

PUBLIC RELATIONS BOOK

A Guide to Public Relations Best Practices, Social
Media, and PR Careers.

by,

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Hello, and thank you for downloading the Public Relations Book!

My name is Ashley. I am the author of Public Relations Blogger. I write, manage, and update the blog daily. I am a marketing and management graduate of the University of Portland and have worked with marketing, non-profit fundraising, authority in online branding and PR, and event coordination.

At Public Relations Blogger, you can find thousands of articles on various areas of the public relations industry as well as a 450+ term glossary on marketing, advertising, and PR terms. This book is a compilation of my favorite and most informative articles that should give you a great starting place to doing your own PR, understanding the workings of

PR, and of knowing how to utilize the tools available to you. Please feel free to send me your feedback, get in touch, and peruse the blog; there are many more posts there that I did not include here.

I hope you find this book to be a great resource. Let me know your thoughts, and thanks again for downloading!

- Ashley

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A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO PR:

A Beginner's Guide to PR | Public Relations 101



Public Relations may be a bit intimidating, especially having never done it in practice, but know that everyone starts somewhere. The best thing to do: exactly what you're doing now. You're here, perhaps by mistake, but more likely because you want to know more about PR and how it can help you, your brand, company, product, service, cause, etc. PR really is applicable in all those areas, and

it simply requires that you get started. (Looking for a definition of PR? Try this: [What is Public Relations? | Brief Overview and Definition](#))

Here are some PR basics you should know and become familiar with:

1. *The Press Release.* While people think this is all there is to PR, this is simply one of the small pieces that make up the entire PR arsenal. This is a tool meant to assist you in your PR efforts and will help you to spread your message. For some tips on writing a press release, check out: [3 Important Things to Consider When Writing a Press Release](#)
2. *The Press/Media Kit.* This is your company's calling card. Use this packet of information to ask the media for coverage, share your expertise with others, and to give an overall introduction to who you are. Predominantly, these are used when sending a pitch to media to give the reporter, journalist, or writer more information on the company. It is also a collection of materials a company uses to send to prospective customers and clients. This can include a number of things, but normally includes company information and history, services offered, press coverage, and team players (key executives, etc.). It can also include advertising materials such as flyers, newspaper ads, or cards. ([Here](#) are some effective ways to use your media kit.)
3. *Social Media.* This includes the blog, social networking tools, forums, and wikis. These are all things you monitor, create copy for, and need to be a part of (so long as it makes sense to use for your company, situation, and audience.) Social media is a wonderful tool to utilize for most companies, and for a majority of the companies that do use it, it is a relatively low investment of funds. It does require time, especially if you want to see results.

If you're on the fence about implementing it into your own PR mix, and for more information on determining social media's role for you, try reading: [Public Relations & Social Media | Make Sure it Fits in Your PR Mix](#).

4. *The Public Relations Plan*. This is a pivotal component to your overall PR efforts. Moreover, it contains all of the pieces (with their individual pieces) above. This also takes time, and requires that you actually plan to have success in this area. This term may be a bit misleading, as it implies that plans are a one time thing that you do and walk away from. They are very much the opposite. A plan is created when you have a specific goal or objective in mind and need to create a plan in order to better define the strategies and tactics that you will use to reach that goal. From there, it requires maintenance, improvement, and perhaps termination if you find that the goal has been reached and the campaign is over.

The main point here is that the PR plan is a blueprint for your next moves, how you plan to achieve those moves, and what the results were so that you can create an ever better plan to follow. Remember, though, that all of your efforts will have been done in vain if you don't measure and analyze your ROI! Return on investment is often the only reason companies conduct PR activities, and even if it isn't the only reason, you still need results to show to your board, investors, and shareholders to get future backing. This is such a large part of constructively creating better plans, yet companies often opt out of doing this step. This is especially important when measuring the effectiveness of your social media use. (For tips on measuring your social media ROI: [Public Relations Strategies | 5 Ways to Measure Social Media ROI \(Return on Investment\)](#) For a step-by-step breakdown of the PR plan: [6 Characteristics and 7 Components of a PR Plan That Works](#))

The key to using all of the above together in a successful and pertinent manner is to ensure that you do your research before just jumping in. To be successful and to create a productive and effective campaign, be sure to define your needs and the needs of your buyers. Additionally, be sure you can define your tactics and strategies well so that you can effectively carry them out!

Good luck on your PR adventures!

Have a question? Feel free to post it here in the comments or shoot me an email. Ashley@BusinessTraining.com

What is PR (Public Relations)? | PR Careers, PR's Future, and Measuring ROI



I was recently asked to do a short interview. Here are my answers, which I thought would be helpful to understand the basics of PR:

1. **How do you define PR? What do you believe its purpose is?**

PR deserves a somewhat long definition as it encompasses so much of what a business does in regards to the public. The definition has

definitely changed in the past 10 years and entails much more of a connection between the public and the company. In the past, PR was about talking to the media, getting press clippings, and sending our press releases that no one but the media saw. Today, PR is much more like marketing, and that can be attributed to the changes the Internet has created for business worldwide.

Marketing entails, well, marketing, or your company. PR is about getting others to talk about your company. But, when you can submit your press release and post to your blog directly without having to contact the media, how to define that? It's a line that is becoming more and more blurred. Some would call that marketing, others would call it PR since it involves press releases. A blog is a social media tool, which again, some people would consider to be a marketing venture and others, PR.

To avoid picking sides, I'll say that it is all a part of PR. You are putting yourself out to the online world and connecting with your buyers, making "Public Relations" public again. Your blog and other social media tools help to craft your image online; they also help to make it easier for others to talk about you online and to share your content.

The only real way to define PR is to define advertising, which is the actual purchasing of space online, space in publications, etc. PR involves getting that space for free.

2. **If someone came to you and said, "I want to do PR for a career" what are some characteristics you would tell them are necessary? Why?**

- *Excellent writing skills.* (Or at least a network of great writers that can

help you learn to write, edit your work in the beginning, and assist you in your career journey.) Writing is such a large component of PR; a press release, a blog post, a speech, these are all writing based. Everything one does in PR involves writing, so the PR professional must be very good at this task. The reputation and brand of the company or client the PR professional represents depends on this writing being good. *Personable*. You need to connect with the public, media, and your buyers.

Attentive. To detail, emotions, and one's overall surroundings.

Understanding. This goes hand in hand with the above; don't push a customer, understand their needs and needs of the media when you are talking to them, and be understanding of the way the company you work for or represents affects the community at large.

Common sense. This is necessary in all aspects of business, but even more so in PR. The PR professional is the face of the company, or in other cases the "behind-the-scenes" worker helping to mold the face of the company to prepare for a speech, press conference, interview, etc. PR professionals need to watch what they say and how they say, and know that all eyes are on them and the executives they help.

3. Do you see any similarities between the PR and journalism fields? If not, what do you see as the main differences?

Yes; they both involve a *great* amount of writing. The main difference: journalists are writing on companies whereas PR is getting those journalists to write about their company/client.

4. How would you respond to people who say that PR has an agenda involved?

PR is agenda orientated, at least it should be; why would a company create a PR plan without an agenda? That's philanthropy. PR is meant to advance a company and connect with the public, which is a pretty good agenda to me. It being controversial is a bit silly, as most companies do it for the recognition. Where companies can differentiate themselves is by doing things to create PR without the intent of creating PR. That's a fine line, too, though.

While there ought to be other reasons to partake in PR than profits or sales, that is the overall end results companies are looking for when they embark on any PR campaign or venture.

5. What measures (if any) do you use to determine whether a PR campaign is successful?

I'll answer this with a blog post I did not too long ago that can be applied to evaluating the ROI on any PR activity.

1. Google Analytics. This free tool can help you track traffic, traffic sources, and keyword statistics. This is crucial to your understanding of what is and what is not working online. You can determine if your efforts are paying off by seeing if your press releases, networking with other bloggers and getting them to link to your site, and participating on Twitter and Facebook are bringing traffic to your blog or website. Though this is the most frequently used tactic to measure the ROI of social networking efforts, there are other methods.

2. Measuring traffic is an important way to measure ROI, but another method not used as frequently is to measure "soft metrics" that includes participation on your blog or forum, engagement with your online profiles/ social networking sites, and WOM (word of mouth). This is part of an active PR plan that monitors your online brand.

3. Try searching for your blog, website, or company in Google. How are you faring? Having great content that changes and is linked to by other sites can increase your search engine rankings, which can result in more traffic. If they are not ranking highly, give it some time; seeing results and being able to determine any ROI takes patience. The Internet, though instantaneous in many ways, has a bit of a delay when it comes to seeing your pagerank (from Google), Alexa rating, and search result appearances. Know that creating great content and utilizing the right tools is the best way to ensure your website's success.

4. Conduct research and simply ask your customers what they think. This can help you to really pinpoint what your customers are feeling and what areas you can improve upon.

5. Lastly, and perhaps in a more trivial manner, measure your followers on Twitter, Facebook, and now foursquare; for a brick and mortar company, foursquare can be a great way to measure your ROI and PR effectiveness.

6. What are advantages of working in the PR field today?

The Internet makes PR a more accessible field to work in, meaning that more and more people can learn and work their way up that learning curve to advance their experience and knowledge. In the past, you had to work

hard to foster relationships with just the media; now, you are working to foster relationships with the media, your buyers directly, and others in your industry to help advance your PR efforts.

7. What are some disadvantages or challenges of working in the field?

Along the same lines, there is now more to do as a PR professional; there are more places where that PR person needs to be spending their time because the Internet has opened new avenues and opportunities for PR to be done internally, by the company, and without the help of media. That isn't to say that media is unimportant, however; they are. There's still a lot of value to having something like an article in the New York Times or the Wall Street Journal.

8. Where do you see the field of PR going in the future? How do you think it will change or stay the same?

I'm not really sure; I think marketing and PR will continue to merge, and more and more companies are going to jump on the PR and social media bandwagons because it is so easy to implement. That ease doesn't solidify their ability to maintain it, as we've seen in blogging and other social media platforms, but getting things started is easier than ever because you don't need a PR boutique/firm to do it for you; you can bypass the media, connecting with your buyers directly.

Moreover, you can have a two-way conversation with your buyers, which is something new and very valuable. I'm sure there are many changes coming, and the younger generations are going to help shape that for sure. Preferences are changing and so are peoples' views of the world; this will definitely help to shape the way PR is done.

What Does PR Stand For?



PR Stands for "Public Relations".

PR does indeed stand for Public Relations. (Others may say it stands for "Press Release", or "Puerto Rico", but that just complicates things.) For the purposes of this blog, PR will stand for "Public Relations".

"PR" can stand for more than just the two-word phrase of "Public Relations". It can stand for the preservation of a brand, public image, or company name. It can also stand for the work a company does for the community, or the work it does for itself. It can represent the flow of information from a company to the public, employees, and the media.

Companies seem to give "PR" their own definition, often times doing things improperly or ineffectively. For example, spamming journalists with press releases without first determining if the journalist would benefit from the press release or even find any interest in it. Another way a company can do things improperly is by underestimating the power of PR. Public Relations can be a more effective, both in costs and outcomes, than advertising ever had the potential to be.

For instance, public relations can create interaction, conversations, and collaboration between companies and their consumers. Opposed to advertising, which is a scream for viewers' attention, public relations can get a company more involved and make a two-way line of communication between companies and consumers. As such, consumer confidence, trust, and understanding of a company may increase, encouraging them to close the sale. Furthermore, companies can get publicity from sources other than the media (which include reporters, news shows, etc.). The Internet has made it possible to share content with consumers directly, rather than going through a media vehicle.

So while PR may not be understood, and marketing/ advertising thought to be the only way to get sales, consumers, or any sort of reach, it is a great resource for exposure. Utilize all the tools that PR has to offer, and try not to underestimate its power; it can do wonders for a company.

Role of Public Relations | What is the Role of PR?



Public Relations has many roles within a business, but the most important may be that it serves as an outlet and tool for shaping an image, whether it be for a company or an individual. The most important thing to remember about public relations is that it is **not** advertising. Though PR may have a similar outcome or influence on the company as advertising,

PR is less biased and self-serving. It is information based, stating facts like a new product release, a recall has been put into effect, or that a new CEO has been brought into the company.

There are many benefits that an effective public relations plan can bring to a company, and while reading a book on public relations titled "Strategic Public Relations: 10 Principles to Harness the Power of PR", I came across a wonderful list of things that PR can do. Though some of these are ideas learned from other books, classes, and research, this list is compiled well and encompasses a lot of the key things that should be stressed when telling the benefits of PR.

Things PR can do for your company, firm, or self include the ability to:

- Grow Your Brand
- Heighten Demand of Your Product or Service
- Expand Your Customer Pool
- Establish Trust for the Company and its Products
- Form a Position of Leadership for the Company
- Change the Way Your Product is Perceived
- Generate Awareness for Your Products or Services
- Improve Employee Moral and Draw Top Quality Talent to Your Company
- Enhance the Perceived Value of Your Company
- Make Socially Responsible a Key Characteristic of Your Company

(Strategic Public Relations, pgs. 9-14)

Though most of the terms are self-explanatory, the only one that may have a need for further explanation might be the fourth term, "Form a Position of Leadership for the Company". I think this is an important benefit and aspect of what PR can do for a company, and maybe one that seems a little out of reach for most companies. This is simply the idea that PR can help to push your company into the front position of your industry. An example the authors used was Starbucks,

who spent less than 10 million dollars in advertising in their first 10 years of business, and with a powerful PR program, they became a leader in the coffee industry.

People tend to trust public relations more than advertising. Advertising seems more scripted (pun intended), which it often is. Public relations feels more credible; much of what comes from public relations comes from an external source, outside of the company itself. It also seems to be more effective than advertising, and perhaps largely due to the aforementioned characteristic. Advertising comes from the company and is used entirely to further business.

Public relations can also help create relationships between the community and your company, including the government, schools, and other non-profit organizations. It can also help you become more aware (or maybe just more informed) of your surroundings due to constant studying of the market required to tailor things such as press releases or press campaigns for the right audience.

Though perceived as an alternative to advertising, public relations really ought to be considered more important to a firm and its success. From the benefits listed above, public relations might need a larger role in the business.

Works Cited:

Gehrt, Jennifer and Colleen Moffitt. "Strategic Public Relations: 10 Principles to Harness the Power of PR". 2009.

Societal Functions of Public Relations



Public Relations has two main societal functions: Social Responsibility and Community Relations. Social Responsibility consists of the actions of companies doing good for the community based on a responsibility to the people, animals, and resources that make up that community. This includes the company being involved in the community, helping the environment, and creating good will for the company.

Community Relations is keeping society up-to-date with its community. Society is comprised of companies and organizations, and from the outside they show (on a macro level, and as a sort of sample) what some of our most influential and powerful people are up to. So in a sense, public relations is also shaped by society, as the people behind the PR are influenced by the society around them.

Furthermore, it could be said that Public Relations serves as an example, both good and bad, and helps society to shape and define these terms (good and bad), functioning as a sort of reference of morality. With so many examples of morality (or the lack thereof) readily and easily available, the public is undoubtedly influenced by the actions of corporations, large or small. When companies emerge and their story is broadcast around the world, people have to wonder what sort of morals are being followed and what sort of a law of ethics is present.

In contrast to Enron and individuals such as Bernake, public relations can also show the good that companies and the people in them can do for others, the planet, the environment, or just for the greater good of humanity. Since PR is an unbiased news resource as to what the company is up to, the public is given a great glimpse as to what is actually taking place. Advertising, on the other hand, shows what the company wants us to think, know, and believe.

While Public Relations serves society as a resources for consumers, it can also be a source of good for the community and other companies.

Public Relations Associations



Below is a list of a few associations in the public relations industry. For more information visit each of their websites where they have blogs, news, and an application to join.

- **Public Relations Society of America:** With more than 22,000 members, the PRSA offers their members an outlet to have their voices heard, an opportunity to stay on top of emerging trends and industry news through the *Public Relations Journal and Tactics* and *Strategist*, the ability to extend their networks while increasing their knowledge through chapters and the sharing of information and ideas, as well as online resources (including case studies and full-text articles) for members only.
- **International Public Relations Association:** IPRA offers international networking opportunities through global conferences and regional meetings, annual directories of members, and online global PR resources. Also as member, there are benefits such as reduced fees to international PR conferences, reduced rates to online Hot-Link referral service, and professional credibility.
- **Canadian Public Relations Society:** With ~1,500 members in 16 member societies located across Canada, in places such as Prince George, Vancouver, Toronto, and Ottawa, they are one of the top associations in North America and Canada, and provide networking for members as well as a member referral program, leadership opportunities, and a National Resource Library.
- **Council of Public Relations Firms:** Some of the membership benefits of the Council of Public Relations Firms include: Proprietary Research, access to major industry studies and data, participation in business development programs, recruitment and intern support, and much more. The Council represents ~14,000 employees and a large portion of the est. \$4.0 Billion dollars in US revenue.
- **Entertainment Publicists Professional Society:** Founded in 1991, EEPS has been a tool used to bring people from every level of entertainment

publicity together in order to share their expertise, information, and ideas. Members are encouraged to join committees, such as the activities, membership, publicity, and website committees. Benefits include a free subscription to EPPS's bimonthly newsletter, discounts on the SCOOP seminars, and access to the Motion Picture Federal Credit Union.

- **International Association of Business Communicators:** IABC provides a network for over 15,500 business communication professionals in 80 countries. Members come from backgrounds in PR, marketing, advertising, training, editing, writing, and graphic design, to name a few. Joining the association gives these professionals a resource in order to make an impact in their jobs, find clients, and to find and explore the hidden job market.
- **Issue Management Council:** "Helping members anticipate and successfully resolve issues through effective management processes". This council is from professionals who work in managing issues and for those who wish to advance in the profession.

CAREER RELATED TIPS:

10 Public Relations Career Tips: How to Get an Internship



Getting an internship can be an important part of any career's beginning. It is a way to show future and prospective employers that you're dedicated to working and dedicated to the industry you are interested in working in, and it can show that you are able to balance school, life, and work together well. An internship can be a great introduction to the business world and a great place to meet mentors.

(I personally have met two wonderful mentors through internships who have in turn developed into friends that I can turn to for help on matters personal and professional.) You will also gain invaluable experience as a student where you can make mistakes and perhaps even learn from others' mistakes.

There are a few ways to get yourself prepared and tips to finding an internship that is a fit for you and one that you are fit for. Some can include the following:

- **Create a personal marketing plan.** This should involve some things that go into a normal business plan, like your own S.W.O.T. analysis where you can analyze your internal and external strengths and weaknesses. Here, you can set a budget for your job searches, really define what you want to do with your degree or for your career, and how to get there. This is a great place to set goals and map steps to achieving those goals.
- **Get business cards.** These are great tools to use at networking events and job fairs, and they serve as a quicker, smaller version of your resume so that people can get in touch with you. (Carry your resume with you at these networking events too, but know that business cards are an effective way to get your name and contact information in the hands of professionals.) Print your business cards on a paper or matte material so that the professionals you meet can take notes on your card once they've met you; this can help them to remember you and the conversation you had.
- **Create your social media profiles.** In particular, create a LinkedIn account. This is a way for employers to see your history, your connections, and places you're involved online. Remember that it is a representation of yourself online so keep it professional. LinkedIn takes minutes to create, and you can even upload your resume, saving you lots of time in the profile-creating process. Use this as a tool to get connected and stay connected with people you may meet at networking events, in classes, or

- through other connections. Join groups there, too, to get connected to other professionals using LinkedIn. (For PR students and those looking to intern in the PR industry, there's even a PR Intern group.) Even if you do not advertise your Facebook or MySpace accounts, know that you can be evaluated there too, so use professional images, copy, and content.
- **Attend networking events.** These can be through school fraternities or groups or through larger organizations like the PRSA (Public Relations Society of America) or the AMA (American Marketing Association). For students, prices are lowered to ensure that you can attend, so take advantage of these associations and their events! They are put on to help you as new entrants in the industry and to help companies fuel their companies with new perspectives. Be sure to keep in touch with the people you meet there, as you may have made a good impression.
 - **Go to career fairs.** Even early in your college years, go to these fairs (which are usually cheap to attend) and see what sort of businesses attend and to see if a graduate school is for you. This is great practice for speaking with professionals, getting your information out there, and for finding internships that may be of interest to you.
 - **Practice, practice, practice.** Though this has probably been engrained in every graduate's mind, there is a lot to be said for someone who practices. Preparing and running through questions you may be asked in an interview can create a great advantage over others looking for internships or jobs. Practice may not make perfect, but it can surely improve your answers, speech, and comfort level in the interview. Go to your career center on campus (if you are still in school) and look at their list of commonly asked interview questions, sign-up for a mock interview, and ask them for pointers.
 - **Dress the part.** Even if you are interviewing over the phone, dressing well can make you feel more professional and get you in 'work mode'. Working from home can be dangerous if you are not in the right mind set, too, so go about your days normally as if you were going in to a business to interview or work. This will help motivate you to be more productive. Remember to dress well (business casual) for an interview, at career fairs, and at networking events. You are allowed to ask the representative from the company you are communicating with what the office attire or dress code is; this will show that you are a forward thinker, and that you are preparing yourself. Though appearances are not the end-all, be-all of your success as an employee, it is easier to see your work and your personality when not distracted by worn or overly casual clothing.
 - **Revamp your resume and write a cover letter.** Though cover letters may not even be read, they are a great tool to reiterate your interest in the position, company, and career. It is also an opportunity to take what your resume says and make it relevant to the advertised position. Take the time

to figure out whom to send the resume and cover letter to, as this can show your attention to detail and your ability to do some light homework.

