

## Tips to Make the Most of Your Media Relations Efforts

The value of your company's brand and reputation can grow as a result of favorable media coverage captured over time. However, securing good coverage can prove challenging if you don't know how to work with the media. To pack a punch into your media relations results, consider these tips.

If you want the media to take interest in your business success story, take interest in the media. Writers and editors want to be first with news and great stories. They review mounds of mail, e-mail, and faxes each day. In addition, they scan competitive media and wire service stories to select news to share. With all this competition, how can you make sure your story gets the attention it deserves?

Monitor the media outlets that you think are right for your story. Read the stories of reporters who cover your industry. Most importantly, take time to prepare concise, clear, and compelling pitches that show why your story is timely, newsworthy, and relevant. Have some fun, be creative in your approach, and give the reporters something they won't find elsewhere.

Many factors determine whether or not your story captures the coverage. These two questions top the list:

- Does your story fit within the coverage area and editorial profile and plans of each particular media outlet?
- What else is making news today?

Local newspapers want local stories. National magazines cover broad trends. Customize your stories whenever possible to demonstrate your understanding of each media outlet. Make clear that you've been following the reporter's coverage of a particular news event as a way to position your story as a great follow-up. By demonstrating interest in the reporter's work, you increase the chances that you can establish rapport. Otherwise, your pitch may fall on deaf ears.

Prepare a few thoughtful and engaging paragraphs that sell the "who, what, why, when, where, and how" behind your story. Share the information with the right reporter in the context of today's news. Be prepared to offer timely access to the experts, deal makers, or decision makers to lend context and commentary to the news at hand.

When interviews take place, make sure spokespeople are clear about the three key points they want the reporter to remember. Share comments in concise, credible, and quotable terms to help put the story in proper perspective. Avoid the dreaded "blah, blah, blah" quotes from top executives that add words without adding story impact. Say something memorable that differentiates your company's story and leaves a lasting and favorable impression.

One more thing – timing is everything. If it is a slow news day, anything is possible. If, however, today's news is focused on a calamity, the results of a widely contested election, or the death, marriage, or divorce of world leaders, news of lesser magnitude is likely to fall to the round file.

When you demonstrate a pattern of delivering customized and compelling story pitches and timely access to decision makers, you'll earn a reputation as a quality media source. This can pay dividends. You'll likely get calls for your perspectives the next time a relevant story breaks.

Media momentum is a powerful thing. One day your story is told within the pages of the local business journal. The next, it can land on the pages of *USA Today*. Each media placement lends additional credibility to your story while reaching a new

audience of potential customers and decision influencers.

Once you secure favorable media coverage, don't stop there. Order article reprints to support your new business development efforts. Frame and display the coverage in your lobby or conference room. Spread the good news via e-mail to your clients, referral partners, and colleagues. Finally, post the story link to your Web site. In doing so, you'll expand the audience as you fan the flames of awareness with the credibility that editorial coverage provides.

Remember, effective media relations demands skills in journalism and persuasion. If you lack the time or skills to do the job right, hire an expert to do it for you. The most important thing is to tell your story well. At the end of the day, a good story will always stand on its own merit.



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