverage. In addition, the various state press associations have clipping services that can help in gathering hard copies for your permanent records.

12) Measure Results

Campaign metrics are an attempt to put results from PR campaigns into a quantifiable format. Print articles can be expressed according to the value of a paid ad of the same size (ad value equivalency) and content can be analyzed for specific content and evaluated according to positive or negative tone. TV and radio broadcast audiences are measured by services such as Nielsen and Arbitron and, like print, can be expressed in ad value equivalency to estimate the dollar value of a PR exposure.

13) Rely On Up-To-Date Contact Information

Media data consists of the contact information necessary to effectively communicate with reporters and editors: titles, beats, mailing addresses, phone and fax numbers, e-mail addresses, circulation figures, deadlines, pitching tips, etc. Services such as [Cision's MediaSource \(http://us.cision.com/Research.asp\)](http://us.cision.com/Research.asp), [Burrelles Luce MediaContacts \(http://www.burrellesluce.com/MediaContacts/default.php\)](http://www.burrellesluce.com/MediaContacts/default.php) and [Bulldog Reporter's Media List Builder \(https://listbuilder.bulldogreporter.com\)](https://listbuilder.bulldogreporter.com) provide this data in directory form, both in online and print formats, to assist in implementing PR campaigns.

14) Boost Your Search Engine Popularity & Embrace Web 2.0 Opportunities

News releases and articles posted online at media and company websites, newswire collectives, and on blogs all have the capability of enhancing search engine optimization (SEO) for your company/organization website. Remember to put as many of your key search terms as possible in the headline and lead paragraph of the news releases you post online. In addition, always remember to include the URL link to your website in your copy, plus other relevant links using the http:// prefix. The prefix helps to assure that the links are functional. To check how your site is searching, try this free service at the [Mike's Marketing Tools website \(http://www.mikes-marketing-tools.com/ranking-reports\)](http://www.mikes-marketing-tools.com/ranking-reports). You can now use Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com>) to "tweet" your news and links to online release postings and coverage, plus other vehicles such as online newsrooms, news feed blogs, and the social networking sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Plaxo.

15) Win Awards To Attract Publicity

Receipt of an industry or community award is a legitimate news hook that can help attract the attention of editors and reporters and ultimately gain valuable media exposure. The focus of the award gives the recipient a reason to expand on the particular topic by providing additional information and related photography. Quite frequently, the prestige of receiving one or several industry awards offers the "awareness lift" necessary to secure a profile or full feature about your company or organization. Examples of Colorado awards competitions that attract significant publicity are the [Rocky Mountain Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year® \(http://www.ey.com/global/content.nsf/US/EGCS - Entrepreneur Of The Year Awards - Overview\)](http://www.ey.com/global/content.nsf/US/EGCS) program and the [ColoradoBiz Top Company \(http://www.cobizmag.com/top_company_finalists.asp\)](http://www.cobizmag.com/top_company_finalists.asp) competition. Nationally, two credible awards competitions are the [Fast Company Fast 50 \(http://www.fastcompany.com/fast50_07/index.html\)](http://www.fastcompany.com/fast50_07/index.html) and the [Inc. 500/5000 List \(http://www.inc.com/inc5000\)](http://www.inc.com/inc5000). These are only several examples, there are many awards competitions occurring all the time. Next steps are simply finding the contest, applying, winning and promoting.

About the Author

Maggie Chamberlin Holben specializes in media relations, the strategies and tactics necessary to achieve impactful editorial placements in international, national, trade and local media – both traditional and new media outlets. She is the owner of Absolutely Public Relations, the PR consulting firm she founded in 1999. With more than 25 years experience, Holben is accredited by the Public Relations Society of America and is a member of its Counselors Academy. Most recently, Holben's "Seven Ways To Get The Media Attention You Deserve" article was published in the PRNews' *Media Training Guidebook, 2009 Edition*. Holben's firm offers PublicRelationsNewsroom.com, Expert411.com and DenverPRNewsroom.com to help clients achieve media relations success. She blogs pitches and placements at <http://DenverPR.blogspot.com> and tweets from Twitter.com/DenverPR. For more information, visit: <http://www.AbsolutelyPR.com>.