- **Act professionally.** Some personalities are a better fit with others, and while you cannot control how your personality is received by people you can act professionally and respectfully to ensure that you put your best foot forward. First impressions are often times difficult to overcome, and with people interviewing dozens (if not more) of candidates, it is vital to your success that you act like a mature professional, even after you get the internship.
- **Do your research.** And then do some more. Internships and jobs don't *usually* come out of nowhere, and more often than not they are a result of your networking efforts and the connections you've made. Keep your eyes on job boards at school, LinkedIn, and even Craigslist. Apply to those that you find interesting and personalize your cover letters.

Remember that it will take time to find an internship that suits you, but know that your investments in time, your appearance, and your efforts will undoubtedly help you to find one.

If you are looking for a PR internship, there is a limited amount available through BusinessTraining.com each year. (Email team@businesstraining.com for more information.)

Entry Level Public Relations Jobs | Starting Your PR Career



An entry-level public relations position can look like many different things. Ultimately, it comes down to the hiring company and the amount of responsibility they want to grant to new employees. There are opportunities within a company as a part of their in-house PR team, and there may be opportunities in an outside public relations firm. With different responsibilities comes a different job title. As such, there are varying names for an entry level PR job. Some include: public relations professional, public relations specialist, public relations account executive, financial public relations assistant, public affairs coordinator, communications coordinator, entry level account managers, and external communications

specialist, to name a few.

(For descriptions of some of the job duties a PR professional may have, click [here](#).)

Generally an entry-level public relations job is filled by recent graduates who studied in public relations, marketing, communications, or advertising. A masters is likely to give you an edge over someone with a bachelors, but there are many firms that will hire an individual with an undergraduate degree.

Good places to look for entry level jobs include Yahoo!'s HotJobs, Monster, Employment Crossing | PRCrossing, your college's or university's job board, SimplyHired, and LinkedIn. (For more tips on finding a job in the PR industry, click [here](#).) Another cool place to look could be the blog titled One Day One Job, which features a new business and their entry level opportunities every day. There's also an internship version, so keep your eyes peeled for some intern opportunities.

As with any job search, it takes effort, time, and perseverance to find a job, and public relations is no exception.

Public Relations Job Description | What do public relations professionals do?



Though the job tasks will vary within each public relations profession there are a few things that each professional in the public relations industry can and might be asked to do. (To read about some typical jobs that can be found in the PR industry, [click here.](#))

First, the role of the PR professional is to be the spokesperson and advocate for the brand, product, company, or firm, and ultimately help to keep an image that is favorable. They are the contact and relationship holder for the public, as the title suggests. Keeping a favorable image does not, however, entail being dishonest or deceitful about the firm or company being represented. This position requires honesty, commitment, and integrity.

Some tasks that a public relations specialist may have to carry out include the writing of press releases, web content, and interview scripts (which could, for example, be used in light of a new product release so that not too much is revealed or that the correct information is reported, etc.). It may also include being interviewed themselves by the media or other companies. Additionally, the PR specialist relays the benefits of public relations to the rest of the company and it's key stakeholders. Without this sort of advocate for public relations, PR may not be viewed as an equally important company mix as advertising is, when in reality it is of the same if not of more importance than advertising, and can cost dramatically less. On top of that, they keep the rest of the company involved and up-to-date with the company's news, as well as what can be said if they are asked about a new product or rumor.

Furthermore, the public relations specialist will need to make constant correspondence with the media, including journalists, reporters, writers of blogs or websites, and people who manage podcasts or videocasts. This requires great communication and a very personable individual. It also requires patience, the ability to learn and listen, as well as common sense and conscientiousness.

If you want to read more about public relations requirements and tips on finding a job in PR, [click here.](#)

Jobs In Public Relations | Tips for Getting a Job in PR



It may seem somewhat daunting in this economic time to find a job of any sort. Depending on where you're starting, being a recent graduate or a specialist from another profession, here are a few tips that might help you land a position in public relations:

[If you would first like to learn more about public relations (and if it's the career for you) and the differences between it and advertising, click [here](#).]

Where to start?

First things first: it is in your best interest to have an education. Having a degree in public relations is not always necessary as a degree in journalism, marketing, or communications may suffice in lieu of a PR degree. The playing field has been leveled, though, with more and more individuals making their way into the job market with degrees; a bachelors degree seems to be the new high school diploma. It has become a necessity in order to find yourself with more options when looking for a career or job.

Finding a job to apply for may be the hardest part of getting a job in PR, but it could be half the battle. Some places to look may be your school's job board (if you still have access), LinkedIn, Facebook, PRWeek Jobs (US), Monster, and America's Job Bank.

For some ideas of best firms to work for, check out TheHolmesReport, which offers news and intelligence for PR professionals. Here is a list of their best agencies to work for.

Bulldog Reporter also offers media news and intelligence for PR professionals, and has job listings on their site, which you can search and read through [here](#).

LinkedIn even has an Entry Level and Intern group specifically for Public Relations. If you do not already have a LinkedIn profile, create one for yourself! It may be a resource a prospective employer may use to learn a little more about you and your accomplishments. Once you have a profile, you can join the PRintern|EntryPR group that lists internships and entry-level jobs, as well as discussions, articles, and available advice from PR professionals. With over 830 members, this may be a good place to start.

Also, be sure to check out industry publications, magazines, and other websites to get some leads and possible career opportunities.

Ok, so you've found a job you want to apply for. Now what?

Find out who to talk to about the position. Is it HR, the PR department, or the CEO? Figure it out so you can address your cover letter and other correspondence appropriately. This will show preparation and real interest in the company/firm and the position. If you don't seem interested, there is no reason for the firm to even consider hiring you; why would they want to? They want someone passionate about the company and what the company is doing.

If there is a job description, tailor your resume and cover letter accordingly. If the job description asks for attention to detail, excellent communication skills, and computer skills, by all means say that you have exactly these things! (So long as you have these qualities, of course.) List them as reasons why you would be a good fit for the firm, and what you could bring to the firm. Action words are key.

The person interviewing may also want some writing samples or examples of any PR work you may have done in the past. Do not supply them unless asked for; you can mention you have examples in your cover letter, but there is no need to inundate the hiring person with more to read when they may not even read your entire resume.

If you start off right, you may land yourself a position you love, or maybe one that just leads to another. Either way, being prepared makes it easier to accomplish your goals.

"Train Hard, Win Easy"

Public Relations Jobs | Some Typical PR Jobs

Although the PR industry has a lot to offer in jobs and careers, this article will address a few typical jobs that can be found within the industry.

- **Public Relations Specialist:** This position usually requires a 4 year degree, preferably a BBA or BBS degree in an area dealing with Marketing, Communications, Journalism, and behavioral sciences, or field closely related. Excellent writing skills are required, as well as a range of 0-4 years of experience, depending upon the hiring company. The position calls for an individual who will be able to effectively incorporate marketing and public relations to better handle marketing and PR campaigns and advertising. In order to promote the company favorably and to create an ideal company image, the PR Specialist will do a variety of tasks, from compiling publications and other works to generating and retaining relationships with customers, media outlets, and retailers.
- **Public Relations Manager:** This position also requires a BA degree, also preferably in Communications, Journalism, or Public Relations. Excellent writing skills are also required, as well as the ability to meet deadlines and work under stress. (As is required in many, many jobs.) 3-5 years experience is also required. The main tasks this job entails monitoring press coverage, developing and managing relationships, and working towards increasing visibility of company brand.
- **Public Relations Supervisor:** This position too looks for a BA or BS degree or equivalent in Journalism, Marketing, or Public Relations. 4+ years of experience are typically required, as well as some industry experience. Writing and communication skills must be exceptional, and one must be driven and hard working. Some of the job's tasks include overseeing, coaching, and mentoring junior-level team members, providing client feedback to team members, analyzing results and reports to evaluate program effectiveness, and assisting in the preparation of client billing and overseeing administration and budget. Tasks also include gaining outside exposure, enhancing company credibility and visibility through print and other forms of media, as well as implementing other public relations strategies. This job requires that you work well with others and under pressure.

PR TIPS: PUBLIC RELATIONS PLANNING

10 Steps to Creating a Successful Public Relations Plan



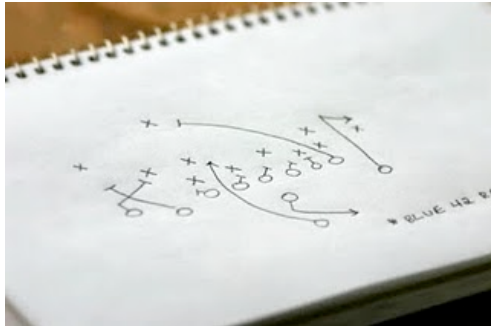
Creating a public relations plan takes time, knowledge, and understanding of your company or client needs and wants. Here are some steps to ensure you capture those wants and needs in the plan creation process and that you create a plan that is relevant and useful to your company or client.

1. **Know your company's or client's current situation.** This is essential to knowing where the company now stands, where the company is able to go, what the company's market/industry looks like, and what direction the company is headed. This helps to put things in perspective.
2. **Know your resources.** This can be a part of the first step, as it is a part of the situational analysis needed to understand where your company or client currently stands. This can help you better build your tactics and strategies while considering the budget, time, and other resource limitations the company or client may have.
3. **Know your objectives and goals.** Also essential to the PR plan having success, you must know where the company hopes to go. Like driving with no directions, a PR plan with no goals or objectives is an aimless action with no knowledge of what could come, or even what results are desired. Be sure that the PR plan's objectives are in line with the rest of the company's overall objectives, and ensure that they are clear to all involved.
4. **Know and define your target audience(s).** This means that you've defined your target buyer audiences and target media audiences. Each audience will need a different message and a different approach. Knowing these audiences will help you to frame your strategies and tactics so that you can effectively reach the people you hope to reach.
5. **List messages and strategies** you will use to reach the target audiences you defined. These should be in line with the goals and objectives listed earlier; if they are not, the plan is already off to a somewhat bad start. Know that your strategies and messages also need to relate to one another, otherwise there is some disconnect happening that needs to be addressed.
6. **Define the tactics you will use** to make the strategies you've listed a reality. These tactics will take the messages and strategies listed and make them happen. If, for example, a strategy is to enhance a company's brand awareness, tactics could include community outreach, social media use, press conferences, etc. There first needs to be a strategy defined before tactics can be addressed and assigned to a message.

7. **Create a time-line for implementation.** This needs to be realistic but also challenging. Remember that there should be no lapses in the PR plan where press releases are being sent out, events are taking place, or media are being engaged. There needs to be constant reminder to the public that the company is alive and well, and that can be done with constant information being sent out.
8. **Delegate obligations and responsibilities** to your team or your client's team to ensure all parts of the PR plan are completed. This helps to ensure that everyone is on board and that everyone knows their own responsibilities and duties. This is crucial to seeing the PR plan come to fruition. This step should be done with everyone involved so that no one feels over-burdened, left out, or given too much responsibility. This can also help to give everyone the feeling of responsibility since the plan was created with everyone together and not just one person's say.
9. **Create measurements of results/ success.** To know if your plan is effective, create measurements and benchmarks for the tactics you implement. This is a place for the PR team to gauge the success of the plan and to see if goals were realistic. Creating measurements can also help to show what could have been done with the expertise and estimations of a PR firm or team.
10. **Review the plan** after implementation and conclusion of the plan. This is the time when all who helped to create and carry-out the plan can come together and share their thoughts on what went well, what didn't go so well, and what could be done differently in the future. This needs to be done to ensure that future plans have a chance of being successful. This step can help to encourage group members to continue working for the company's success by giving everyone a chance to talk and contribute to the next planning.

The key to remember when creating a PR plan is that all plans are going to be unique and different for each company, and even within the same company, they will be different for each plan objective/goal. Do your homework before creating a plan, and be sure that you work closely with the company or client to make the plan a success.

Public Relations Strategies and Tactics | The Difference Between the Two



'Strategies' and 'tactics' are terms that are often used interchangeably, but they are two very different things. One is the way in which a competitive advantage is (attempted to be) gained, and the other is the competitive advantage. That makes the two things related in the sense that they are both part of the public relations planning process. A strategy is what will set your company

apart or help your company or client to reach a goal and objective. For each strategy, there are tactics needed to accomplish that strategy.

Let's start with some definitions:

Strategy: *noun* a: a careful plan or method: a clever stratagem b: the art of devising or employing plans or stratagems toward a goal. ([Source](#))

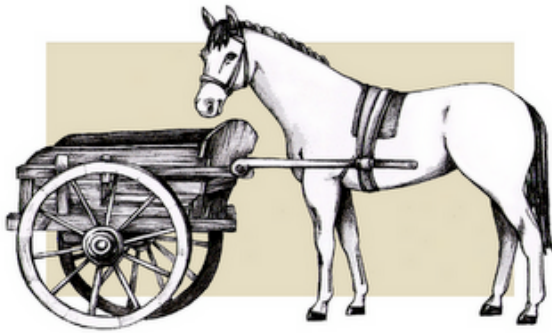
Tactic: *noun* a device for accomplishing an end. ([Source](#))

Those definitions help to show the differences between the two. One is the strategy or the art of creating a plan, while the other is the means with which that plan is executed.

When creating a PR plan, there are essential components (which can be found in the previous post) that include strategies and tactics. Having these components gives the plan a better chance of success and makes the plan more relevant and tailored for the company or client when these strategies and tactics are based on the company's overall business objectives. To help ensure that success companies should create strategies corresponding with the company's and PR plan's objectives as well as tactics tailored for the intended/targeted audiences and media.

While strategies and tactics seem to be the same thing, they are not. Know that one requires the other, and vice versa. To take action and implement a tactic without knowing why wouldn't be very helpful, and to create a strategy without acting upon it would be somewhat pointless.

PR Planning | Know Your Strategy Before You Implement Tactics



Strategies and tactics are terms sometimes used to represent the same thing. [They are not.](#) Similar to putting your carriage before the horse and expecting things to move along smoothly, public relations doesn't work out too well if you implement tactics without first knowing your strategy. PR requires proper planning and proper execution. I read an interesting analogy from [Sarah Evans](#):

Would you pick up a phone and randomly dial 10-digits? Unless you're prank calling, probably not. The phone is a tool for communication, just like social media is a tool. Before making a phone call, sending a tweet or launching a blog, strategy is essential. It will guide the decisions you make, the platforms you use and how you interact.

So, why then, do many companies across vast industries do just that? They "call" random people in the hopes that someone will fit their target audience, be interested in what they have to offer, and even be home. By home, I mean where you are "calling" them at. Are you trying to reach them through social media, press releases, magazines? Determine this so that you can save time and resources in trying to get in touch with your audiences; it's no fun to have to start over after implementing all a tactic that wasn't backed by a strategy.

As I've said before (in many, [many](#) blog posts), using social media may be something that can be very beneficial for your company and for you audience. If it doesn't make sense to use in your company and for your audiences, then using it won't do you much good. The least that can do is to waste your time and resources; the worst it can do is to damage your brand or reputation. Blindly partaking in things for any business venture can be a dangerous strategy when there is no other strategy in place.

Things to do, then:

1. Define your strategy. This can be a tricky thing, but know that you *need* to. Utilize your objectives and goals here to structure your strategies and to craft a clear idea and message of where you want to go.

2. From that, define your desired results. This is a great way to visualize the end results of your tactics and to better plan the front end, which is the strategy.
3. Create a measurement of results/success. While not every strategy has to be a success, create measurements to establish that success so you can give yourself a benchmark of what to achieve. Set these goals high, but not too high, and be sure to use this information (after tactics have been implemented and measured) to see where you can improve next time.

Remember that PR is a never-ending activity that requires your attention. Avoid implementing tactics with no strategies, and creating strategies that have no tactics. Also try to avoid implementing tactics and calling it good; they need to be monitored to get any value from your efforts.

Public Relations Strategies: Knowing Your Audience



Your '**audience**' as a PR professional may be larger than you think. It refers to the press contacts and media vehicles your consumers and potential consumers (target audience) use, see, read, or visit. Knowing who to address in your pitches for your news and press releases is critical to getting any sort of coverage, reach, or results. Are you targeting your pitches, new stories, or press releases?

Just as you would (or *should*) personalize a cover letter, so should you personalize your pitches and stories. Don't waste the message you worked so hard on perfecting! Here are some ways for targeting the right audience:

- **Do Some Research.** This is such a simple task that, though time consuming, can be what gets your company some media attention. You need to understand who it is you're targeting, and where they go for news or entertainment. For example: you are a technology company and your target market consists of mostly college-educated, white-collar professionals from Generation Y who are mostly male. What sort of publications do these white-collar folk read? Time? BusinessWeek? The Times? Small Business? Knowing will lead you in the right direction. Not knowing what publications your target audience reads means you could be wasting time, energy, and monetary resources on media who, though they may give you coverage in their media vehicle, do not target your consumer audiences. Ultimately, you need to know who you target as a business, and who targets them as a media vehicle.
- **Customize.** Once you've found who your target is, make your pitch personal and customized, and ensure that your news is relative to that targeted individual. Also, it may be a good idea to know the angle that publication uses. If you fit their tone, use similar angles, and write on topics they often feature, they may be more likely to feature *your* story.
- **Understand What Medium to Use.** What does your target audience use most? The Internet, newspapers, television, or magazines? If you know where to go to get to your target audience you can save yourself a lot of time. This knowledge can come from research (the first step that should have been completed). This research will also let you know how each medium gets information. Do they have writers on staff, or do they usually syndicate or byline articles from industry experts?

- **Lastly, Have Something Newsworthy.** Your story doesn't have to be Earth shattering news, but so long as you make it more interesting by making it relevant to readers or viewers, your story ought to be considered newsworthy. You can send out a press release about something big to your company, like the changing of a CEO, but it won't be read as important or newsworthy unless you state what will come of this change. Relate it to the community and your audience, as they feel the affects of this change as well.

There are a lot of things you can do to improve your rapport with media and get your company some coverage. While there is a lot of competition, you doing well makes a world of difference. Put a little extra time into planning and you should see some positive results.

Public Relations | Crisis Management Planning



When your company experiences a crisis there needs to be a plan that can easily be implemented. Planning is *crucial* for getting things right. After the planning process it really comes down to trial and error. Once implemented you can learn what went right and what went wrong, and can adjust your response accordingly when the next crisis arises. You can also look at companies who have gone through a similar crisis and learn from their mistakes, avoiding making them yourself.

Some types of crises include (but are most definitely not limited to):

1. Natural Disasters
2. Economic Disasters
3. Managerial Mistakes
4. Deception
5. Technological Issues
6. Slander / Rumors
7. Legal Issues
8. Errors in Judgment

Many crises can be found in each type, such as a bacterial outbreak in your product, outside tampering with your product, exposure to animals or insects, ethical issues within the firm such as stealing or dishonesty, or a breach in company security.

There are some things to consider when responding to a crisis and when creating a plan. While there is no set of rules for crisis management, the following might help you to create your own set and perhaps help you better respond to the crisis at hand:

Keep in mind that responsibility is a key component of any company's success.

