

Excess Energy Communications PR and Communications workshop toolkit

PR and comms

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1. The Power of the Media and how you can utilise PR

PR - what's in it for you?

Public relations – be that media coverage or influencer postings can be amongst the simplest and most cost-effective way to promote your product, service, shop, outlet, event or activity. It's important to keep your newspapers and radio and TV stations (particularly local) involved with any news you have as they can be powerful allies. Good media relations can contribute to longer term strategic objectives such as:

- Create a higher/better media profile
- Communicate/engage with new and existing audiences
- Change and inform attitudes of target audiences
- Improve relationships with communities
- Influence government policy at a local level
- Provide support and endorsement for other neighbouring or community businesses or organisations
- Provide support and endorsement for campaigns or initiatives

Reach a mass audience

National press, including newspapers, online platforms, blogs, TV, radio and magazines (and influencers) is consumed by vast amounts of people daily. To get your work out there in the national sphere in the right way is hugely influential and will no doubt lead to awareness, sales and footfall.

Trust

Regional media is far more trusted by people than the national press. People tend to like their local paper and read more of it for enjoyment and local journalists are often well known and respected. Local media is the most trusted medium for dissemination of information as it is central to community life across the UK and remains the first port of call for people looking to find out about local events, buy goods and find services in their own community.

So how can you utilise the media to help support your work?

2. Media Sell-in process

So what is PR and media relations?

Media relations relates to the part of PR which informs and educates by means of a whole variety of promotional activities which result in editorial coverage in newspapers and on the radio, TV and Internet. The majority of readers have no knowledge of the PR industry or how it works with the journalistic community so still believe that their reporters find out every bit of news through a thorough investigative procedure. This therefore means that people reading, listening to or watching a story unfold really believe that is the hard news style factual status of the world around them, therefore attribute a great deal of importance to what they are

seeing, hearing or reading.

Stories that appear in any media therefore have solid influential value (in a positive way!) and your business, service, event or story can therefore utilise the skills of the everyday PR practitioner to great effect.

So how can you create your own PR and get your stories into your media?

PR informs and educates by means of a whole variety of promotional activities which result in media editorial coverage. Before you can get news into print or on air, you need to have a story that is newsworthy or interesting. Take your time to educate yourself about the media outlets you are targeting, their style or writing or presentation and the things that appeal to them.

Your unique selling points for media

You also need to focus the materials you send to help the editors or producers. This means anticipating and answering their questions, labeling photographs and explaining why your story/proposition is worthy of coverage. Local journalists are always looking for local success stories—either the 'first of' something, the 'most significant' of, the 'biggest' of or the 'most exciting' of.

Getting media coverage

The best way to get media coverage, is to gauge the types of stories that are hot and tie your story in with them. If you can think of a way to use a human-interest link, you'll increase your chance of coverage. Being aware of how your story will hit their agenda and interest their readers is the main factor that you should concentrate on. For example, if you are expanding your premises and employing more local people, that has a great local human-interest story.

Learn about the media outlet before you contact them

In defining your target audience, you will also know what they read, what radio programmes they listen to, what TV programmes they watch and what websites they visit. Take your time to educate yourself about the media outlets you are targeting and get an idea of the geographical areas that they cover and the age group that they are created for and then create your plan of action and the things that you will say based on this.

Deadlines

Find out deadlines for each outlet in relation to your event or activity. For newspapers and TV prepare your press release at least two weeks in advance of when you would ideally like a story to run. This gives the journalist time to absorb the story and plan plenty of space/time for it. Magazines often work a couple of months in advance so be well organised if you're keen to get in there. Deadline for local press differs from publication to publication so it is worth contacting them to determine this. If you miss a deadline then you won't get any coverage.

Create and review your materials

After digesting this toolkit, you should be aware of what a press release is and how

this important piece of material works. You should e-mail your press release in plenty of advance time to the right journalist, and you should have a colleague or friend proof it for you to make sure it is as error free as possible.

Follow up

Many people send press releases and then moan that they never get published. Journalists have some of the most blocked inboxes in the business world! They get hundreds of e-mails every day and many just don't get read. The only way of ensuring that yours gets noticed, and potentially covered, is to go through what is known as the 'sell-in' process. You effectively become a mini salesman and you call up and 'sell' your story to the journalist.

"A good PR can certainly influence how much coverage is received for a story or client. As a journalist I was often under a great deal of pressure and a good PR could alleviate this by presenting me with a complete package. PRs do all the research, check names and facts are correct, provide good quality photos or photo opportunities, arrange for interviews and answer questions. A really well written press release probably won't need much rewriting - maybe just a change in headline and a slightly different angle to fit the publication. The better the initial package and the information I received, the more likely I was to allocate more space for a story."

Jackie Butler, Former Features Writer, Western Morning News

Making that all important sell-in call

Before you make the call, you should read through the press release again and have a quick practice of what you're going to say to them. You should also make sure you've read an article that the journalist has recently written, and be sure they're the right person for you to target.

Here's a suggested script, just relax and try not to sound like you are reading. Be as friendly, positive and enthusiastic as possible:

'Hi my name's (your name) and I wondered if I could take two minutes of your time to tell you about a great new art performance/crowdfunder/concept that's going to be happening/launched in the next few weeks/is happening at the moment?'

