



**Public relations is an effective means to build your business.** *Having a PR plan in place helps you strategically communicate the value of your company targeting key decision makers and influencers in your respective industry. A successful PR program will help potential customers find you by seeing your company in relevant trade journals, on relevant websites and at relevant industry events such as trade shows or conferences.*

Since PR delivers your message via a third party it tends to carry more clout than paid advertisements. The key is to assemble the most effecting blend of marketing and PR elements that will position your company as an industry leader.

## HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR PR PLAN

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A concise PR plan will clearly outline your communication objectives, identify your target audiences, detail specific tactics and measurement tools your company will implement to effectively execute your plan.

### Identify Your Objectives and Goals

A strategic plan is created based on your company's "big picture" goals. Once you have determined your objectives, begin to develop your plan to achieve your set goals.

### Identify Your Audience

Establishing your core market will assist in shaping your message. Understanding who you are speaking to will help to shape what you are speaking about. You don't want to disseminate your message to the wrong market, rather, disseminate your message to individuals in your respective market and industry.

### Manage Your Media Relations

Once you identify your target audience, how do you communicate your message to them? By managing your media relations, you can identify appropriate media contacts that reach your intended audience.

#### ♦ Identify Your Editorial Contacts

Once you've determined the top publications, including general business publications as well as specific industry publications (a.k.a. *verticals*), then you need to identify the editor that covers your company's area of expertise. You can visit the publication's website, which usually lists all editorial contacts and their email addresses; or check the first two or three pages within the printed publication to find editorial contacts.

Create a spreadsheet or contact database with your press contact names, addresses, emails and phone numbers. It makes the job of following up much easier.

### ◆ **Know the Editorial Calendar of Each Publication**

The editorial calendar lists the publication's content for the year. It can be found on the publications website under "Media Kit." Editorial calendars mainly apply to the printed publication, however there's usually an association with the online content.

Why is the editorial calendar or site map important? They indicate an area of opportunity for a potential story. So for example, if a publication is doing a story on packaging innovations in automation and you have a new product that fits the theme, then contact the editor to see if you can participate. At best, you could gain a feature story opportunity, and at the very least, you may be included in roundup story that covers a variety of packing innovations in automation.

*Note: Make sure you know the editorial closing (cut off date) for each publication so that you pitch your story or send your news release before the close. (i.e. a print magazine cover date of June 1 would have a close of March 1.)*

In the online world, things tend to move much faster, so if you have a new product launch and the publication website has an area for "new product news," then the sooner you get your news to the editor, the better.

### ◆ **Determine What Type of News to Share**

How do you determine what your news is? Based on your goals and objectives, what is the message you want your customers and potential customers to know? Most news falls into three categories, use these as a guide in determining your news:

- *Product news* consists of any new product developments, technologies or upgrades to existing products that would be of interest to your target market.
- *People news* consists of changes to key personnel that would have an impact on your markets. For example, you would announce that you recently hired a regional sales manager with expertise in specific market, or a new engineering VP who may have specific expertise in technology of interest to your target market. This category may also include news in your distribution channel such as "ABC Company Establishes New Distributor in China."
- *Company news* consists of important events in your company that would be of interest to your target market. For example, acquisitions or mergers that provide a specific benefit to your target market. Any company accolades such as Six Sigma adoption or ISO certification can be included in your company news as well as high profile client "wins."

### ◆ **Determine Your Distribution**

Depending on the news, your release could have a broader appeal than the publications serving your industry. For example, company news such as a merger or acquisition may also appeal to a broader business audience or even a specific geographic audience. Therefore,

your distribution should not only include industry-specific publications, but also local newspapers and/or major daily publications.

Many companies use a fee-based news distribution service to distribute news releases to a broader audience, while continuing to rely on their own in-house PR or PR agency to handle the industry-specific distribution. News distribution services include PR Newswire ([www.prnewswire.com](http://www.prnewswire.com)); Market Wire ([www.marketwire.com](http://www.marketwire.com)); and Business Wire ([www.businesswire.com](http://www.businesswire.com)).

## Implement Strategies to Execute Your Plan

While there are several strategies you could implement to execute your plan, begin with the basics.

### ◆ Create Press Materials

Prepare a press kit to have on hand for all media and new business inquiries. Your press kit is an organized way to present an overview of your company to external audience. Your press kit contains current press releases, a company backgrounder, a fact sheet, executive team biographies and other relevant information.

### ◆ Determine Relevant Events

Trade shows, conferences and industry association meetings provide numerous PR opportunities. From new product announcements to press conferences, you can maximize your visibility at every event by participating on panels, in seminars, workshops and roundtable discussions.

- ◆ Start with the show organizer's website. They usually include a selection for PR opportunities or promotional opportunities ranging from free listings to paid sponsorships. At the very least, make sure that your company's name, booth number and hall location (if applicable) appear in the show directory and on all press materials.

## Evaluate Your Plan

A successful PR program delivers credible content to your targeted audience by utilizing media to disseminate your messages. Measuring the effectiveness of your PR plan allows you to assess strategies or tactics that were successful in achieving your goals.

With the company's long-term goals in mind, ask yourself if the PR program generated the results that you initially set. Your PR program should also generate business opportunities, leads and ultimately increase sales.

Remember, it takes time to see the results of your Marketing PR efforts. Set tangible goals and a realistic timeframe for your plan. ◆