An example of great crisis management can be seen in the mid 90s recall of Odwalla juices. There was a strain of E-Coli found in their apple and carrot juices which were present in a handful of juices. The source of the strain was unknown, and despite not knowing the source, Odwalla recalled all juices that contained the apple or orange juice. This cost millions of dollars but showed a great amount of responsibility and may have avoided future lawsuits and irreparable brand

damage. Odwalla also changed how they did things, implementing a pasteurization of their juices to ensure that the E-Coli would not return. They created a website, made TV appearances, and paid for medical bills, showing consumers that they were doing everything they could.

A poor example of taking responsibility can be seen in the 1989 Exxon oil spill in the Prince William Sound off the coast of Alaska. Though some say the amount spilled was underreported, there was an estimate of ~10 - 40 million gallons spilled that day, with estimates of hundreds of thousands of wild life killed, including bald eagles, sea otters, and harbor seals, along with hundreds of thousands of dead seabirds and billions of eggs of salmon and herring. Exxon avoided responsibility, even at times putting the blame on the coast guard. Today the sound and the residents affected by the spill are still feeling the repercussions of interrupted salmon runs, the loss of the herring in the local ecosystem, and the some thousand gallons of oil still buried in the beaches. (Wikipedia)

In the midst of a crisis is not the time to avoid responsibility. Be honest and don't push responsibility on others if you were involved. Doing so can save the reputation and credibility of the company, as well as show the community you care. As a corporation you have responsibilities to the community and neighbors, and if something goes wrong, it is your duty to remedy the damage for the well being of your company and your consumers.

Give yourself time to gather evidence and consider the facts.

There was a crisis at Pepsi Co. when rumors started that syringes were being found in Diet Pepsi cans. Pepsi checked their facilities and came to the conclusion that there was no way any syringes could have been added to their cans while in their plants and factories.

Pepsi told the Public Relations Society of America that being quick with actions is important, but so is being accurate. Had Pepsi done a recall, they could have been out millions of dollars and made the situation worse. Additionally, it may have cost them their image; seeing Pepsi recall cans may have encouraged the rumor and consumers to think of the product in a negative light. Instead, Pepsi gathered the facts and decided against a recall. Though negative reports and consumer opinions spread after the decision was made, the rumor was proven to be just that, a rumor, and a hoax.

Furthermore, timing is of the essence.

If your company comes across a product that needs to be recalled, timing is a critical aspect of responding to the crisis properly. A crisis management plan, or a crisis communication plan, can dramatically curb the damage done to your

company, brand, or image. As with the Pepsi example, had they acted irrationally and put a recall into effect things may have gotten worse. For Odwalla, a swift recall was needed.

Once your plan is established and you have decided which action to take, it is important to put together materials that will be needed. For example, your employees need to be informed, as well as the public. Prepare statements and scripts so that everyone knows what is being released and what the facts are. Create press releases to inform the public, and be available for questioning; don't avoid the situation and make sure you are truthful and up-front about the circumstances.

Additionally, after the crisis has occurred there needs to be more planning for future crises and corrective action ought to be taken to ensure that a similar crisis does not occur. In order to diffuse a crisis, action must be taken *before* it occurs. Keep your company informed, congruent in the information provided, and honest.

Public Relations Crisis Management | Don't Spread the Blame



When responding to a potential crisis that involves your company, it is never ideal to wag your finger around, putting the blame on someone else; yet some companies continue to do this. The inspiration for this post comes from the recent oil spill (the largest in US history). Can you guess what BP is doing? They're helping to create a great

case study PR courses can use for decades to come! How are they doing that? They're blaming the oil drillers they hired, not themselves. I'm afraid that was the wrong move.

What *should* have happened? Well, from a (or my) PR stance, the exact opposite.

1. The first thing any PR professional would and should advise a company to do in light of a crisis such as this (which will devastate agricultural, oceanic, and wildlife systems, killing millions of marine and land animals in the process) is to **accept responsibility**. Regardless of who was at fault for your oil spilling, you are the overseeing company who is responsible for the oil when profits are being made; that makes you responsible when a crisis occurs, as well.
2. The next thing that good PR pro would advise is to **apologize**. Putting aside the actual cause for the crisis, apologize because *you were involved*. Guess who the public is going to remember when they talk about this spill in 20 years, like the Exxon spill, who's repercussions are still being felt? BP's. The name of the drillers whose machinery failed will not be remembered. The media, bloggers, and the public are already responding and nothing is being said that references the drillers; BP's name is the only one being used.
3. Be genuine about your apology as well, because, believe or not, regardless of the general public's lack of understanding of what's actually going on (because they are ill-informed), they can tell if you're being sincere or not.
4. The most important step: act, **now**. There are regulations to be dealt with and the US government also has to go through a few hoops before they can release the ~~Kraken~~ Navy and Coast Guard, but that doesn't mean that

BP had to wait. Regardless of the crisis at hand, regardless of what you plan to do in the coming days, do something about it now.

BP is doing a few things right, despite the blaringly obvious mistakes that they made in the beginning. They are saying they will "throw everything they have at this". It appears military are also helping with the clean up and ships are being deployed to collect the oil. It may be too late for BP to be seen in a good light, though, since the most crucial time to do the right thing is in those first few days.

What's your take? Politics aside, as there are some pretty ridiculous things floating around about our own government's participation, how should BP have acted to manage this crisis?

Internal Public Relations | In-House vs. Outside PR



When deciding whether to have an in-house public relations team or to go outside the company and look for a PR firm, there are many things to consider.

First, consider your costs. What can you spare for the PR budget? (If you are the PR team, stress your importance to the company! There are many things you and your department can offer that the CEO, CFO, or other stakeholders might not be thinking about when they plan the budget. Remind them (or inform them) that PR can cost less than advertising, but can offer many more results. Look here for some of the benefits of public relations that you can impress upon the decision makers.)

Secondly, consider what you want to accomplish with your PR plan. If there are things that your internal PR team is unable to perform or provide, you may need to look elsewhere for some PR support. There are thousands of firms to choose from; make sure they can do what you are asking of them, and make sure you fit into their portfolio, or that they work/ know how to work with companies like your own. Ensure that while they should be a good fit for your company, you should also be a good fit for theirs.

Consider mixing the two. If there is a specific plan that you do not feel your in-house team can handle, outsource it. It might get done faster and better than you can do it, and it might be cheaper than trying to do it yourself. Your PR plan could be great with the help of your internal PR team and

Other things to consider could be external conditions: Try performing a S.W.O.T. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis of your firm. This will bring together in one analysis what external market conditions look like, what your company does well and what it can do better, as well as threats from other companies or factors, such as political factors.

While it is usually best to have someone internally who really knows about your company handling communications and public relations, it also helps to have someone who is a public relations professional and who might know more about the market your company targets. When it comes to time, it may also be more beneficial to spend the extra money to save yourself time and effort in getting something right.

PR TIPS: SOCIAL MEDIA

Public Relations & Social Media | Make Sure it Fits in Your PR Mix



There are many [benefits to using social media](#), many of them evident in the companies who are taking the time and making the effort. (For companies who may not be giving social media the attention it needs, benefits may not be seen as often.) So while the success of social media in your PR plans relies heavily on your output, it also depends on how

well it fits into your PR mix. ([Your social media efforts will not sell themselves...](#))

What is social media? It is the new media that PR and other business professionals now deal with in order to reach their buyers and target markets. Instead of needing to go through other media, like newspapers and TV, companies can create that relationship with the public themselves. Social media can include things like blogs, forums, wikis, & social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and foursquare.

There are a few things to consider when thinking of implementing social media. You can ask yourself the following questions:

1. *Will your target market and current and future buyers benefit from your use of social media?* If the answer to this is "no", it may not be worth your time to implement one or more aspects of social media. Your use of the tools mentioned above needs to benefit the buyer just as much as it should benefit you, the company.
2. *Will you reach your target market and current and future buyers with your social media efforts?* Again, if the answer is "no", your time might be better spent on other PR activities. This question addresses where your target market and buyers get their information. If they are predominantly offline, social media may not benefit or reach the bulk of your market, and small, marginal results may be seen. Evaluate where your time should be spent.
3. *Will you use the medium consistently and frequently?* Social media is not something that can really be done "half-time"; your results will only be half as good as you would like them to be. To really feel the benefits of social media and to see a return on your investment (of time and

resources), you need to ensure that your output equals the input you hope to see.

4. *Why are you thinking of using social media?* If your answer here is to advertise your brand, product, and services, social media is not for you. It is meant to be a tool to engage your audience, target market, and buyers, not to sell to them. (That's what advertising is for...) Instead, use these tools to share with them things of value like information on your industry, answers to questions, etc.

Be sure that you're also aware of the results you may see if you do use social media, but do so improperly (as it pertains to your company). You can not only lose out on potential buyers (or donations, votes, whatever you're trying to get), but you can even tarnish your brand. Customers may not remember you if you do everything the same as everyone else, but doing it poorly usually stands out in their minds. While social media is easy to use, implement, and cost effective, know the reasons you want to use them, the sort of commitment you can make, and the results you hope to see.

Social Media & the Workplace: Robert Half Technology's Findings

"Whistle - but don't tweet - while you work."



In light of the plethora of social media and social networking sites, Robert Half Technology conducted a survey of 1,400 CIOs from companies around the US with at least 100 employees. (In contrast, it would be interesting to see what companies of a much smaller size would say.)

There are many reasons to advocate the use of social media for public relations, marketing, and overall business. This study, however, shows that companies are still hesitant and rather suspicious

of their employee's abilities to use the media vehicles in an appropriate (or relative) manner.

While 1% was unaware (or opted not to answer) of their policies, 54% said that they completely prohibit use of these sites and 19% allow use for work related purposes. The number of companies who allow these sites to be used for business was surprisingly low, while the number who prohibit was also surprisingly high.

There are many benefits to companies who use these sites for their businesses, and for those who encourage their employees to get involved in their company's online presence. I have, in past articles, urged the use of these sites because of the advantages they offer.

From StopBlocking, some key ideas that help to reiterate my reasons (and offer some new reasons) for encouraging their use:

"Well-communicated and consistently enforced policies will deal with most issues. The number of companies blocking access to social media sites is roughly on par with the number of companies without social media policies. Isn't it possible that employees who knew what the rules were might actually follow them? Especially if they knew there were real and serious consequences for failing to do so?

Access to social media improves productivity. According to Dave Willmer, executive director of Robert Half Technology, "Using social networking sites may divert employees' attention away from more pressing priorities, so it's understandable that some companies limit access." But multiple studies prove exactly the opposite.

Productivity concerns are based on fatally flawed assumptions. First, there is research to suggest that every hour an employee spends at work on non-work-related websites is compensated for by an hour spent away from work on work-related activities. Do you check your work-related email on your mobile phone before you even get out of bed? Most knowledge workers say they do. Second, there are work-related benefits to social media activities, including collaboration, mindsharing and professional social networking amongst employees, affiliates and partners, according to David Lavenda of WorkLight (drawing on results from a Gartner study).

Employees don't need your network. I can access any social network I like on my iPhone and my Palm Pre. I have a laptop with built-in access to the Sprint network that gets me on any site I want. Employees can (and do) bring these tools to the workplace. Your blocks have no impact. Employees can still get to Facebook all they want.

Who died and put CIOs in charge of worker productivity anyway? I'm not sure when supervisors and HR abdicated this responsibility to IT, but IT is simply not qualified to address employee productivity.

Blocking kills engagement. There are plenty of studies that tie high levels of worker engagement to increased growth and profitability. Trust is a pillar of engagement. So what happens to engagement when all employees get the same message, "We don't trust any of you, not a single damn one of you, as far as we can throw you, so we're blocking all of you"? Bye bye, engagement.

Access to social media is not an automatic invitation to viruses and malware. Those companies that *do* permit employee access have found ways to protect their networks. For many of the companies blocking access based on the fear of infection, it's just easier to block than to find ways to protect the network while providing access. Laziness is not an excuse for blocking.

Millenials will not work for companies that block. These workers — the ones you need to hire to replace the retiring boomers — are networked 24/7 and expect the company to accommodate them. Many simply won't work for companies that block access, which means you're left to hire your second and third choices. Is mediocrity actually a hiring goal in your organization?

Bandwidth is a bogus issue. Bandwidth is the paper of the digital era. Can you imagine a company 25 years ago telling workers, "We'd love to get memos and publications to you, but we don't have enough paper"? The very notion is absurd. They'd buy more paper. Companies pinching pennies on bandwidth are doing themselves a disservice in many more ways than one."

Robert Half Technology even offers some ways to protect your professional reputation, which would be a great thing to share with employees:

- **"Know what's allowed.** Make sure you understand and adhere to your company's social networking policy.
- **Use caution.** Be familiar with each site's privacy settings to ensure personal that details or photos you post can be viewed only by people you choose.
- **Keep it professional.** Use social networking sites while at work to make connections with others in your field or follow industry news -- not to catch up with family or friends.
- **Stay positive.** Avoid complaining about your manager and coworkers. Once you've hit submit or send, you can't always take back your words -- and there's a chance they could be read by the very people you're criticizing.
- **Polish your image.** Tweet or blog about a topic related to your profession. You'll build a reputation as a subject matter expert, which could help you advance in your career.
- **Monitor yourself.** Even if your employer has a liberal policy about social networking, limit the time you spend checking your Facebook page or reading other people's tweets to avoid a productivity drain."

I think there is a happy medium to allowing use of social media sites. As a millennial, I want to be involved in these sites, whether for myself or for the company I work with. Networking with others is enjoyable and helps to pass a long day online.

I hope that in the future companies can shift the responsibility of deciding Internet usage to people who are more knowledgeable and better equipped to make such a decision. IT may be told (from higher ups) that employees will waste time and blocking responsible sites is the only means to stopping it. What they are not able to see is the overall benefit of having employees involved in the company's online identity.

Using Social Networking Sites to Your Advantage



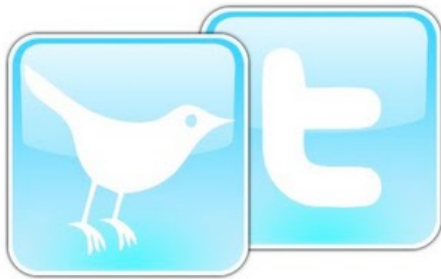
Public relations changed when the Internet came into play. Now, with more and more people getting online, having your own online presence is important and at times vital.

Here are a few things to consider when launching a social networking PR plan:

- 1.) *This is not intended to be advertising.* Most people (your customers) are on these networking sites to talk with friends, share things they like, and network with people. Your role on these sites is to remind people you are around and that you are an active participant in their world.
- 2.) Being an active participant does not mean advertising yourself. Instead, contribute to forums, comment on blogs, and join groups. As a company, create a group in your industry that offers resources for members. Encourage others to get involved as well; people love sharing their opinions, so make sure they know they are welcome. (They may assume it anyways, but knowing that it is the case always helps.)
- 3.) Offering benefits to joining your network is always great incentive. You don't have to bribe everyone, but if you show yourself as being genuine and helpful to others in the industry whether they be customers or professionals, they are likely to spread the word for you. For example, offer some helpful advice, write articles, make it so people can ask you questions, and be active.
- 4.) Being genuine is a great way to get others to trust you. We all know that your end goal is to make a sale (or increase your traffic, whatever your cause may be), but by coming across differently, consumers can accept that you may really have their best intentions at heart. As such, convey yourself honestly.
- 5.) If you want to forgo representing yourself in a more professional manner, consider creating a social networking site for a company mascot, such as the Gil the crab from the Honda Element campaign, who has a MySpace and over 58,000 friends. Although Honda's ads are all over the page, people add Gil to their network because the character works, and people enjoy him. They may even love Honda, and just want to show that to their present network. Either way, humor works in many ways.

People who love your brand will find you, and tell others about you, especially if there is something useful or beneficial once they get there. Incorporate current events in your industry to help drive traffic, and be honest when consumers interact with you. If something comes up that shines a negative light on your company, don't ignore it and only reply to the positive things. Rather, reply and, if at fault, apologize, accept responsibility, and provide a remedy. Otherwise, help set the story straight (without pointing fingers), and move on to the next question. Encourage people to get in touch with you, offer advice as consumers, and leave feedback on the forums and blog posts you create. You build your own online credibility, so start taking action.

Public Relations & Twitter: Utilizing Social Media and Networking Sites



You may be hesitant to use Twitter. You may not understand its value, or even its use. There was even a study indicating the large percentage (~40%) of useless content present in Twitter. Despite there being so much useless content, Twitter can be rather valuable for business professionals, companies, and individuals looking to network, share ideas, and promote their

businesses.

For instance, Twitter is being used by many bloggers to share articles, topics, and other blogs they've learned to enjoy. I am able to follow other professionals, read useful articles, and pick up some tips and news from around the web. Twitter even endorses itself for the business industry with an article titled: "Twitter 101 for Business". There are a few key points in that article that will help me to reiterate my thoughts on Twitter and its remaining useful 60%:

- Twitter is a quick way to share content with others. Your ideas are instantly online for all to see!
- Twitter writes, "[it] is a communication platform that helps business stay connected to their customers."
- In addition to staying in touch with customers, it is a great way to stay in touch with other professionals or businesses in your industry, and is an effective way to share ideas and brainstorm with the aforementioned individuals.

Twitter sums it up pretty well for businesses who use the site: "As a business, you can use it to quickly share information with people interested in your company, gather real-time market intelligence and feedback, and build relationships with customers, partners, and other people who care about your company."

The most useful and base-line characteristic of Twitter is that it is a great social networking site. With short, 140 character sentences, you can immediately share content, redirect visitors to your site, and suggest other sources of information for those that follow your tweets. Public Relations Blogger has been picked up from time to time by other Tweeters, and has in turn generated some traffic. (Because of my blog being picked up, I am more inclined to link to their blogs or content as well, so networking in this industry (or any) is a crucial component of brand building if you'd like to make some connections. It's amazing to think that this website started in 2006 as an experiment. It sure has come a long way.

Public Relations & Social Networking | Utilizing LinkedIn



Public Relations is a full time gig for any company, and to add to that laundry list of chores to do as the PR professional you are, you and your company ought to be participating in the social networking sites, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter, to name a few.

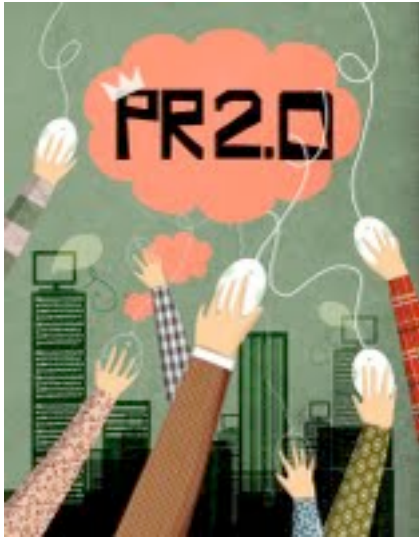
A social networking site to utilize your real life network connections from business and education, LinkedIn allows you to can connect with classmates, professors, coworkers, employees, and employers. This is a great tool to utilize your networks already in place, and to increase the size of those networks by seeing the networks your peers have. This enhances the potential one has to find employment, employees, or advice from industry professionals or others who have experience in a field you may be looking to enter. In addition to advice, there are many groups that can be joined for students and professionals alike, such as the PRIntern Group.

Once you've signed up to become a LinkedIn member, which takes just a few minutes, filling out your profile takes a little longer. Having a resume to upload will save you time; LinkedIn takes your resume and updates your profile with the information therein. Voila! Work Experience: done. Education: done. Though it may get some things wrong, it's easier to change once the information is already uploaded, rather than starting from scratch.

Then, once you've created a profile, start searching for people you know. You can search by schools you've attended, places you've worked, even by industry or location. Creating these connections keeps you in touch with past colleagues, professors, or other peers who may be able to help you find a job in these tough times. If anything, it's a great social tool.

For prospectives looking to enter the PR industry (or any industry, for that matter), remember that your online presence represents you to millions of people, including companies that you may have applied to or are currently working for. Filter your content, make things private, and exclude things you wouldn't want your mom to see, because she's probably your friend on a number of these sites as well. More often than not, companies will screen your online accounts to see if you'd be a good potential hire. If your profiles make a bad impression, you may be cast out of the interview pool.