Hopefully they'll say yes here, then that's your cue to explain:

'Great. It's completely different because it's (details of the project) and it's all been organised by XX. The team are....(then a couple of lines about what they are doing that's new/different/the biggest or most significant of etc...)

Take a breath and hopefully they will say 'that that sounds interesting!' Then you say:

“I sent you over a press release a couple of hours ago with some photography and I wondered if you’d be able to give us some really nice coverage.”

Hopefully they'll say yes! Then you can ask if they need anything else and then send it to them if they do.

3. The Power of the Image

Getting your PR Photography Right

Visual stimulus counts for a huge percentage of our perception, making it a key component to any marketing campaign. This is why it is paramount to spend time considering every aspect towards creating a PR photo which will have maximum effect in minimum time (usually no longer than a glance).

Making photographs

Avoid simply taking a photo and step into the creative realm of making a photo. This may simply be a matter of finding a leading line or even dropping down to one knee and asking your subject to move their hand. This activity and effort all adds up to make a difference to the impact of the image.

What do Editors want?

In general, it is important to please the Editor whilst also making sure nothing that you want is compromised in the process. Find out who you're shooting for! Have a good look at the photographs in the local paper or magazine and think about what seems to appeal to the picture editors. Do they go for creative angles, interesting compositions, use of light or are they more straight up and traditional? You should ensure that with your shoot you create a range of photos for them to choose from but always be sure and take as many shots as possible in the style that they generally go for.

Good press photography

Good photography can really help to get your story in your newspaper so think about possible photographs before the event - THINK PICTURES!

- Images should always reflect what you are saying in your press release
- Avoid going for the obvious and be imaginative i.e. try to avoid standard cheque presentation shots and cheesy grins
- Use props and think of something quirky if at all possible
- Images must always be good quality and high resolution

Composition: Consider composition and think about shooting from a different angle with light on your key subject.

Lighting:

In general shots should be delivered by e-mail and should be in jpg format and you should always have at least one portrait and one landscape for them to choose

from for page layout purposes. Try not to make emailed images or several images in one mail bigger than 5MB as this will clog up journalists' inboxes and they may well be rejected by their server.

For print media:

- Jpg format
- At least one portrait and one landscape image
- 300dpi

For web media:

- Jpg format
- 72dpi
- 800 pixels wide for landscape
- 650 pixels high for portrait

Crediting the photographer

At all possible times, you should ask for a credit for you or for the photographer.



4. Writing your own Press Release

Once you have made contact with the media and know who your contacts are, you should send them a press release to give them all the details.

A press release is an article written for the media in a journalistic style to inform them of a launch or story that is newsworthy i.e. is interesting to people who will read that newspaper or listen to that radio/TV bulletin. The whole idea of a press release is that it can be immediately and easily converted into an article that will sit in the paper or be used for a piece of broadcast coverage.

Press release top tips

- Write an eye catching title
- The headline and first paragraph should always contain the most important information to draw the reader's attention and enable them to find out quickly what the story is about
- The five Ws should be in the first paragraph. This means that the first paragraph should tell the reader who is involved in your story, what is happening, when it is happening, where it is happening and why it is happening. This should be as clear and concise as possible

Who What When Where Why

- Press releases are best sent via email. Always make sure that the subject heading of your email is clear. Don't title it 'Jukebox Café Press Release', instead write something along the lines of: 'JukeBox Cafe Big Draw Project' or 'Over 500 Volunteers take part in biggest beach café beach clean.'
- Send the release well in advance of your event or activity. We recommend at least two weeks to ten days before so they can plan to allocate journalists to cover the event and save a space for it within their newspaper or news show.
- After you've sent your press release to the media, give them a call to ensure they have received it and to assess their interest
- Follow up your event with a post event press release and photos. Let the journalists know what happened, who was there, how many people etc.

Use the press release planner that we have developed to help you get started.

5. Press Release Planner

Date: (X)

For immediate release [OR Embargoed until: X]

[Heading: make it an eye-catching one]

[Sub heading: One full sentence that expands on heading]

[**Paragraph 1.** Intro must have who, what, where, when, why. What's unique about the story/event/activity? Is it the first of its kind, the biggest, the cleverest etc. Include a local angle pull, mention local place name and if relevant how many people are involved.]

[**Paragraph 2.** More detail, mention any partner organisations, who's involved, what the story means and why it's exciting.]

[**Paragraph 3.** Expand details about how the story has come about or why it's happening.]

[**Paragraph 4.** Future plans and any new phases/news coming up. Give brief information about involvement of key leaders or people, historic elements of other elements of significance. Dates of future events or exhibitions should be included here as well as targets and challenges.]

[**Paragraph 5.** Quote one of the key people involved in the project or organisation – why they got involved, why it's exciting, what they hope to achieve, why this will mean something for the future. Introduce the quote e.g. John Smith, Director of Beetlejuice Ltd., says, "x"]

[**Paragraph 6.** Quote from another representative (if appropriate and relevant – perhaps the Arts Council). Use this quote to bring all the strands together with an inspirational finish]

[**Paragraph 7.** Reiterate times, dates, website details, venue, contact name and number/email if relevant (for event contact not for press contact)]

ENDS

Images attached: xxxx.jpg - 'Caption of photo', name of photographer and owner of copyright

For more information please contact: [PR contact's name, email address and telephone number]

Notes to the Editor: Drop in info from your business and other useful info.