PR 2.0: Social Media & Social Networking



The technological world is ever changing, and businesses need to keep up to avoid being left in the dust. There are a few ways that social media and social networking sites can benefit a company, business, or brand. Namely, PR 2.0 can help a company become more integrated with tech savvy individuals and can also increase brand/company awareness, online and off. Due to the connection of Internet and other forms of media, having an online presence can greatly increase the likelihood that it will transcend into another form of media.

There are a few sites that can help a firm trying to break into the PR 2.0 world. For example, LinkedIn, Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter are all popular and widely used networking sites. More and more people are joining these sites; they are no longer simply for teenagers or college students. More companies and people from older generations are now joining, creating a very large social network, connecting millions of individuals. What a great way to reach audiences, worldwide!

With so many individuals on these sites, it is almost expected that a brand or company be on them as well. It is a simple and easy way to increase your brand's reach. It can also help a company with a large following of loyal customers to potentially grow that loyal customer base more. Loyal customers, 'fans' if you will, are apt to talk about your brand.

With the ability for anyone to Tweet, blog, and comment, major shifts of power are occurring. Consumers are being given more of a voice since opinions and thoughts can be shared more readily and to a wider range of readers. Equipped with tools such as TweetDeck, consumers can Tweet and share with millions of people, including some of their friends, what brands they love and why. However, bad news is prone to travel much faster than good news. Which is why having an online presence is necessary for companies of today. You ought to be available to talk about a rumor, comment, or statement about your company.

Use these sites to keep customers and prospective customers up-to-date with your product, ventures, and overall company going-ons. This sort of participation makes a company more, 'real', or personable. Be honest and up-front with what your intentions are. Or, don't do what Wal-Mart did with their astroturf "blog".

The reason attempts like astroturfing don't work can maybe be attributed to that fact that it assumes that consumers are completely ignorant. Once the astroturfing efforts are discovered, as they usually are, customers can tell when you were calling them stupid and assuming they wouldn't notice. Admittedly, consumers are a little naive when it comes to some things, but perhaps it is a lack of interest or concern, and therefore we are ignorant for another reason. For instance, many consumers didn't care about where our goods came from, unless of course it was imported fashion from Italy, or imported wine from France. But, when something happens to infringe upon our homeland or seemingly impede on our "freedom", we seem to magically have pride for the products made in the good old US of A. Similar to newfound pride in American goods, customers won't appreciate your astroturfing, and will most likely find pride in other goods. Though some consumers will take things at face value, it's really not worth taking that chance.

On another note, using these social networking sites can help your causes. There are a lot of ways to get users involved, such as contests, fundraisers, and other events that can occur online or off. These tools are the face of the future, as well as the present. Just remember, your online representation is what more people will ever see or know. Enter at your own risk.

Public Relations and Social Media | What's the Point?



There are many ways to look at that question. You could elaborate and follow it with "if you don't actually use it?" By actually using it, I mean doing more than just updating your Twitter account by monitoring what others are saying about and to you.

Often times, I find that bloggers, companies/bloggers on Twitter, etc., don't seem to notice when I comment on their blogs, RT their tweets, or mention them to ask a question or give some praise; I seem to be ignored much of the time. Well, let me retract that: they may not be ignoring me, but they are ignoring their responsibility to monitor their accounts and that involves looking at all of the components. What are those components, you ask? Well, allow me to elaborate:

1. **Retweets.** On Twitter, there are multiple dimensions and areas where you can connect with your audience. One of them is RTs. Similar to the tool I use on this blog from Tweetmeme, other bloggers also utilize a RT tool. What's great about this tool from Tweetmeme (aside from it being free to use) is that you can customize it to reflect your Twitter account name (the default RT name is Tweetmeme's).

What's more, *you can actually see who's retweeting your post*, regardless of if they mention you or not. (They can choose to delete the RT @twitternamehere when clicking on the TweetThis button.) This gives you the ability to (dare I say) respond to the efforts they made to RT your post. Give a quick tweet to thank them for RTing your post. This takes a maximum of 5 minutes to do, and if there are few people RTing the post, it can take even less time.

2. **Mentions.** Also on Twitter, you're able to see when someone mentions you. (To see what a mention is, check out [PR & Social Media Tips | Using Twitter.](#)) This means that you are more than able to see who is asking you a question, referencing something you offer/said/sell/do/think, and perhaps sharing you with their followers. Again, this takes less than a minute to see and respond to.
3. **Comments.** Someone leaves a comment on a blog, Facebook account, etc. Why would you take the time to leave the option of comments on, create the Facebook page/group/account, etc., if you don't plan to actually utilize the opportunities presented therein? Out of the traffic these pages receives, a very small percentage will talk about it on Twitter and an even smaller percentage will leave a comment. That means that they really

wanted to ask you something or respond to what you said. (Or they're just trying to get some backlinks for their outsourcing company. Thanks, recent commenters! Your comments were not approved.)

If they took the time to comment, take the time to reply! They may not reply to what you had to say in return, but at least they'll know you saw what they had to say and took the time to respond. This is a great way to cultivate relationships, open up that two-way communication that social media offers, and encourage participation.

4. **Emails.** If you get a relatively genuine email from someone, take a few seconds to reply, even if it's to tell them "no thanks". They may be upset with you for saying no, but they will also probably feel somewhat appreciative for the fact that you took the time to reply. There are so many companies who don't take that time, and for me as a buyer/customer/audience member, there is nothing more that annoys me. What's worse, companies will often ignore a complaint; don't be that company.
5. **Web mentions.** Google Analytics is an awesome tool. You can Big Brother your own sites! What I do with that ability is to see where traffic is coming from. Then, I can backtrack to bloggers, websites, etc., that mention me, my posts, or something I may have said. I often thank the person for mentioning me or my blog and can create more relationships that way. Often times I am again ignored, but I did my part.

I AGAIN POSE THE QUESTION: WHAT'S THE POINT OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA IF YOU DON'T UTILIZE IT TO ITS FULL POTENTIAL? WHAT ARE YOU GAINING FROM DOING SO? ARE YOU USING IT SIMPLY BECAUSE EVERYONE ELSE IS DOING IT? (AS I'VE MENTIONED IN OTHER POSTS, THAT IS NOT THE RIGHT REASON.) THINK ABOUT IT: THE OLD WAY PR AND MARKETING WAS DONE INVOLVED AN INTERRUPTION, A DEMAND FOR ATTENTION FROM BUYERS/CONSUMERS THROUGH ONE-WAY COMMUNICATION. WE ARE NO LONGER THERE. THIS IS THE AGE OF TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION WHERE BUYERS ARE COMING TO YOU WITH PURPOSE AND TO GET A RESPONSE; IT'S EASY ENOUGH TO DO, SO WHY AREN'T YOU DOING IT?

PR TIPS: SEO

What is SEO PR? | Search Engine Optimization Public Relations



This may not be a term you've heard of but that doesn't detract from its importance in your PR plan. SEO PR has a whole field of specialists ready to optimize your content! You can also do this on your own, however, especially if you already perform SEO activities elsewhere online.

SEO (search engine optimization) can really apply to any activity you do online related to increasing your web traffic. While it takes time to get used to integrating SEO efforts into your regular, everyday web copy creation activities, it soon becomes second nature. For the most part, SEO can be a natural occurrence that website and press copy writers are somewhat unconscious of; keywords are picked up in the copy of your blog post or press release that weren't put there intentionally. The difference, then? You put them there with intention.

SEO PR is essentially just SEO used for PR, to put it plainly. What this entails is that you work to implement SEO tactics into your PR copy, which can include press releases, interview scripts, articles, blog posts, eBooks, and social media updates. [Hello Mails](#) defines it as follows:

Search Engine Optimization Public Relations (SEO PR) is a blend of search engine visibility and traditional public relations that disperses a company's message across the Internet by way of online media outlets and search engines. SEO PR not only helps disseminate an organization's messages, but it also incorporates search engine-friendly communication through techniques such as optimizing copy in online content such as press releases, articles, whitepapers, blogs, RSS feeds and websites.

Such activities should already be taking place if you're working to integrate SEO tactics throughout your online presence, but know that taking some time and paying special attention to your PR efforts can greatly increase the success of your PR tools and publications. The goal of your PR efforts are to raise awareness for your brand, drive traffic to your websites, and to get buyers to act, whether it be purchasing or simply downloading your free eBook.

How to implement SEO PR? Shift your SEO skills to your PR writings. For some

tips on integrating SEO into your web publications, blogs, and websites, read [SEO & Your Blog | Pay Attention to the Long Tail](#) and [SEO & SEM | The Importance of Optimization and Marketing](#). (Find these on the proceeding pages, as well.)

The key to having success in these areas is to be consistent, cognizant of what you're doing, and monitoring your traffic to see if your optimization efforts are paying off. You can do so by utilizing [Google Analytics](#).

SEO & SEM | The Importance of Optimization and Marketing



SEO (or Search Engine Optimization) is an important part of marketing and public relations online; when blogging, creating content for a website, or distributing press releases, it is important to remember that optimizing your posts is a simple way to increase the reach and searchability of your content. (What I mean by "searchability" is the ability of your content to come up in search results, and rank well when doing so.)

From [Rostin Reagor Smith](#), "Many of your competitors are already using SEM in an attempt to capture a larger portion of your market. There has never been a better time to protect and expand your territory."

This is an important point to remember. More importantly, consider that even if your competition are not doing the above. What a great opportunity you've been presented with to optimize your posts in order to gain more of a competitive advantage over others in the industry who aren't optimizing or paying attention to SEM.

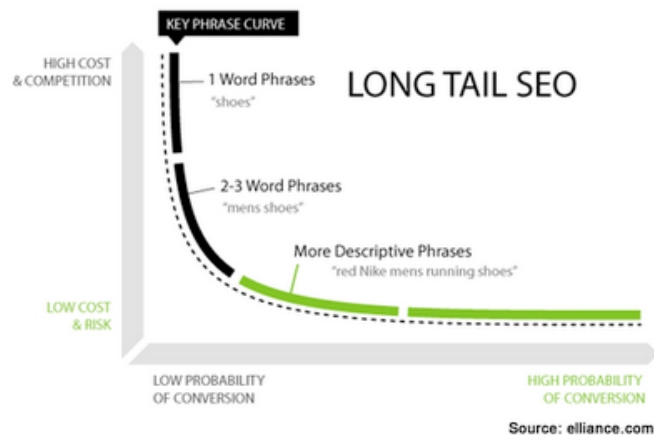
Rostin Reagor Smith goes on to elaborate on SEM and why it is so critical: "Search engine marketing blends SEO, pay-per-click advertising, and social media strategies to give your company a higher level of visibility within the search engines' listings. But, visibility without sales is useless. And therein lies the true value of SEM."

To read the rest of their article with great information on SEM, it's relation to PR, and if you need to hire a SEM professional, click [here](#).

SEO & Your Blog | Pay Attention to the Long Tail

SEO, or search engine optimization, is not a new tool, and certainly not a new topic on Public Relations Blogger, but it can be a new tool for many new bloggers, business owners, and website creators alike. SEO takes some time and effort, but it shortly becomes second nature in your normal blogging or website writing. Search engine optimization is essentially the use of keywords and phrases (hopefully related to your blog or company) that can help increase traffic. When search engines send out "spiders" that crawl the web and record, in a sense, the information on your website, having more keywords and phrases that web users search for can move your website up the search results, in turn bringing more traffic to your site.

One vital thing, and perhaps the most effective way of gaining new traffic, is to pay particular attention to the long tail of the keyword curve. Every day, new searches that have never been searched before are made in Google, while simple keywords that are one or two words long are repeated many times. While it may seem illogical to aim for these new searches, it is rather the opposite. When a consumer searches for something like "shoes", there is going to be an endless amount of results, and your website or blog can very easily get lost in the sea of options. In order to differentiate your blog or website, focus on the long tail of the keywords. The graph below from Elliance is a great visual to explain the concept of the long tail.



The chances of your site grabbing the attention of users from the head (or front) of the curve are less likely to occur than capturing those of the long tail. The majority (~74%) of the traffic that comes to this blog comes from search engines. More than 75% of that traffic comes from a term or keyword phrase that was only

made once, a single search of a more descriptive phrase that would put them into the long tail. Without much effort, I gather a ton of traffic and potentially new readers by focusing on the long tail searches. Long tail phrases can also bring more than one visitor from search engines. For example, "new public relations tools to benefit your business" has brought more than two dozen visitors in the last two weeks, but it still only accounts for 1.4% of my traffic. In the last month alone, 1,244 searches brought this blog traffic.

Try out different phrases, use Google's keyword tool to get ideas, and experiment; marketing and public relations is all about figuring out what works and what doesn't. If this doesn't work immediately, don't give up; it may take time for the search engines to record your site's data. Keep optimizing, pay attention to the long tail, and offer great content.

PR TIPS: BLOGGING

Public Relations Trends | PR Meets the Blog



While blogging has been around for many years, it is increasingly gaining importance and momentum. With new blogs exploding onto the blog scene in impressive numbers, it's no wonder blogs can get lost in the "blogosphere". Despite the seemingly endless number of competitor bloggers, I encourage the use of blogs.

Not only do blogs offer consumers a new way of reviewing products, companies a new way of interacting with said consumers, and every-day mom's to blog about crafts they've created, it gives PR a new outlet, but they've created a portal that any company or individual can use to share ideas, opinions, and ask questions.

PR met the blog some time ago, but here are some tips for creating a blog that is your own, but is also productive and successful:

- *Give your blog an aesthetically pleasing look.*

There are templates and themes available for use (more often than not, for free) that any one with any level of HTML or CSS knowledge can use. Giving your blog a clean, professional, or interesting look can help keep visitors on your site. We are a fast, visual species, who can judge something in a split second. If your site is not appealing, you're bound to lose some traffic, or have an increasingly large number of bounced visitors. (A bounce is a visitor, who comes to your site and, after looking at one page, leaves, hits the back button, or closes the browser. The main idea here is that the visitor "bounces" from your site before visiting any other pages of your blog. These visits are usually very short, but they can vary.) Spruce up your blog, give it a welcoming feel, and ask for feedback from other bloggers or visitors.

- *Get your visitors involved.*

Bank on that amazing characteristic of the blog: it is a communication tool that can get you in touch with your consumers or readers. You can earn some degree of professionalism, and people may start to see you as a trusted resource for the industry you write in. Make a forum, leave comments open, and respond; leaving

these tools up and on the site without any sort of activity on your end (other than making a new post now and then) does not say much about your efforts to communicate. So, get busy replying! If you don't get comments right away, don't let it deter you; visitors will come, and you can encourage comments and questions by asking your own to the readers in your posts, or by opening forum questions. Encourage involvement!

- Write for your readers, buyers, subscribers, and the media.

When you make your content interesting, and keep things up-to-date or timelessly relevant, people will continue to read what you've got to say. Keep your content flowing, and advertise that you've written something people may consider useful through Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn. If you've got a small following, but would like it to increase (and who doesn't?), let people know you've got content to be read. Look into what people want to read about. How, you ask? Google offers a great tool to see what keywords are searched for most. Instead of buying AdWords, which is what this tool is primarily used for, utilize the results you can find from this tool and optimize your posts. In writing what others are looking for in relations to your market, you can create your own niche blog that will attract visitors. Make your content useful and related, and you've got a recipe for success.

- After you've written the content, get others to help you share it.

This involves a level of collaboration, a "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" sort of thing. You can help other bloggers get traffic from your site as well. (There are many factors that come into play with this, and it can depend on the page rank Google assigns, and how many sites link to your site. It can get a bit confusing, but don't fret; keep creating connects, sharing links with other blogs or websites that fit in your blog's market, and feel free to do favors for other blogs. This can include advertising an event the other blogger is holding (especially if that blog belongs to a company), or posting an article they've written to help get some more exposure.

Another great way to get others to help share your content is to let them know you exist. This can involve following other bloggers on Twitter. I usually look into who's following me, and a lot of times, I'll share what they have to say because I think it's valuable. Someone may do the same, as they've done for Public Relations Blogger, and it can generate some great traffic. Sometimes it happens without any effort, but it usually works better if you do give it some attention. While there may be millions of blogs clogging up the Internet, there is always room for a great blog that has something to offer.

PR Tips | Tools for a Successful Blog



The Public Relations tool belt is ever expanding. PR is no longer just about newspaper ads, magazine articles, and press releases. While blogging has been around for a long time, there is still much to be gained from blogging and being a part of the online community your customers frequent. There are a few ways to get your blog noticed.

Here are a few things I do to help my blog:

1.) **I try to post daily.** Not only does Google reward sites (and blogs) that post regularly, but readers may be more prone to suggest your blog to others when the content is consistently fresh and mildly interesting. This can help your blog's overall success. Building readership in the beginning is a step all blogs go through, and though it takes time, keep at it.

2.) **Participate in other blogs.** This could include commenting on posts (after you've actually read them, mind you). Rather than simply posting a two word sentence or congratulatory phrase, like "great post", think about your comment and if it will add any value to the post. If it won't, don't worry about posting. Rather, comment about it on your blog if you found it to be interesting. This is a way to contribute to the blog in your own way, on your own blog. Another means of participating is posting guest articles on other blogs. Most bloggers welcome, or should welcome, guest articles, so long as they are relevant and in-line with the rest of the blog. You should also consider adding guest bloggers to your own. A guest article gives readers a new voice to read, and may also provide your blog with some information you may not have considered posting before. Most guest bloggers will also link to the article they wrote for your blogging, bringing more readers your way.

3.) **Use Twitter, Facebook, BusinessExchange, etc., to announce your posts.** Though it may seem a little "salesy", it can bring some traffic to your blog. What's even better is when someone uses the "TweetThis" feature and shares your blog post with the rest of the world. (With applications like TweetDeck, which can update your MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter accounts at the same time, a "TweetThis" option can really increase your reach.) BusinessExchange is brought to us by Business Week; it is a beta site, but it seems to be a great resource already. You can share your articles there with other members of the

site.

4.) **Optimize you posts.** Though search engine optimization (SEO) can be a difficult thing to master, let alone grasp, it is easy to learn how to add more 'search engine' power to your posts. I was referred to a quick, concise overview of SEO. You can find it here.

5.) **Offer something of value to your readers.** I like to think that readers come here to learn something about public relations, and hopefully they (you) do. I write to be an educational source for people interested in learning more about PR and the PR industry. I also want to offer resources, such as the glossary and blogroll, to add more value to the blog.

6.) **Make time and plan ahead.** Just as Rome wasn't built in a day, your blog will not magically appear overnight, nor will your readership jump to the thousands the first week you start posting; it takes work. Make yourself an action plan after you set yourself some goals. (It's hard to work towards something if you don't really know what it is.) Give it time and you should soon see your hard work paying off.

Note that these all require patience, perseverance, and consistency, but they can be done. There are a few more good things to consider when blogging at Robb Sutton's blog. He lists some of the reasons why other blogs are doing well, and some things you can change to make your blogging career more lucrative, enjoyable, and worthwhile.

PR Tips: "Bringing Your Blog to the Next Level"



I followed my first talk show on Twitter with TweetGrid last night. (It was a pretty intense.) With hundreds of people tweeting about the Q&A taking place between Anita Campbell (@smallbiztrends) and Melinda Emerson (@SmallBizLady) from @SmallBizChat (also the name of the show), there was a lot to

follow. The conversation took place for an hour or so, with some very interesting tips on how to bring your blog to the next level.

Here are some notes. I found some of the tips to be very helpful, and actually implemented some last night.

1.) **Things take time.** My readership is slowly growing, at what I thought was a somewhat discouraging rate. Anita reminded followers of the interview that "Rome wasn't built in a day", and that "Every blog starts small with just a few readers." Stay consistent, and they will come. (Blog and they will come?)

2.) **Things have changed in the past few years.** Bloggers are being asked to provide something a little more original. To get someone other than your boss and mom to read your blog, you have to try different tactics, and your content needs to be original, or interesting at the least. For example, Twitter has helped bloggers share their posts, and has helped to be more beneficial to bloggers than say Facebook or MySpace.

3.) **Focus.** Having a focused topic, targeting a niche market or audience, helps keep your blog consistent. It also helps to keep content flowing; when you know the topic of your blog, it may be easier to sit down and write rather than stare at the monitor wondering, "what to write about today...?". (You may still get stumped on what to write, but at least you know what area to write in.) Differentiate yourself by narrowing your focus.

4.) **Treat your blog like a product.** You are the manufacturer and distributor. You are responsible for the brand, and treating it like a product helps to give your efforts a purpose and structure to follow. Furthermore, it makes it easier to focus, which is a key aspect of gaining and retaining readers. Stay consistent in distribution, just as you would if you were selling a product. Anita posed the question, how well would your company do if you only sent out your products every once in a while?

5.) **Write yourself a marketing plan.** Even if your blog is not your main product, treat it as an important component of your business. It is a great way to reach current and future consumers. Create a plan for your blog so that you can stay on track, rather than blogging with no apparent method to your madness. All you need is a one page marketing plan to stay focused.

6.) **Plan.** This could include using an editorial calendar in addition to the marketing plan. Producing content consistently is important. (A recent study found that blogs who write consistently, and daily, do better than blogs who post once a week. Most big blogs post a minimum of once a day.) Planning for your week/month with topics to write on can help you stay on track and help you post every day. Incorporate keywords from your industry to help increase traffic.

7.) **Don't worry about advertising on your blog.** Focus on serving readers first. Monetizing the blog too early was Anita's "#1 mistake made when trying to get your blog to the next level". Once your readership is high, advertisers will come if you need them. (From other bloggers' advice, stray away from GoogleAds. They only clutter your blog.)

8.) **Be consistent.** It was mentioned above, but it is worth reiterating: being inconsistent in your topics and rate of posting can hinder your blog's growth. If you only post once a week, keep it consistent. Also keep in mind that your blog will grow at a slower rate than blogs that are posted to daily. It is more important to be consistent than to post more frequently with lower quality topics and articles.

9.) **Consider guest bloggers.** Ensure they are in line with your blog's topics. Your own voice and what makes your blog unique can get diluted easily if you are not careful. Treat them as an Op Ed contributor to a newspaper's Editorial page rather than a freelance writer.

Remember that blogging takes time, but there are some easy ways to ensure your blog is more successful in the long run. Check out @SmallBizChat every Wednesday night from 8-9PM, EST.

anything! (Well, ok, not *anything*.) Read blogs in your industry, in related industries, and blogs on current events. This will help fuel topics for your own blog, and it can also give you a good place to comment, leaving a link to your blog, and getting involved in the online community.

5.) **Offer more.** This doesn't mean you have to go over the top, and at times, it doesn't even mean you have to do anything beyond your normal tasks. By offering more, your brand and company will carry a more significant meaning in the mind of the consumers, and mind space is the end goal, after all. Ways to offer more:

- Make your site educational. You don't have to sell your product all the time. If you offer educational resources to visitors, they may see you as a reliable source, and visit time and time again.
- Make your site interactive. As consumers, we love choice. If there are links to click, places to move around to, and places to voice opinions, your site could become a hit.
- Price competitively. And, on top of that, offer a product that you've worked hard on. Make a product better before launching another.

These are just a few of the numerous things you can do for yourself. PR online is different than offline PR, so know that you have to do some creative things to get results.

Publicity Promotion | How to Promote Your Firm Using PR



Though it may seem difficult, there are some simple ways to gain publicity for your company or firm. It may not be free, but it is cheaper (and usually seen as more credible) than advertising.

Here is a list of some things you can start doing to increase your publicity that you may or may not already be implementing:

- **Business Cards:** Make some for your employees or team so that when they network they are a walking, talking advertiser and advocator for your company. Ensure that the card includes your logo, your company name, and your website, which leads to the next point:
- **Company Website:** If your company lacks a website you are losing out on the millions of users who are already plugged in to and surfing the web. Your website is like a virtual store front that needs to be available to as many people as possible. On top of having a site, spend the time in making it presentable, aesthetically pleasing, and work on search engine optimization (SEO) which will grow your traffic and grow your exposure. If your website is old, outdated, and never updated, you may get traffic, but you may also ward off business. It takes a matter of seconds for a reader/visitor to decide if they like your website (and in essence your company) and if they are turned off by looks alone your website and your company will surely suffer.
- **Company Header:** This can be a small monthly cost (in comparison to other sorts of advertising) and can be used in every piece of mail you send out. If you are writing to businesses for donations or inviting customers to a company event, send it out on paper with the company header. Put your company's information, your website, and a way to contact you. This is a great way to reiterate your company to readers. Use this header in emails too, such as your newsletter or reminder about events.
- **Press Releases:** So long as you pick someone with excellent writing skills, and they follow some guidelines on how to write a press release, your press release should offer some additional and low cost publicity. There are a few websites that offer free distribution of your press release, though if the story is big enough it might be in your best interest to pay a small fee for someone else and someone bigger to distribute it for you.

- **Host an Event:** Whether it be an opening party or a fundraiser for a local community effort, an event could be a great place to get some publicity. In addition to releasing a press release about this sort of event, local papers and news-channels may broadcast information about the event for you. You can also add it to local events calendars online. Put the information on your website, and send out a newsletter, incorporating the company header, and this can grow your web traffic too. When adding your company's event to the calendars, be sure to add your website address and a way to contact you should there be any questions.
- **Use Promotions:** Even if the promotions are not used, or people do not meet the requirements, it still gets customers in the door and it can usually help to increase sales. If anything it increases brand and company awareness, which can lead to future sales or customers. Promotions such as free samples or rebates can increase store or online traffic, and can also serve as a press release story (if the promotion is good enough), or warrant a newsletter be sent out to announce the promotion.

Though these are just a few things you can do to get some publicity, they are effective and can really give your company a boost it can use.

PR TIPS: ETC.

PR Tips | How To Do a Webinar



The term "**webinar**" is somewhat self-explanatory: a web-based seminar. (Like "**blog**", which was derived from "web log".) Despite their somewhat easy to decode name, webinars are a little more difficult to understand and master.

Don't get me wrong though; webinars are great tools for many reasons. Similar to

podcasts, a webinar feels a little more personal and can really get viewers involved in a dialogue with the webinar providers or with others who watched the webinar. The ability to interact back and forth is the real value of a webinar, whereas videos, webcasts, and podcasts are one way transfers of information. Even though webinars have this ability to be interactive, most times they are still one-way conversations.

Usually a webinar is comprised of some sort of workshop or lecture that is (at times) useful to the viewers. (Sometimes, as with a lot of content found on the Internet, webinars are completely useless.) To provide a useful webinar, think about your target audience and what it is they are interested in. Are they interested in learning how to write a press release, or how to avoid a public relations crisis? Share that information with them, if you know it. This is a great way to get others to ask questions, keeping the conversation alive and interesting.

Webinars involve some sort of audio, video, or presentation from PowerPoint or other program, and is often used by companies to showcase the benefits of products and the problems that product can solve. I think the most value from a webinar can be the complete lack of advertising done therein. Rather than advertise a product, why not offer some useful content, tips, and advice to participants/viewers? You are sure to garner more followers, participants, and customers that way. Advertising will only work so well, and since we (consumers) are inundated with advertising day in and day out, we may not be prone to participate in a webinar about a product. Instead, offer a webinar on how to capture audiences and you may reach a wider array of customers (so long as your product is somewhat related).

Try to offer something valuable for free. This is a great way to instill trust, and shows customers that you are not simply there for their business. A webinar can be a great place to share information, tutorials, and create an interactive place for people interested in the topics related to you and your company.

If you'd rather not do a live webinar (which may detract from the value of the webinar, and in fact change the meaning of the word), you can prerecord the video and post it on your site for visitors to access. If you'd like to keep it open and more of a two-way conversation, try adding a forum to your site, and open a thread about the webinar.

Expand your blog or website and make it interactive, whatever process you feel is best for you and your company. People are happy to talk and give their opinions, and may be even more prone to doing so if they're asked for. The best way to get people to share their opinions is to ask for it; end a webinar with a question, open that forum, and make comments open on your blogs. You can choose to moderate all of the content that is added there, but it makes your blog inviting and open to others to participate, and that may make others happy to share your blog and get involved.

Public Relations Tips | How to Write a Press Release



While the strategies of public relations have been transformed with the advent of the Internet, press releases may still hold some value (despite the multitude of other sources for PR and coverage). There are many things to consider when writing a press release, a major one being that of your reasoning for writing it. It ought to convey some sort of value for its readers, offering some sort of benefit they

may see from the contents of the press release. When readers, and especially with journalists, find value in your press release, they are more likely to share it and pass it along for others to read.

The following is a list of some helpful tips to consider when writing a press release:

1.) **Titles are important.** While it may seem a bit trivial on the surface (in comparison to the actual content of the press release), the title is the first time people will read. As such, it should be paid some well deserved attention. Journalists, reporters, bloggers, and the like are all pressed for time (aren't we all?). They may review hundreds of press releases, which means your press release may not even be read. The title, then, needs to be a quick, succinct representation of what is to follow.

The title is also a great place to optimize for search engines (SEO). It can help your press release rank well when people search for topics your press release may cover. Using long keywords may bring traffic that means more to your company as well, since anyone can search for generic keywords, but may not find your press release useful.

2.) **Content is equally as important.** Once you've got their attention, keep them reading with information that is useful and, well, informative. They're going to read the press release to see how it relates or affects them or people they know. Be sure to include some vital key elements: who, what, when, where, why, and how. These are the things journalists, reporters, bloggers, etc., will be looking for when reading your press release.

Here is a quick overview of what should be included:

- **Time of Release:** the release may be prematurely released, so establishing a time to send out the press release, as well as when other news sources

are free to post the release, is essential for ensuring proper exposure, release, and advertising.

- **City, State, and Date of release:** This is simply more information for the reader to learn of where the company is located and how recent the press release is. Often, news sources pick up on press releases days after the company initially launched it, so this is useful information.
- **Contact Information:** Also crucial for a press release, as the press release can be a great source of free publicity, and for readers/ viewers, there needs to be a way to contact the company releasing the press release. It is wise to list the Marketing Director here or the main publicist.
- **Company Information/ Byline:** This is additional information about the company, such as what they do, the products and services they provide, and what they are currently working on. This is all a great source of free publicity, especially when launching a new product or service, or signing on with a new employee or partner.

3.) Last, but certainly not least: **Know the recipient of your press release.** As mentioned above, journalists and reporters may not have time to read *every* press release they are sent. Moreover, more than 75% of the press releases sent to them may be of no relevance to them. As such, these press releases will mostly likely end up in the recycling bin. I've said it before, but I'll say it again: Do your homework. Look into your targeted reporter, blogger, or journalist. Take a few minutes out of your day to see what they write, if they link to sites that they may read, and most importantly, what interests them (which is usually what they write about). If you've got some information that may have some relation to the area they write in, they may be interested in what you and your company have to say. So, instead of blasting our press releases (which is spam), figure out who would be interested in your news. As with most aspects in business, figure out your target market before you advertise.

If you take a little extra time in crafting your press release and establishing who it is best to send to, in the end you can save yourself time and send out a better, more effective press release.

Writing Effectively to Maximize Your Public Relations Efforts



There are many things that public relations can do for you and your company, but working magic without your efforts is not one of them. Your efforts ought to establish the beginning of a relationship with consumers and the media so that you can relate with them in the future. This can be done through writing, and writing well.

When writing, the audiences you are targeting should be considered. Logically, then, the first step is to establish who your target audiences are. Create specific profiles of who your main target audiences are. For a class project, we created profiles for consumers looking for a new vehicle. With that profile, we were able to talk specifically to that target consumer, going so far as to state in our advertisements or PR materials what they themselves stated in commentaries from online reviews, focus groups, and surveys.

Once you know what your consumers are looking for in your product, you can address that on your website, in your press releases, and in your interviews. If you target audiences are looking for safety and reliability in your machine, and you can in fact offer that, say so. Don't try to use jargon, or words that are rather generic (such as "state of the art", "ground breaking", and "leading"), as they alienate you from these consumers, making your relationship with them less of a success. Talk about the needs they have and how your product can help.

Lastly, try to simplify things, but not to the point of assuming that anyone who uses your product is completely ignorant. Rather, use terms that are recognizable to others, relay the message of fulfilling needs, both utility and societal, and make it a little more personable as if you were having a conversation with your target audience. This may help visitors to your site or readers of your press release to feel more inclined to learn more about you or keep you in mind for future investments.

Public Relations: Brand Names, The Physical World, & The Internet



I read an interesting book a few weeks ago, "The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding" & "The 11 Immutable Laws of Internet Branding". The concept that I'd like to share is that of their 3rd Internet Branding Law, "The Law of The Common Name".

Recently, in driving around looking for a nail salon or for a dry cleaners, this law became much more real. I don't know the name of any of the salons or dry cleaners (unless it was a salon I'd gone to more than once, and really enjoyed). The generic name of 'salon' or 'dry cleaner' works really well in the physical world. These companies don't need specific, brand names for a physical bricks-and-mortar company who's location really helps to differentiate them. "I dropped off your jacket at the cleaners on Hall."

How convenient!

The story for an online business is far different. How can you differentiate one brand from another if the names online businesses use are generic? For instance, a company named "Shoes.com" doesn't say much about them that would make me visit them over "Heels.com", and I really only know that they sell a generic product of shoes or heels. On the other hand, I know what to find at the DSW or Zappos website, because I know the store and I know the brand.

Another reason website names are crucial to an online business is that, standing alone, away from advertising, marketing, or PR, a website is simply an address, usually comprised of a few words. This means that businesses can no longer rely on their logo, the look of their website or product, or really any other visual characteristic. The website address needs to capture the attention first, and then the logo and other aesthetic aspects come into play. (What pressure!)

So, while a generic name may work on Hall St., remember that there needs to be a way for your customers to distinguish you and your brand, and your brand name ought to instill some sort of desire and wonder, whereas Flowers.com doesn't give off much excitement. It may tell me what is offered there, but that is the extent of the utility the name offers. (In fact, in looking for a website that sells flowers that I could contrast to Flowers.com, my search resulted in other generic flower sites. I suppose, then, that having a generic flower website or brand name

won't hurt your business much, but it would definitely benefit you to have a unique name among a sea of generics!)

Having an 'uncommon' name will help you to be more recognizable in the end. If a customer of ThePetShop.com is asked where they got their pet medications, and their answer, "The Pet Store", prospective customers may be confused, and inquire, "Yes, but which pet store?"

It can be beneficial to have a name that helps to bring a new identity to your company. Petco, though a big brand offline, probably does well online, simply because their name is something other than a common name.

Public Relations and Marketing | Your Online Presence



Marketing and PR have merged, thanks to the wonders of the Internet. As such, businesses should have some sort of presence online, whether it be a website, blog, or network ID to comment on other blogs or forums. Instead of letting others dictate what your name means online, get involved. It is a great way to reach the people that are looking for your services and products, as more and more people are online. As these

online, savvy consumers search for answers, reviews, and tips to convince them to make a move, your company can answer that call. David Meerman Scott, author of "The New Rules of Marketing and PR" writes, "Content drives action".

My father is a small business owner who is often troubled by months with little business. He is a contractor who more often than not works outside, and as such, he is inundated with business in Summer, and sits idly in the cold Fall, Winter and early Spring. I've suggested to him that a website or blog would help with his attempts at filling empty months. Despite there being a great deal of seasonality in the industry he works, extending his reach may guarantee work in the slow months.

What a website could do for him is immeasurable. He realizes that he will not be able to do the work he does for the rest of his life. It's tough, manual labor, and he really ought to consider expanding. He first needs the demand, which is where the Internet comes in. But simply having an online presence won't guarantee that you reach more customers.

Scott wrote about an experience he had when looking for a new car, a similar process I am now going through. He was put off by the big car companies and their lack of person-ability on their sites. I asked myself, "Why would a company with such a large, real-world presence, not want to offer the things that customers seek out most, like reviews, pictures, forums, and other ways to really learn about the products they sell?"

Why do we assume that big companies need boring and often times stale websites? It seems to be protocol to have a clean, professional website that is devoid of any actual content from customers. It is an advertising portal for companies who are trying to get our attention. Like Scott stated, if we are already at your site, you have already captured our attention. There is no need to inundate visitors with advertisements, TV commercials, or pitches. Offer some networking capabilities, some real, live, personal touches, and your website will

no longer be an advertising portal, but a useful tool for potential and current customers to network, talk about your products, and probably sell more of your product than your advertising may have ever done.

The Internet has greatly changed the way Marketing and PR are done. Being personable, real, and a resource to consumers will help your online (and offline) journey as a business.

PR AND BRANDING

Below is a review of the book “The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding” by Al Ries and Laura Ries. The book covers branding very well, and there are some concepts below that I think should be known by every PR professional when it comes to branding. If you have any particular interest in branding, please buy this book! Though the 11 laws of Internet branding are a bit out of date, now 7 years after the book has been published, the 22 laws of branding still apply very well. To get a better, in-depth understanding of these branding concepts, please read the book.

Law #1: The Law of Expansion:

“The power of a brand is inversely proportional to its scope.” This law/chapter had some great concepts, namely that expanding is not necessarily the best thing to do as a company. Expansion tends to make a brand weak, and tends to confuse consumers because the brand’s identity is being weakened. Rather, companies should focus on the things they are good at. For example, Amazon.com was a pioneer in the online bookstore. They’ve done really well, and sold millions of books, and are now the brand that consumers think of when they need to get books of any kind online. Then, the idea comes into the minds of the powerful executives, and they decide to expand their offerings. “If eBay can sell shoes, so can we!” According to the authors, they could not be more wrong. They are good at selling books. eBay is good at listing everything because that is what they do: they are an auction site, and that’s what they’ve mastered. If they started to sell things from their own lines, it may detract from their core business model and in turn weaken their brand. For now, they are seen as the #1 auction site, and with good reason. There are millions of buyers and sellers. Amazon has lost sight with their success and expanded their brand.

Key note: Expanding can weaken your brand. Consumers can confuse your product as the brand, and not associate your actual brand with the product. For instance, Chevrolet makes many cars, and most of the time, it is the product name that is used to describe what an owner of such a car drives, not the name of the company. This weakens the brand.

Law #2: The Law of Contraction:

“A brand becomes stronger when you narrow its focus”. Opposite the first law, this is what a company ought to be doing. Contracting, or narrowing the focus of a company, can make some drastic improvements! For example, a café or a delicatessen offers everything under the sun, but Starbucks and Subway really only offer and specialize in one thing: coffee and submarine sandwiches. This narrowing

of their focus has helped to make their brands strong, recognizable, and successful. The places they have made mistakes? Adding breakfast sandwiches, soups, and other products. It detracts from the main product of the company, and may not be helping profits.

Law #3: The Law of Publicity:

“The birth of a brand is achieved with publicity, not advertising”. This law’s title is a little more self-explanatory than the previous two. This one deals with the law of, well, publicity. It goes over the best way to generate publicity: being a pioneer in an industry. Being an incumbent brand really helps to alleviate some of the problems companies entering the market face, and can help establish economies of scale.

Law #4: The Law of Advertising:

“Once born, a brand needs advertising to stay healthy”. Advertising doesn’t buy you anything, it simply keeps you from losing your current market share. Additionally, advertising is used when a company’s publicity potential runs out, i.e., hype about the company diminishes. Advertising then serves as a defense system, like a country’s military that keeps them from other countries invading. Advertising then is a defense and secondary to publicity. It is a tool to keep your leader position visible to others so that they don’t forget.

Law #5: The Law of the Word:

“A brand should strive to own a word in the mind of the consumer.” This means that when a consumer thinks of a word, at times a common word, they should automatically think of your brand and associate the original meaning of that word with your brand. Brand names have become nouns. For example, Kleenex is no longer associated as a brand, but as the product. Kleenex is a tissue. The same goes with a Q-Tip, a Xerox, and a Band-Aid. These brands own the words of tissue, cotton swab, and copy, just as Jell-O owns the gelatin dessert word.

Law #6: The Law of Credentials:

“The crucial ingredient in the success of any brand is its claim to authenticity”. Like Coca-Cola, their claim is that they are the “Real Stuff”. For other brands, their being the leading brand makes them the ‘real stuff’, and are seen as credible. Don’t forget leadership; it makes your brand credible.

Law #7: The Law of Quality:

“Quality is important, but brands are not built by quality alone”. While quality is important, so is a brand name. Quality can help your brand avoid bad reviews, but

does a Rolex really keep time better than a Timex? There is something to be said for quality, but the brand and its popularity go beyond the product's quality. Where does the brand's perception of quality come from, the showroom? Not likely. It starts in the mind of the consumer, which usually comes from WOM and other reviews from current consumers.

Law #8: The Law of the Category:

"A leading brand should promote the category, not the brand". Branding is widely perceived as the process of capturing a bigger share of an existing market, yet the most efficient, most productive, most useful aspect of branding is creating a new category. In other words, narrowing the focus to nothing and starting something totally new. That's the way to become the first brand in a new category, like Dominos did for delivery pizza, Mercedes did for luxury cars, and Rollerblade did for in-line skates. There was no market for these items, but they are purchased and doing well because they narrowed their focus so much that they created a market and in turn demand.

Law #9: The Law of the Name:

"In the long run a brand is nothing more than a name". This is the most important aspect of your brand, and the most important branding decision you will ever make. What is needed in the short term for a brand's success is the not the same as what is needed in the long term. In the short term, it is a unique idea and concept, and to be the first, market leader. When that is gone, in the long run, the name is all that can be used to differentiate your product from your competitors. For example, Xerox was the first plain-paper copier, giving it a lot of publicity and little advertising needs. Now, all printers are plain-paper printers. All that is left to keep the Xerox printers the best brand by far in the copier field it's name, quality, and leadership.

Law #10: The Law of Extensions:

"The easiest way to destroy a brand is to put its name on everything". More than 90 percent of all new products introduced in the U.S. grocery and drug trade are line extensions, which is the major reason stores are choked full with brands. What some brands forget is that when expanding brands, users of this new product usually comes from their other products. For example, Coors Light drinkers most likely will come from Coors drinkers. As such, an extension hurts the overall brand. More is not always more. Another damaging move is the extension of "light, healthy,

and diet” products, which can make questions arise of their already existing products: “Is Heinz Ketchup bad for me if there is now a Light version?”

Law #11: The Law of Fellowship:

“In order to build the category, a brand should welcome other brands”. (Greed often gets in the way of common sense.) When a company finds success in one area, such as McDonald’s in fast food, they often think it’s time to expand (which the law of expansion states is not the key to further success but rather failure). For example, McDonald’s once said they would have the entire food market if they only served beer and wine. Not likely. What companies forget or don’t seem to realize is that competition drives demand. When consumers have more choice, they are prone to purchase more because with more brands to choose from, they are inundated with more information on the type of products and are thus more conscious. Advertising from your competitors probably helps your company with this theory in that it reminds your consumers why they choose you and reminds them of your existence when they see your competitor. Lastly, who wants to buy a product if there are no other products to compare it to? It may seem suspicious to see one lone product in a market.. The best place for a new Hard Rock Café might be right next to the Planet Hollywood, where customers who already go to that area can see your restaurant, and perhaps make a change.

Law #12: The Law of the Generic:

“One of the fastest routes to failure is giving a brand a generic name”. In the past, some of the most successful brands have had rather generic names: General Mills, General Motors, Standard Insurance, Standard Oil, National Broadcasting Company, etc. Does this mean that all companies should bear a generic name? Not at all. Generic names make the product seem just that: generic. It’s hard to distinguish and differentiate brands from one another when their names all sound the same. For example, the National Biscuit Company, now Nabisco, made a change to their name. There are other national biscuit companies, but there is only one Nabisco. The companies who have been successful with their generic names were normally the first of their kind: National Biscuit Company was the first national biscuit company, General Electric was the first general electric company, and International Harvester was the first international harvester company. Reason for a non-generic name, such as Dell or Microsoft in comparison to Power and Data Technology, is that it is hard to distinguish a brand name when consumers hear “Power and Data Technology”. Capitalization does not come across when said aloud. Blockbuster is a better name than Video Rental Store, and names like Budget and Lexus give consumers an idea of what they offer while still refraining from generic names. Budget, though a common, generic word, works in the context it is used: a car rental company.

Law #13: The Law of the Company

“Brands are brands, companies are companies. There is a difference.” The best way to avoid the confusion between brand names and company names is to use the brand name in large font, and the company name in small type. For example, the Mach 3 by Gillette in the text. Brand names should almost always take precedence over company names. Consumers buy brands, they don’t buy company names. When companies, such as Coca-Cola, IBM, Xerox, etc., are used alone as the brand name, consumers see these names as brands. Furthermore, companies are not their brands. Companies produce products. For example, Microsoft is not Word. Microsoft is the company that produces many products, one of which is Word. On the other hand, Coca-Cola Company, the Zippo Company, and the WD-40 Company all use their company names as their product names. This is ideal, but it does not usually work. When companies make their company name their brand name, the brand name becomes the product. For example, Coca-Cola is not just a cola, it is the ‘real thing’, and a Rolex is not a sports watch made by the company, it is watch you put on your wrist.

Law #14: The Law of Subbrands:

“What branding builds, subbranding can destroy.” Subbranding goes hand in hand with line extensions. Companies tend to legitimize their desire to make branding moves. For example, companies who want to make upscale products of their already cheap product, and vice versa. The best example may be Cadillac, who wanted to make a smaller car. (When I think Cadillac, I do not think compact. Right away, this seems like a bad idea.) Were people walking into these companies asking for a smaller Cadillac, a cheaper version of Donna Karen, or for a more expensive room at the Holiday Inn? No.

Law #15: The Law of Siblings:

“There is a time and place to launch a second brand.” If handled incorrectly, a second brand can dilute the power of the first. Yet, in some situations, a family of brands can be developed to ensure control of a market for years to come. For example: Wrigley’s. When launching a second brand, do not keep the first brand’s name on the others. That would be subbranding. Instead, create a new brand. Like Time, Inc. did with *Time*, *Fortune*, *Life*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Money*, and *Entertainment Weekly*. These magazines/brands all stand tall and powerful on their own. It probably would have been a different story if they were called, for example, *Time for Finance*, or, *Time Entertainment*. Another good example would be GM, who owned Cadillac, Oldsmobile, Buick, Chevrolet, and Pontiac. They were most successful when they kept each of their brands separate.

Law #16: The Law of Shape:

“A brand’s logotype should be designed to fit the eyes. Both eyes.” A customer sees the world horizontally due simply to the fact that human eyes are mounted horizontally on one’s face. According to our authors, this means that logos should be horizontal as well to be more aesthetically pleasing to a customer. Another thing to consider is the font that is chosen for a logo or logotype of a brand. Consumers need to be able to read and make sense of your brand, so legibility is important. For example, Lord and Taylor make a logo that is illegible, whereas Escada, Lancôme, and Ralph Lauren, while all similar in appearance, are legible, clean, and yet still recognizable. One last thing to consider is the use of images with names; the name of a brand or company give meaning to a logo, such as Nike giving meaning to the swoosh symbol they use, but in the case of Shell, using a shell didn’t help much in giving consumers something to associate with gasoline. How will consumers know that the shell logo, seen without the name, means a company, named Shell that sells gasoline?

Law #17: The Law of Color:

“A brand should use a color that is the opposite of its major competitor’s.” This is a great way to differentiate your brand. Caution needs to be applied here, however, as colors are given meaning when they evoke emotions. For instance, red is the color of power, (and desperation, as others have said), so at times it can be a little overbearing. Since the color the eye interprets red differently than other colors, such as blue, which moves away from you. Red appears to be moving towards you due to the eye focusing red light slightly behind the retina. White is interpreted as the color of purity, blue as the color of leadership, black as the color of luxury, purple the color of royalty, and green the color of the environment and health. So, while focusing on the emotion that you are trying to convey is important, it is more important that your consumers and future consumers are able to differentiate you from your competitor, who may use the color blue. So, while it may not be the best choice for you to use red, you need to establish a color that others can identify you with.

Law #18: The Law of Borders:

“There are no barriers to global branding. A brand should know no borders.” There are a few things that you can ‘unlearn’ about growing a brand. 1st, you don’t need to expand your brand in order to gain some share of your brand’s market. 2nd, you do not necessarily need to grow. If you are headstrong on growing, what makes you think that the 1st thing to unlearn is not true? Something to consider: go outside your company. So, keep your brand’s narrow focus in the home country, and go global. But, to be successful as a global brand, your brand has to: be first, and your product has to fit in the perceptions of its country of origin. For example, if you’re selling a product from America, it should really resemble something of America, if that’s who your primary market initially was. And, if it’s being imported, it may be

being imported solely for the fact that it is American, just as watches are imported from Switzerland, and wine is imported from France. American products that have done well include Dell, Microsoft, and Compaq, who all carry the American perception, and are global brands.

Law #19: The Law of Consistency:

“A brand is not build overnight. Success is measured in decades, not years.” A brand cannot get into the mind of a consumer if it does not stand for something. When you change what your brand stands for, how can consumers know what your represent, and know that they want your brand if you keep changing what it is you stand for? Like Amazon trying to expand their brand into products other than books, they are weakening their brand by confusing the customer. It may make sense to expand and change what you stand for because you’ve done so well in one area, but you ultimately confuse the consumer and they don’t know to come to you for what you were good at in the beginning. So, if you’re known for books, or vodka, don’t try expanding to shoes or gin; it won’t work.

Law #20: The Law of Change:

“Brands can be changed, but only infrequently and only very carefully.” Brand changing occurs in the mind of the consumer, not inside the company. There are three times when changing your brand makes sense: 1. Your brand is weak or nonexistent in the mind of the consumer. This is where the brand essentially has no meaning in the mind, and you can do really whatever you want to the brand. 2. You want to move your brand down the food chain. It’s hard to move the other way with a brand, but if you want to do so, make a whole new brand, rather than an extension. But, moving down the price ladder is easy and consumers often feel they are getting a great value for the price. 3. Your brand is in a slow-moving field and the change is going to take place over an extended period of time. For example, taking a corporate company to a consumer focused company. Essentially, your brand is not what you think it is, and it frankly doesn’t matter what you think your brand is. What does matter is what your consumer thinks your brand is. You can bet that what got you popular in the beginning, and what consumers first learned about you, is still what they think, regardless of any changes you may have made internally. The change needs to take place in their minds, not yours.

Law #21: The Law of Mortality:

“No brand will live forever. Euthanasia is often the best solution.” And rightfully so; it may be a cheaper alternative to letting the brand kill itself off. It may give you time to consider a new brand to launch as well. Don’t worry about caring for that brand that might be past maturity and near death; instead, invest in the future.

Law #22: The Law of Singularity:

“The most important aspect of a brand is its single-mindedness.”

If everyone is doing it, and it is just the way it's been done for generations, does that make it the right way to do it? Not necessarily. This chapter focuses on the idea of a brand being a singular. Brands are weakened when they forget to stay singular and they lose their identity. What's a Chevrolet? Well, it's a large, small, cheap, or expensive truck and car. Would they be better off if they had offered only one brand and product? I don't think we'll ever know.

This chapter raised a lot of questions for me (as with much of the book). Companies worldwide are expanding their brands, and yet they seem to be doing fine in the scope of sales and market share since all of the other brands are doing the same thing. There are a few companies that are doing well with just one product, such as Dell, but does that mean companies should contract their brands to succeed as Dell has? I think consumers like choice, but perhaps from other companies rather than the same company offering 10 different products. I think growth is important and there needs to be diversity in a company, but perhaps keeping a specific brand singular makes the ideas in this book work better.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Public Relations Writer's Handbook: The Digital Age

by Carol Ames, Mary Aronson, and Don Spetner

This is a very in-depth book; because it is so thorough, we will focus on the following chapters: 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, & 14.

1.) Public Relations Goes Digital. Almost EVERY communications effort requires writing. Knowing how to write well is a critical part of having successful PR and marketing efforts, as with most aspects of business. The Internet, computers, email, etc., all increase the ease and decrease the cost of researching, writing, publishing, printing, and, esp., distributing writer materials as well as producing graphics, short videos, audio downloads from the Internet, and multimedia presentations. Remember your main responsibilities as a public relations writer: Clearly understand your product, client, company, or message; Know your target audience; & Write clear, engaging prose that effectively communicated your message to your audience.

- a. **A Few Words About the Truth.** Tell the truth or say nothing. If you do not know the answer, do not lie about it. Tell the truth because it will come out in the end anyways with research, the ability to compare, etc., made easier with the Internet.
- b. **A Few Words About Grammar.** Write in correct English. Negative judgments can easily be made by a reporter or journalist, as well as other educated buyers, about a person who was too lazy, careless, or uneducated to write correctly. Take care and pride in writing well; it is definitely worth the time and effort.
- c. **Email Is Not Private; Email is Forever.** This isn't really pertinent unless you work on a company server. Otherwise, the same rules should apply when you post anything on the internet: what you write does not go away, and someone, somewhere, may find what you've written in your emails, and someone whom you may have trusted may turn around and use an email against you. Be smart when you email.
- d. **A Few Words About Style.** Some tips for writing with more style, even if you are not the best writer around: Use action verbs, avoid the use of the passive voice of verbs and use the active voice, vary sentence lengths, and proofread your writing by reading it aloud, etc.

2.) News Releases, Photo Captions, and Media Kits: Making Your Story Newsworthy. "Many published news and feature stories originate from news/press releases. News releases, press conferences, official proceedings, and other nonspontaneous events continue to make major contributions to new coverage in newspapers..." If you want your news release read and considered for coverage, there are few things that need to be done: offer a

newsworthy story; write well clearly, and simply; and offer lots of information rather than adjectives.

- a. **Inverted-Pyramid News Style.** Most important details at the top, or a summary of information at the beginning of the release, followed by a backing of the lead statements with facts, finishing with the less important information for the end.
- b. **Trade Versus Consumer Press.** Trade publications are intended for a specific profession or industry, and consumer publications are made for, well, consumers, or general readers. Use yourself and your consumer habits to consider whether or not to target journalists at either publication.
- c. **Adjusting Your Style: Consumer Versus Trade.** Depending on the publication you target and hope to get coverage in, you need to adjust your writing to capture the interest of either the general reader or the industry professional; these two groups will read things very differently from the other.
- d. **Before You Write.** Ask yourself a few questions before you write related to the relevancy of the story, the interest, completeness of the press release, the benefits, etc.
- e. **Research.** Somewhat self-explanatory. Do your homework: read past press releases from the company; research the company (your client's) executives; read what you're reporting on if there is information to read; etc.
- f. **Conforming to a Standard Style.** This sort of style is one such that the company you are representing uses in other press releases.
- g. **Content.** Outline your release, as you would when writing a paper for a college course; this helps ensure that all the points that need to be addressed are, and that you keep the release to the Inverted-Pyramid Style to help expedite the reading process for journalists.
- h. **The Appointment Release.** When a company hire, fires, or promotes, it is usually beneficial to share with stakeholders these changes; thus comes the Appointment Release. See the book for the structure.
- i. **The Product Release.** Used when a new product debuts. See book for the structure to use.
- j. **Lifestyle, Trend, and Survey Releases.** See book for an in-depth covering of this, though the title defines what this sort of release entails.
- k. **Localizing a National Release.** This title doesn't make sense to me, as this section talks about making news national, not localizing it. Either way, this section talks about making digital distributions to make announcements that are relevant to media across the country.
- l. **The Delayed or Feature-Style Lead.** This sort of release does not give the answer to the "why" until the fourth paragraph. This apparently peaks interest?

- m. Quotations.** Used to lend personal authority to a statement or needed information related to the release.
- n. Photos, Samples, and Review Copies.** Don't forget that these things can be offered! Mention that they are available upon request. "Make it as easy as possible for the journalist to experience firsthand the subject of your press release."
- o. Style and Form.** All news releases must have 4 key components:
 - i. Date and Embargo*
 - ii. Contact*
 - iii. Headline*
 - iv. Letterhead*
 - v. (See pg. 35 for additional formatting tips.)*
- p. The Q&A.** This can be added if your release was not thorough enough and you anticipate questions that someone may ask. This is something I would include in a media kit, rather than attach to a press release, but it would also be good to pass around to the entire company so that when questioned, they may have an answer everyone else has (that is correct and accurate) so that everyone answers consistently.
- q. Photos.** Can be used to enhance, document, or publicize a subject.
- r. Media Kits.** A comprehensive package of information on a client. Media kits are often compilations of several of the kinds of public relations writings mentioned above.
- s. Approvals.** Before a press release or news story is sent to the media there are a series of approvals that need to be made to prevent a misstatement of divulgence of inappropriate information.

3.) The Pitch: Creating Media Interest

- a. Stage One: Analyze the Subject, Identify the Target.** This should be done in all of your PR writing endeavors. Identify your target audience. "The key to a good pitch is the hook, or news angle, it offers. To find that hook, you must understand the subject you're pitching and then consider the needs of the journalist who will receive the pitch letter."
- b. Stage Two: Call the editor.** You may need to call to figure out who the editor is, but it's a simple call. When you call, introduce yourself, and explain why you are calling. If they have time to talk, they may ask for more information, but they may also ask for you to send more information with no time to talk on the phone. If they refer you to someone else, your opening sentence to that other person should include that you were "referred by the editor".
- c. Stage Three: Write Your Pitch.** See the eBook for more information. Begin with a reminder about your phone call, then write a catchy lead and brief, informative text. Wrap up the pitch, and say you will follow up in a few days.

- d. **Stage Four: Follow-Up.** Call and see if the journalist likes the story, needs more information, or if they even got the materials you sent.
- 8.) **Special Events: The Art of Getting Noticed.** “Will anyone care? How can I make them care more?”

Here are some things to use for every event:

Make an invitation list: Every event will attract different journalists because of their interest in what your company does, what you are attempting to benefit, or what your event plans to announce. Internally, create your own lists to keep journalists in mind, and separate them based on specifics like their location, what they write about, and what media they represent, such as radio or video. Taking these things into consideration can help you to invite the people that will take come value from your event, and in turn benefit you in return.

Make (and distribute) a media kit: This is a great tool for reporters and journalists because it (should) contains everything they would ever need to know to write a story about you, your company, or client. Include in this all the information that is presented at the event including product specifications, people who are involved, and how it affects the public, which should all be found in the news release. Also include copies of any speeches that are give, company information, and biographies of any persons who speak at the event. Send out more generic versions of these media kits to reporters and journalists you invited in #1; this can help them write better stories about why consumers ought to be interested in the event, or introduce the event better.

Do some DIY PR: This can include sending out news releases to others that you didn't send an invite or media kit to, adding your event to community calendars, announcing it to people who connect with you on Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn, and by utilizing a network of bloggers to help spread the word.

Make some callbacks: Once you've invited people, make some follow-up calls to confirm attendance. Invites can often get lost, put aside, or forgotten about, so a callback is crucial to ensure that the right people who were invited can make it to the event.

Set the date and time of the event: This can conflict with many things, such as other events taking place the same day, holidays, weather, etc. Do some research and if there is no other day to do the event, promote it well. Otherwise, if you're able, reschedule before press materials are sent out. This can help to ensure some attendance numbers.

- a. **News Conference.** The most common PR event. These are events where the media is gathered (invited) to a designated place at a specific time so that newsworthy news can be shared and they can ask questions.
- b. **Press Junket.** A special tour for reporters and editors with transportation and accommodations provided so that the journalists can view or experience a product, service, or a particular event.
- c. **Publicity Tour.** A parade of sorts to promote a book, concert tour, or to introduce a new product or area of service. These usually take place in a few different cities to really get the best results.

11.) Writing for the Internet

- a. **Email, Instant Messaging, Paging, and Wireless Internet.** There are some things to consider when writing online. Remember that correctness, brevity, and clarity are crucial for successful Internet writing. Email messages are forever. When writing to journalists, remember that email subject lines should be tantalizing.
- b. **Websites.** Websites need to be correct as well, especially a company website.
- c. **Blogs and the Blogosphere.** Blogs are a great way to connect directly with your consumers, giving them an opportunity to communicate with you and give you feedback.

12.) Responsive Writing: Setting the Record Straight

- a. **Letters to the Editor.** This is an easy and frequently used method of responding to negative or incorrect information, but they can also be a letter of congratulations or praise for a well done article. For letters in relation to the first reason, there are a few reasons you would write an editor. They can include:
 - i. A published mistake, such as a misspelled name, incorrect date, or other small detail. Regardless of how small, the mistake can be damaging.
 - ii. Corrections that serve as a publicity tool, which can include a correction that is written well and positively to help promote the product or company.
 - iii. In response to a reporter's opinion or conclusions, which can be damaging to a company's image. Rather than being irrational, emotional, and harsh, simply write to let the reporter know that the way the story was presented was not ideal. This is simply used to make the reporter aware of your disappointment and perhaps result in a follow-up article.
 - iv. A letter to point out an omission. This can include a list of stores in an area that your client resides but was omitted. This is simply to make a reporter or blogger aware of your presence, not to scold them.

b. Web Responses. Getting involved online can be a great thing for your company, so long as you do it well. Many of your customers participate in forums, comment on blogs, and even write their own blogs. As a result, you have a great opportunity to respond, interact, and communicate with the consumers themselves. Say, for example, a comment is made about a product and has to do with supply shortages. You can reply and satiate a customer who may start an uproar online, resulting in lost sales. Spetner, Ames, and Aronson, the authors of "The Public Relations Writer's Handbook", write, "

"Even the most obscure blog may be linked to hundreds or thousands of other sites and may receive thousands of Web views daily. On the positive side, this phenomenon has led to viral marketing and using the Web to create word-of-mouth recommendations for a product or service. The downside of this development is the way that a single negative comment can become an epidemic of misinformation that is destructive to a client's carefully created brand image." (Pg. 252-253)

c. Guest Editorials. While it may be a little difficult to get the guest editorial/opposite editorial (or "op-ed") published, (especially in a large magazine or newspaper) it is definitely worth the effort to try. An op-ed is usually a place or section of a newspaper or magazine that allows others to submit some writing of their own. Often times the paper or magazine accepts responses to their articles (which may be printed elsewhere in the publication, such as Letters to the Editor), but most publications may require that what is submitted for an Op-Ed not be a response to another article but rather original and value-adding. As the PR person, you will often be writing for another executive or member of the company; as such, make sure you interview them so that the editorial you submit captures their voice and addresses all of the points they wanted addressed. Remember that this is a representation of you, the executive, and your professionalism; write well and never plagiarize. Your reputation and that of the executive you may be representing are on the line.

13.) Crisis Communications and Official Statements: "Poor, slow, late, incomplete or dishonest communication during a crisis creates additional risk. Early, open, and honest communication decreases risk." Timing is EVERYTHING when it comes to a crisis.

a. Official Statements. These are important to help keep the media up-to-date. It's important to control what is said to the press in these times. As such, keep the entire company on the same page and give

everyone the same information so that if someone gets questioned, answers can be given that are correct, true, and the same as what everyone else knows. These can also be used on radio and TV interviews, press releases, company editorials or letters to the editor, employee-briefing materials, and used by staff to respond to phone, email, or other web inquiries.

- b. Talking Points.** These are bulleted points that are presented to the media by any insider giving interviews or answering questions on a crisis or issue. These are sort of like key phrases that media representatives, family, friends, and members of someone's entourage can use these when giving speeches or answer questions.
 - c. Crisis Media Plan.** This is simply the early preparation in anticipation of a crisis potentially occurring. When dealing with a crisis, there are a few things that need to be done:
 - i. Communicate Early, Openly, and Honestly**
 - ii. Act Quickly**
 - iii. Accept Responsibility from the Start**
 - iv. Express Compassion for Victims**
 - v. Offer Immediate Financial and Psychological Assistance**
 - vi. Meet the Red Face Test**
 - d. Anticipating Needs in a Crisis.** Ask yourself some questions to know if you are prepared.
 - e. Disclosure.** Getting the information to the media swiftly is essential to dealing with a crisis. This can help to control rumors, satiate dissatisfied customers, etc.
 - f. Crisis Releases.** These are simply press releases (follow the form explained earlier in the text) that address the issues, perhaps the affects on the community, and how the company plans to alleviate the problem.
 - g. Minimizing Negative Reports.**
 - h. Threatened or Ongoing Litigation.** What to do when litigation rumors are flying, or if litigation is actually being taken.
- 14.) Program Writing: Selling Your Concept to the Client** (This is closely related to the Strategic PR book.) UCG examples: MySpace and YouTube.
- a. Structure of a Public Relations Program** is as follows:
 - i. Introduction or Situational Analysis.** This describes the reason the program is being written and raises all of the issues that the program is being designed to answer. Get as much information as you can to analyze the situation the company you are creating the plan is in.
 - ii. Objectives.** Somewhat self explanatory, this is the section where you state the goals you would like this plan to accomplish. The objectives ought to be written and stated clearly and concisely.

These should be straightforward and demonstrate your understanding of the client's needs.

- iii. Target Audiences.** Again, somewhat self-explanatory, this section is about defining and identifying the audience your program is trying to reach. See book for example of how to write a target audience list.
- iv. Strategies.** This section outlines the methods of vehicles you will use to achieve your objective and reach your target audiences. It should also cover the channels you will use to communicate your message.
- v. Activities.** This requires the most thought and creativity, and is the most important part of any program. Here is where you need to reveal specific ideas for accomplishing the goals you set in the Objectives section using the strategies listed above. You need to demonstrate how the activity is suited to the target audiences you defined, why the activity is likely to get media attention, why your idea is suited to your client, and cover all the bases. If you notice questions, answer them if you've anticipated them. See book for in-depth examples.
- vi. Management, Staffing, Administration, Tracking, and Evaluation.** Now is the time to explain who will implement the campaign and how much it will cost. See page 300 for some good questions this section needs to answer.
- vii. Budget.** It is only appropriate that, after you've laid out how the plan will be carried out, you state how much it will cost. Lay out the activities and how much it will cost. This needs to be realistic, detailed, and include an accurate budget or cost estimate.

The New Rules of Marketing & PR: How to Use News Releases, Blogs, Podcasting, Viral Marketing, & Online Media to Reach Buyers Directly

by David Meerman Scott

“Buzz doesn’t have a measureable ROI.”

-Jeffrey Eisenberg

The main premise of this book is that before the Internet, there were really only two ways to get your organization noticed: buying advertising or convincing a journalist to write about your story. Now, the Internet has made it possible for anyone and everyone to get in touch, directly with consumers. The need for the middleman (the reporter or journalist) has shifted just a bit; while we still need the authority that popular individuals bring to the mix (such as an influential blogger or well known reporter), we now have the ability to get in touch with consumers directly. Having stories featured on the New York Times is never a bad thing, but to have it distributed to the readers themselves, without the use of the paper, is an entirely new thing. So, this book features a lot of new methods and strategies to embrace this new found ability and how to do it all well.

I. How the Web Has Changed the Rules of Marketing and PR

1. The Old Rules of Marketing and PR Are Ineffective in an Online World:

- i. Prior to the web, organizations only had two significant actions to make in order to attract attention: advertise or a third-part featuring from the media. The web has dramatically changed these rules. The web is not TV.
- ii. The web has given way to companies who sell niche products because those niche markets are now accessible when before they were often overlooked due to expenses, time, and other resources that were limited by traditional advertising. Instead of one-way interruptions that TV and radio present, web marketing is more about a two-way communication where messages are delivered not when a commercial break is scheduled, but when it is most needed by the consumer.
- iii. The web has transformed the rules, and you must transform your marketing to make the most of the web-enabled marketplace or

ideas. Reporters and editors use the web to seek out stories, people, and companies.

- iv. IF you have some news you want to share with the world, but are not famous or well known, you have to share it yourself. The web has made that easy to do.
- v. Lastly, the web has made public relations public again with the advent of blogs, online news releases, and other forms of web content that let organizations communicate with buyers directly.
- vi. In conclusion, learn to ignore the old rules in order to embrace the new ones.

2. The New Rules of Marketing and PR

- i. The Long Tail Theory: Instead of focusing on small number of hits (which Scott here describes as mainstream products and markets) at the head of the demand curve, our thinking needs to shift to the niche hits at the end of the curve, the long tail. The bulk of consumers lie in this long tail, and our thinking needs to move towards embracing them. With the changing costs of production, holding, etc., it is becoming more and more economically smart to cater to these smaller niche needs instead of clumping consumers into a “one-size-fits-all” mentality.
- ii. Shift thinking from larger, more specific areas, to more small, underserved audiences via the web. “Marketers must shift their thinking from mainstream marketing to the masses to a strategy of reaching vast numbers of underserved audiences via the web.”
- iii. “The most effective web strategies anticipate needs and provide content to meet them, even before people know to ask.”
- iv. Online tools, such as the online news release or the blog, are not simply tools for technology companies but for companies who had a primarily physical presence, the “brick and mortar” companies. Great online content can help position a company as a trusted resource can get people to act – whether that be purchase, sign up, donate, etc.
- v. Marketing and PR have begun to merge thanks to the Internet. The Internet has blurred the lines between marketing and PR.
- vi. People want participation, not propaganda.
- vii. PR is not about your boss seeing your company on TV; it’s about your buyers seeing your company on the web.
- viii. Marketing is not about your company winning awards; it’s about your company winning business.
- ix. Blogs, podcasts, e-books, news releases, and other forms of online content let organizations communicate directly with buyers in a form that they appreciate.

3. Reaching Your Buyers Directly

- i. Relying exclusively on the media and expensive advertising ventures can be frustrating, but those days are over. With the Internet, companies no longer need to rely on other companies to reach consumers and relay information/ deliver messages. “The tremendous expense of relying on advertising to convince buyers to pay attention to your product is yesterday’s headache.”
- ii. In order to drive interest, news releases can be used and released periodically to keep interest peaked.
- iii. Let the world know about your expertise. Everyone has the ability to elevate themselves on the web to a position of importance, through blogs, newsletters, social media, etc.
- iv. Develop messages that your buyers want to hear. In the time-shifted, multichannel, Webcentric world of the long-tail, YouTube, TiVo, and blogs, spending a ton of money on ads is like commissioning a portrait was back in the nineteenth century: it made you feel good, but it didn’t really bring you any revenue.
- v. Develop buyer personas. Smart marketers understand buyers, and even create a persona for the type of buyers they service or target. By truly understanding the needs and the mindset of each buyer persona, it is easier to create content that is valuable, relevant, and appropriate.
- vi. Think like a publisher. The new publishing model is not about spin, hype, and messages, but rather delivering content when and where it is needed. In the process, branding you or your organization as a leader may happen.
- vii. Tell your organization’s story directly.
- viii. Know the goals and let content drive action.
- ix. Content and Thought Leadership. Reaching customers with web content

II. Web-Based Communications to Reach Buyers Directly

1. Blogs: Tapping Millions of Evangelists to Tell Your Story

- i. Blogs, Blogging and Bloggers: Blogs are a multifaceted tool that marketers and PR folks everywhere can use and utilize to get in touch with buyers, directly. Blogs are also a great way to be found: create content that people will search for, and they will come. Blogs, or Weblogs, are essentially websites that call for commentary or posts, and is maintained by the author, rather than a team of tech persons or the CEO of a company. A blog usually showcases someone’s credibility or area of expertise. There are even blogs by companies that let their experts blog about company topics or the industry they work in.

- ii. **Understanding Blogs in the World of the Web:** Blogs are often dismissed, being categorized with newspapers and magazines. Journalists as well as public relations and marketing professionals are quick to dismiss the importance of blogs because they often insist on comparing them with magazines and newspapers. Blogs are often misunderstood by people who do not regularly read them. Contrary to the belief that blogs are useless, and aside from the fact that ANYONE can blog about anything and everything, there is some great content out there in the blog world.
 - iii. **The Three Uses of Blogs for Marketing and PRL** 1. To easily monitor what millions of people are saying about you, the market you sell into, your organization, and its products. 2. To participate in those conversations by commenting on other people's blogs. 3. To begin to shape those conversations by creating and writing your own blog.
 - iv. **With that, Monitor Blogs – Your Organization's Reputation Depends on It:** Organizations use blogs to measure what's going on with their stakeholders and to understand corporate reputation. Companies need to expand their scope of measurement to include not just the media but also blogs. Strive to gain as much knowledge as you can about blogs that talk about your company, the industry, as well as the marketplace that your company operates, and get involved.
 - v. **Comment on Blogs to Get Your Viewpoint Out there.**
 - vi. **Do You Allow Employees to Send Email? How About Letting Them Blog?** If not, consider it; blocking and restricting the use of technologies is not the answer. Instead, set guidelines. It's hard for an employee to be compliant if they don't know what you want of them. It is better to guide the way people behave rather than what they can and cannot use.
 - vii. **Breaking Boundaries: Blogging at McDonald's.** They blogged about the changes they were making internally, and also launched some video podcasts.
 - viii. **The Power of Blogs.** People can blog their way to success. It's amazing what can be done by a smart individual with passion and a blog.
 - ix. **Start today.**
- 2. The New Rules of News Releases**
- i. Press releases are not, and haven't even been, exclusively for the press. "Millions of people read press releases directly, unfiltered by the media. You need to be speaking directly to them!"
 - ii. **News Releases in a Web World:** The media has been disintermediated. The web has changed the rules. Buyers read your

news releases directly, and you need to be speaking their language. There are markets where mainstream media and the trade press remain critically important, and of course, the media still derives some of its content from news releases. But your primary audience is no longer just a handful of journalists. Your audience is millions of people with Internet connections and access to search engines and RSS readers.

iii. **New Rules of News Release:**

1. Don't send out news releases just with 'big news'. Find good reasons to send them all the time.
2. Create news releases that appeal directly to your buyers.
3. Write releases that are replete keyword-rich copy.
4. Place links in release that help to drive action and compel consumers to respond to your release in some way.
5. Optimize news release delivery for sharing and browsing.
6. Add social media tags.
7. Drive people into the sales process with news releases.

iv. **If they Find You, They Will Come**

1. Optimize your news releases with phrases that people often search for.
2. Driving Buyers into the Sales Process
3. Reach Your Buyers Directly: under the old rules, the only way to get published was to have your news release "picked up" by the media. We've come a long way since then...

3. Audio Content Delivery Through Podcasting

- i. Audio on the Web is not new, but utilizing it and creating it has become much easier than in the past. This whole chapter is just dedicated to the use of podcasting. Though podcasting is important, this chapter is more for musicians.

4. Forums, Wikis, and Your Targeted Audience

- i. People are expressing their opinions online with chat rooms, message boards, forums, and wikis, as well as blogs that allow comments.
- ii. Your best customers participate in online forums- so should you. Never before has there been as good a tool or opportunity to monitor what's being said about you and your products than the one we have now. The Internet is like a massive focus group with uninhibited customers offering up their thoughts for free! Tapping into this resource is simple: monitor what's being said. Through monitoring what is said about you on forums, and even responding when you see fit, you can save yourself lost sales, upset customers, and increase your credibility. What's stopping you?

- iii. Your Space in the Forums. By participating in forums, you can learn what consumers are interested in.
 - iv. Wikis, List Server, and Your Audience. A list serves is similar to a forum or message board, but rather than having a central place to go to in order to read the messages, they are sent as an email. A wiki is a website anyone can edit.
 - v. Creating Your Own Wiki.
- 5. Going Viral: The Web Helps Audience Catch the Fever:** Viral things are not usually created by the company itself but by consumer videos, feedback, reviews, etc. While creating something to go viral can happen, it is usually due to an external force rather than your own efforts. But, encouraging things to go viral and helping them along when they do can help your PR efforts greatly.
- i. Monitoring the Blogosphere for Viral Eruptions. As mentioned above, it is greatly important to monitor the web for references to you and your company. More importantly, though, analyze what's being said on top of counting the number of times it happens. Then, you can help capitalize on those trends that your company is being associated with.
 - ii. Creating Viral Buzz for Fun and Profit. It is difficult to purposely create viral marketing buzz, but it is certainly possible.
 - iii. When you have Explosive News, Make it Go Viral. This has got to be really important news though, so bear in mind that when you're trying to make something go viral, you may not succeed.
- 6. The Content-Rich Web Site.** While aesthetics of your blog or website are important, there needs to be awesome content to offer some sort of value to your site. While most sites are monitored by Webmasters, which can be fine if your site isn't attempting to revamp itself with the new rules of Marketing and PR, but for websites trying to reach audiences, there needs to be another voice of reason and content on a site.
- i. Content: The Focus of Successful Web Sites. This pretty much sums up this section. A successful website has awesome content and gives its readers value. Again, while aesthetics, flow, navigation, and logos are all important, content should be the main focus of a website.

III. Action Plan for Harnessing the Power of the New Rules

4. You Are What You Publish: Building Your Marketing and PR Plan

- i. Marketing is not just about your products. The most important thing to remember as you are developing your marketing and PR plans is that you need to put your products and services to the side for just a little while and focus your complete attention on the buyers of your products. Think Starbucks: The coffee isn't that great. When you buy

a cup of their coffee, you are buying the name, logo, place to meet, hangout, do the crossword, and get away on you lunch break. They ought to focus, then, on the value they bring to a consumer rather than the products they sell.

- ii. **What Are Your Organizational Goals?** As the marketing or PR team, objectives are often different than that of the overall business. When PR or Marketing measures hits, traffic, or numbers of mentions, they are disregarding the actual power of PR and marketing. Unless traffic, hits, etc., are offering revenue to a company, measuring them does not do much good.
 - iii. **The Buyer Persona Profile.** After identifying goals, it is usually helpful to create a buyer persona. This can help to really target marketing and PR efforts to meet those goals. For example, a company wants to get 200 new participants to an online certification program, and want to earn revenues of \$100,000. From there, they can make the Buyer Personas. This helps to personify a “target market”, which may be difficult to do otherwise. Keeping with the example, the online business could create a buyer persona for a business professional already in their career paths looking to further their education; a student looking to learn more about the industry, or a recent graduate who is looking to vamp up a resume.
 - iv. **The Importance of Buyer Personas in Web Marketing.** Taking into account these buyer personas can greatly help in the content creation of a website. You can create a separate landing page for each persona, giving different benefits for each persona, and different incentives for each persona to make the next move: a sale.
 - v. **In Your Buyers’ Own Words.** Use searches that your buyers are using, so as to optimize your search-ability and to get their traffic to your site.
 - vi. **What do You Want Your Buyers to Believe?** Create messages for each persona. This will hopefully speak directly to them. You must create for them a word they can associate with your company: do you want them to think of your company as luxury, safe, etc.? For example, Volvo doesn’t just sell a car, it sells safety.
 - vii. **Developing Content to Reach Buyers.** Think like a publisher. Develop an editorial plan to reach your buyers with focused content in the media they prefer.
- 5. Online Thought Leadership to Brand Your Organization as a Trusted Resource.** Web content sells! An effective online content strategy, artfully executed, drives action. Whatever it is you’re creating, doing so well can help to set you or your organization apart and contribute to a positive reputation. This form of content can brand a company as an expert and as a trusted resource.

- i. **Developing Thought Leadership Content.** Take off your company hat and think like one of your buyer personas. Write something that would solve one of their problems, w/out mentioning your company or product.
 - ii. **Examples/ Forms of Thought Leadership Content:**
 - 1. Whitepapers
 - 2. E-books
 - 3. Email newsletters
 - 4. Webinars
 - 5. Wikis
 - 6. Research and survey reports
 - 7. Blogs
 - 8. Podcasts
 - 9. Vodcasts/ video content/ vlogs
 - iii. **How to Create Thoughtful Content**
 - 1. Do not write about your company and your products.
 - 2. Define your organizational goals first, so as to know where this sort of content will help.
 - 3. Based on your goals, decide whether or not this content will be free.
 - 4. Think like a publisher by understanding your audience.
 - 5. Write for your audience.
 - 6. Choose a great title.
 - 7. Promote like crazy.
 - 8. Alert appropriate reporters, bloggers, and analysts.
 - iv. **Leveraging Thought Leaders Outside of Your Organization. External help can, well, help.**
6. **How to Write For Your Buyers.** Your buyers and the media that covers your company want to know what sort of solution you and your product or services will provide. They also want proof that it works in writing they can understand. This means NOT using jargon. Every time you write, you have an opportunity to communicate and start the flow of communication between you and your consumers.
- i. **An analysis of Gobbledygook:** There are terms that completely wash over a reader, and perhaps have lost their complete meaning due to their overuse. Such words are usually adjectives like: “marketing-leading, innovative, ground-breaking, etc.”
 - ii. **Poor Writing: How Did We Get Here?** Words like the above make for a boring read; yes, those attributes may seem worthy of your press release and may be words you were told were a good choice to use to describe your product, but unless these words are important to your consumers, they won’t do you much good. Instead, offer adjectives that offer more meaning to your product and give it an

extra “oomph”. Marketers don’t understand buyer, the problems they face, or how their product helps to solve these problems. That’s when these terms get used. Use the opportunity to convince consumers that your product is their solution.

iii. Effect Writing for Marketing and PR: Your marketing and PR is meant to be the beginning of a relationship with buyers and journalists. This begins when you work at understanding your target audience and figuring out how they should be sliced into distinct buying segments or buyer personas. Also, don’t use big words or fancy expressions; your consumers don’t care about them. You must use words that are clear, concise, and easy to understand so that you can really relate with your consumers.

iv. The Power of Writing Feedback (from Your Blog). There is great power and potential with the assistance of feedback from others.

7. How Web Content Influences the Buying Process

i. Content Drives Action. Consumers are on a quest for content, not for advertising.

ii. Segmenting Your Buyers. The online relationship begins the second a potential customer hits your homepage. The first thing he needs to see is a reflection of himself. As such, you ought to organize your site with content for each of your distinct buyer personas.

iii. Elements of a Buyer-Centric Web Site. As you build a site that focuses on your buyers and their purchasing process consider what they prefer in terms of media and what their learning styles are. Don’t choose, or make it an either or sort of thing: make it both. Different consumers like to read, learn, watch, or view in different ways, as all of the above are different on their own. Don’t risk losing someone’s attention by not offering their media format. Also, try developing a site personality. Add photos, include interactive content tools, make feedback loops available, provide ways for consumers to get in touch with each other, and yourself, and create content that has pass-along value that could go viral.

iv. Use RSS.

v. Link Content Directly into the Sales Cycle. Marketers with the most successful sites specifically design content to draw buyers into the sales cycle. Take into account where a buyer is in the sales cycle: are they in the early stages where they need basic, introductory information on the product, or are they ready with credit card in hand? Both sets of people need adequate attention, or you may risk losing a sale. When they are in the early stages, they need in-depth information that really sells the benefits of the product, and when they are in the latter stage of the buying cycle, they need easy to use,

quick, and efficient methods to purchase. If they become frustrated with the purchasing step, they may change their minds.

- vi. **A Friendly Nudge.** Try not to nudge or hint at ordering or buying until you've really established yourself as a trustworthy source. Rather than elaborating distinctions between products, remain focused on the buyer and her problems and how your product will solve them.
- vii. **Close the Sale and Continue the Conversation.** Make it easy for customers to provide feedback, and keep them on your newsletter lists.

8. How to Use News Releases to Reach Buyers Directly

- i. **In most markets, mainstream media and the trade press remain vital.**
- ii. **Developing Your News Release Strategy.** When creating a news release program, think about the need to write for your buyers. Create an editorial calendar for news release based on what buyers need to know. Topics to write about, that cover what your company is doing:
 1. A new take on an old problem
 2. Serve a unique marketplace
 3. Have interesting information to share
 4. CEO speaking at a conference
 5. Win an award
 6. Add a product feature
 7. Win a new customer
 8. Publish a white paper
 9. ETC, ETC.
- iii. **Publishing News Release through a Distribution Service.** Post a news release to your site and send it out for distribution.
- iv. **Reaching even more interested buyers with RSS feeds.** As the title describes. Some readers prefer RSS feeds.
- v. **Simultaneously Publishing Your News Release to Your Web Site.** This keeps your press releases alive much longer than they may have stayed otherwise, as other press release distribution sites may not keep long archives.
- vi. **The Importance of Links in Your News Releases.** Very important, as this can help the sales process and bring visitors to your site.
- vii. **Focus on the Keywords and Phrases Your Buyers Use.**
- viii. **Include Appropriate Social Media Tags** if you are able to do so.
- ix. **If it is Important Enough to Tell the Media, Tell Your Clients and Prospects, Too!**

9. The Online Media Room: Your Front Door for Much More Than the Media

- i. **Don't forget that not the press or media visit these pages of your website.** If you have a regular website, in contrast to a blog, then your media room is a place where people will look to find recent content, etc.
- ii. **Your Online Media Room as Free SEO.** As stated above, this is a great place for spiders to crawl and index because the information is updated more frequently than other parts of a company's website.
- iii. **Best Practices for Online Media Rooms.**
 - 1. **You Control the Content.**
 - 2. **Start w/ a Needs Analysis.** Consider buyers, journalists, etc., to see if this is a worthwhile approach/addition to your site, and what needs to be found there.
 - 3. **Optimize Your News Releases for Searching and for Browsing.** Some people search, some people browse.
 - 4. **Create Background Information that Helps Journalists Write Stories.** This could be called your online media kit.
 - 5. **Include Multimedia Content.**
 - 6. **Include Detailed Product Specs and Other Valuable Data.**
 - 7. **If appropriate, Go Global.**
 - 8. **Provide Content for All Levels of Media Understanding.**
 - 9. **List Executive Appearances, Conferences, and Trade Show Participation**
 - 10. **Include Calls to Action for Journalists**
 - 11. **Embrace Bloggers as You Do Traditional Journalists**
 - 12. **Avoid Jargon, Acronyms, and Industry-Speak**
- iv. **An Online Media Room to Reach Journalists, Customers, Bloggers, and Employees.** Make it an easy place to read, browse, etc., for everyone, not just journalists or reporters.
- v. **Really Simple Marketing: The Importance of RSS feeds in Your Online Media Room.**

10. The New Rules for Reaching the Media.

- i. **Don't Spam!** Barraging large groups of journalists with indiscriminate PR materials is not a good strategy to get reports and editors to pay attention to you.
- ii. **Nontargeted, Broadcast Pitches are Spam.**
- iii. **The New Rules of Media Relations.**
 - 1. **Nontargeted, broadcast pitches are spam.**
 - 2. **News releases sent to reporters in subject areas they do not cover are spam.**
 - 3. **Etc.**
 - 4. **Etc.**
- iv. **Blogs and Media Relations.** Getting niche bloggers interested in your product is important too.

v. **How to Pitch the Media.**

1. **Target one reporter at a time.**
2. **Help the journalist to understand the big picture.**
3. **Explain how customers use your product or work with your organization.**
4. **Don't send email attachments unless asked.**
5. **Follow up promptly with potential contacts.**
6. **Don't forget- it's a two way street journalists need you to pitch them!** This doesn't mean they want all of your spam, however. Pitch the ones that want and need your pitches and your stories and release will be greeted well and welcomed.

11. Blogging to Reach Your Buyers

12. Podcasting and Video Made, Well, as Easy as Possible

13. Social Networking Sites and Marketing

- i. **Check Me Out on MySpace.** Marketing on these sites can be tricky because the online community at social networking sites hates overt commercial messages.
- ii. **Optimizing Social Networking Pages.** While these tools are not marketing or advertising venues, you can still help lead customers into the buying process. Here are some ideas to get the most out of using social networking sites:
 1. **Target a specific audience.**
 2. **Be a though leader.**
 3. **Be authentic and transparent.**
 4. **Create lots of links.**
 5. **Encourage people to contact you.**
 6. **Participate.**
 7. **Make it easy to find you.**
 8. **Experiment.**

14. Search Engine Marketing. Search Engine Marketing is remarkable because, unlike almost every other form of marketing, it does not rely on the interruption technique. The information that appears when you use search engines is target, and usually content that you actually want to see. You may disregard the advertisements at the top and side of the search engine, but the content that comes back as the search results is content that you searched for.

- i. **The Long Tail of Search.** It is ineffective to try and reach buyers with broad, general search terms.
- ii. **Carve Out You Own Search Engine Real Estate.** Consider not using a name if there are a lot of search results that could muddle your chances of gaining success in the search engine world.
- iii. **Web Landing Pages to Drive Action.** You need to build landing pages that have specific content to enlighten and inform the people

who just clicked over to your site from the search engine. Some ideas to consider when creating a landing page:

1. **Make the landing page copy short and the graphics simple.**
2. **Create the page with your company's look, feel, and tone.**
3. **Write from the prospect's P.O.V.**
4. **A landing page is communications, not advertising.**
5. **Provide a quote from a happy customer.**
6. **Make the landing page a self-contained unit.**
7. **Make the call to action clear and easy to respond to.**
8. **Use multiple calls to action.**
9. **Only ask for necessary information.**
10. **Don't forget to follow up!**

15. Make it Happen

Strategic Public Relations: 10 Principles to Harness the Power of PR

Jennifer Gehrt and Colleen Moffitt (w/ Andrea Carlos)

As the title alludes to, the book consists of ten chapters, or as the authors refer to them, 'principles'. It starts with a section of the book titled "The Case for A Strategic Approach to PR". Here the authors give reasons as to why there needs to be a strategic approach to public relations, where there has since been a lack thereof. To come later in the book, some of the notions of a strategic approach that I find the most important include their stressing the importance of communication, being aware of others and their needs (such as deadlines other than your own), and the need to evaluate and measure the success of your public relations efforts. There is much more to this book than those concepts, but I find that those are not stressed as much as others. Ones I found that were stressed more often were ones such as defining your goals before you implement, keeping a good rapport with reporters and journalists, and maintaining a focused approach to public relations, along with a strategic one. Another thing that is stressed when it comes to PR are its benefits, which can be found in this section, and the authors list a few basic things that one might imagine public relations can offer to a firm, company, or individual:

- Build your brand
- Increase Demand for Your Product or Service
- Broaden your customer base
- Create trust for your company and its products
- Establish a leadership position for your company
- Shift the perception of your product
- Develop awareness of a new product or service
- Strengthen employee morale and attract first-rate talent to your company
- Enhance the perceived value of your company
- Establish your company as socially responsible

The book goes into detail on these things, though each term is pretty much self-explanatory.

To conclude, this section merely gives reasons public relations takes a lot of forethought. Otherwise it seems to be a wild race in the dark where the end is nowhere to be found, let alone visible. This book was written with the intention to be used as a manual from time to time to reevaluate PR practices in place and evaluate how some of the new practices from this book that you may have implemented are working.

Principle #1: Sell PR to Key Stakeholders Within Your Company

As the title of this principle suggests, in order to get any sort of PR to be implemented you need to talk to your company's stakeholders to get something started. Some of the key ideas from this chapter are:

- The Importance of Being in Sync:
 - This section stresses the importance of everyone being on the same page and knowing the same goals and anticipated outcomes. This also includes everyone being in sync when it comes to processes and means used to get desired ends. Once everyone is on the same page they can understand why something is being done, and if they do not agree, they can voice it then and there. This creates a sort of consensus, which makes things move more smoothly.
- Embracing the Best Ideas:
 - This notion states that along with creating consensus and being in sync, you can, collectively, brainstorm and put ideas from different areas of the company on the table and select the best idea. This gets everyone thinking and makes the best ideas emerge from the company and the employees. This creates a better rapport within your organization and creates better relationships between key stakeholders. The book quotes another author, stating, "If they are not involved in the process, they are hardly likely to approve the product." It definitely is hard to be passionate about something if there was no involvement or ownership in the first place.
- Sharing Responsibility for Success
 - This also means that there is shared responsibility for failure. The book writes that this makes it easy to come back to the boardroom and say, "this was a collective decision, not just my own". This approach ensures that everyone has the best interests in mind. If everyone is making the decision, it makes it more difficult for someone to undermine the company and its goals.
- Advancing Your Business Objectives:
 - Once consensus is reached, it is easier to ensure that you stay on track and on message once it is time to develop and implement the PR plan.
- Why Companies Skip This Step (Principle #1):
 - This can be for a number of reasons, but at times this whole process is skipped altogether because of a lack of understanding of the importance of PR and that the board and CEO do not care about it. This can also happen as a result of fear of giving up control over the PR plan process, though it is essential to the success of a company and the success of the PR plan, whatever the tactic may be.
- Tips for Obtaining Buy-In:

- Identify all key stakeholders: it is hard to get consensus if you're talking to the wrong group of people.
- Obtain advance agreement about the budget.
- Understand their interests.
- Frame your pitch for each specific audience: this means that the CFO might prioritize things and desired results differently than the CEO.
- Take a team approach: this is, after all, a team effort.
- Be open to feedback.
- Update stakeholders at regular intervals.

Note: It is important to update expectations, budgets, etc., as factors change.

Principle #2: Select Your PR Team Wisely: This requires thought and deep understanding of the company and its needs, as it will be specific and will change depending on the type of company and the market, as well as with time. There are some important things to consider when choosing your PR team.

➤ In-House Staff or Outside Agency?

There are a handful of things to consider here when choosing between in-house or outside agency, including some of the pros and cons of each. For example, in-house keeps things congruent, while outside agencies have a greater specialization in the market, but are more costly. Evaluate what your company needs and what sort of attention it will require. Then, you may be able to decide if there is a need for one, the other, or both. The following is a list of steps to take after you have decided how to structure your PR efforts:

- Things to evaluate when looking for your PR team:
 - Your Objectives and Budget
 - Relationship/ Chemistry Factors
 - Experience
 - Passion
 - Capabilities
- After Evaluation, develop a Request for Proposal
- Interview
- After hiring, define payment terms
- Have a kick-off meeting
- Check-in Regularly
- & lastly, be available and accessible

Principle #3: Know Your Target Audiences and How to Reach Them:

This chapter deals with knowing your target audience, how to approach and reach them, as with each different audience, there are specific things to and not to do that could make or break your success.

- “Know thy customer”
 - This is a vital step towards having any sort of effectiveness, success, or results. Do not waste a good story, pitch, or press release on someone who would not be interested in reading it. In effect you could turn away the company because of a simple mistake such as not finding out who would be best suited for receiving your story or press release. In order to ‘know thy customer’, follow these steps:
 - Do Your HW
 - Know Your Industry Analysts
 - Target the Print Media
 - This also involves the online media, as there is a continuing shift from print to online media
 - Reach Your Audience Through Broadcast

Principle #4: Leverage Emerging Trends and Technologies:

The Internet is keeping everyone on their toes with trends changing every day. To keep up there has to be constant research, leverage, and understanding of why something becomes a trend, and how to use them to your advantage. With this change in technology and media come a few new concepts and modes of communicating with customers and media:

- Consumer-Generated Media: this change in technology and media also creates a shift in power; now more than ever consumers are the critics, the influencers, and the changers of public perception.
- Search Engine Optimization: Get yourself ranked in those search engine results; otherwise you can be in a world of trouble.
- The World of Blogging: this has also drastically changed the technological world. There are more than 19.5 million active blogs. People certainly have a lot to say, and there are two ways to do so:
 - Create your own blog
 - Contribute to another, already established blog
- Podcasts and Videocasts
- Social Networking Sites: such as LinkedIn, Facebook, MySpace, and many, many more. According to a survey, more than 45% of active web users also use a social networking site.
- Virtual Worlds
- Embracing Social Media Opportunities, which includes:
 - Keeping up with the latest trends and technologies
 - Understanding who’s using the medium
 - Keep your business objectives
 - Stick to your promises
 - Anticipate what could go wrong

- Be upfront about your identity
- Disclose your company's agenda
- Fight fairly

Principle #5: Develop a Strategic PR Plan: Creating a strategic PR plan requires steps to be followed, and also requires focus and team effort. In order to devise the best strategic PR plan, there are a few steps that should be followed:

- First, "Rally the Troops": this ensures that everyone understands the goal, where the plan is desired to go, and what is a desired outcome. This helps the rest of the planning process go a little more smoothly.
- Some characteristics of a successful PR plan:
 - Researched
 - Focused
 - Creative
 - Integrated
 - Holistic
 - Realistic
- Determine the length of time the plan should cover.
- Brainstorm
- Ensure that your plan has vital components, or building blocks. Within each of these building blocks there are key components that would ensure a well put together and thorough PR plan.
 - Situation analysis: This should include information on the industry and the company, and should discuss things such as customer demographics, competitors, and company performance. It should also evaluate things outside of the company, creating a S.W.O.T. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) of sorts.
 - Business objectives: As the title suggests, this part of the PR plan should state what the firm hopes to accomplish when the new plan is implemented.
 - Target Audience: This section should list whom you want to reach in order to meet the aforementioned objectives.
 - Communication objectives: This is where you can get specific as to what you would like to communicate to what audience, and what sort of perceptions you would like to create.
 - Key messages: Building on the communication objectives, this is where you can get even more specific and create the key messages you would like to communicate to each of your target audiences.
 - Strategy and tactics: With each strategy, which will ultimately (and hopefully) create the desired outcomes from above, there should be a set of tactics to describe how you will get those results.

- Budget: Think overall, and think realistically. Also consider what the company can afford and what is feasible. Create a spreadsheet that describes where your time is spent, and how much that time costs.
- Timeline: Using the strategies you've listed in the budget, create a timeline to set goals for yourself and to also keep yourself on track.
- Measurement of success: This is an important aspect of the PR plan and it will help to reinstate the value of the PR plan and will help to create standards of expectations.
- Conclusion: This is the place to leave any final words and to ask execs for feedback.

Principle #6: Craft a Compelling Story: This section goes over the idea of humans loving stories. We talk in stories, we read in stories, we think in stories (according to research), and when we read a great story, our emotions are aroused and we are inherently drawn into the story and the storyteller.

This section seems to stress a few main points, the overall theme being that a story, with all the necessary characters and plot, is needed for a successful PR plan. It also touches on the following ideas:

- The Compelling Nature of Stories
- The Key Elements of a Compelling Story, including:
 - The Protagonist
 - The Antagonist
 - The Cast of Characters
 - The Setting
 - The Plot
 - The Conflict
 - Resolution
- Applying the Other Rules of Narrative
 - Show, Don't Tell
 - Be Selective
 - Make it Interesting
 - Use Analogies
 - Leverage Classic Story Themes
- Benefits of a Compelling Story
 - Describing the Forest, Not Just the Trees: This is important in capturing the reader; when we know more about the story (or, can see the whole forest), it makes for a more interesting story. If we know the beginning and the middle, the end is that more desirable to know.
 - Providing a focused Framework
 - Telling Your Story with Conviction
 - Tailoring Your Story to Your Target Audience

To reiterate, tell the whole story; it will seem more relevant that your company sold 500 units if you tell the world that it was your second month in business. Seeing the whole forest puts things into perspective and engages your audience.

Principle #7: Build Media Relationships for Strategic Advantage:

This section covers the importance of media relationships and how it can give your company the advantage it needs. The section also covers the importance of making wise decisions when putting together a plan of attack. Some other ideas presented in the section are as follows:

- Choosing Your Spokespeople: Here are important things to consider, such as communication, patience, and insight.
- Preparing for the Interview
- Managing the Interview Process: Here are tips for the interview, such as including your PR specialists in the interview, listening for clues, and keeping in mind that 'off the record' may in fact be 'on'.
- Forging Lasting Relationships
- Embargoes and Exclusives: When these can apply.
- Setting Coverage Expectations

Principle #8: Maintain an Open Information Flow: Once a PR plan is implemented is not the time to sit back and relax. This chapter covers some things that need to be done in order to keep that PR plan working and beneficial.

- Anticipating Problems Before They Happen
- The Role of the Executive
- The Role of the PR Team
- The Role of Employees
- Dealing with Disappointing Results
- Preparing for a Crisis, which includes these steps:
 - Be Prompt and Truthful in Your Response
 - Allow Yourself the Time to Gather the Facts

A lot of what is done in a firm when it comes to maintaining an open flow of information requires a timely response, as well as an educated, researched response. There are examples in the chapter that cover some mistakes and some successes of crisis management.

Principle #9: Measure and Merchandize Your Results:

PR is not merely a practice that deserves to have money thrown at it and then never evaluated; to ensure that your PR efforts are paying off there is a need to measure and evaluate. This way the value of your PR plan and PR team and efforts can be seen more easily.

- Five Ways to Measure Your Success
 - Return on Impressions
 - Ad Value Equivalency
 - Return on Media Impact
 - Return on Influencers
 - Share of Voice
- Deciding Which Measurements to Use
- Getting Started
- Budgeting for Measurement
- Merchandising Your Results: remember that this involves knowing your target audience within the organization.

Principle #10: Keep Your PR Program Relevant Over Time: This sections covers the importance of reviewing your work, talking and communicating with your team and company, and ensuring that you are constantly improving your strategies, objective, and tactics.

- The Post Mortem: This is essentially a meeting where you can discuss what went well, and what did not, which leads to the following step:
 - Asking the Right Questions
 - Tips for Making the Post Mortem a Success
 - If You're Not Getting the Expected Results
 - Keeping Your PR Acumen Current