

Do It Yourself Public Relations

Five Steps for Successful DIY PR

BuzzGain Inc.

BuzzGain White Paper

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Overview

Overview: The Three C's

Would you like to create better awareness of your company's products and services in a cost effective manner? If so, then consider a public relations campaign to take your business to the next level.

In this white paper we will look at what public relations is all about and how it fits in today's marketing and media landscape. We will also look at how you can use this information to develop your own do-it-yourself (DIY) public relations (PR) campaign.

There are three reasons to consider handling your own public relations: credibility, cost effectiveness and coverage.

- **Credibility** achieved from media coverage can have instant and recurring benefits. When your company is mentioned on a television program or when you are mentioned in a respected blog, the coverage is viewed as objective, independent and credible.
- **Cost effectiveness** is important to any business that is balancing a marketing budget (and operating in a down economy). Your company's public relations efforts may be another layer of your overall marketing campaign, but it is the most cost efficient of them all. For example, a PR campaign for a product launch can cost less than other marketing methods such as a direct mail campaign; this is especially true when your goal is to increase the number of leads generated or number of customers converted with your marketing efforts (as opposed to just branding).
- **Coverage** means building awareness of your company through the media—online, offline and social media. The exposure gained from mainstream and citizen media can create public esteem and action that accrues to your bottom line.

These three "C's" of a DIY PR campaign may provide a rationale for mounting your own PR, but now it's time to find out how to actually dig down and do it yourself!



Step 1

Step One: Craft a Compelling Story

Before you can DIY PR you need to learn how to tell a compelling story. To help you understand this, let's look at Toyota's "Why Not?" marketing campaign.

Launched at the end of 2007, Toyota capitalized on the company's commitment to making environmentally friendly vehicles (i.e., the Prius) and the company's commitment to the community and "green" operations. Toyota's campaign included print ads, commercials, community events, a [Web site](#) that included links to the company's blog, behind-the-scenes videos and more.

In each of these marketing and PR tactics Toyota focused on the *people* behind the Toyota logo. The viewer/reader was able to look into the eyes of someone doing something profound for the environment, community and automotive industry.

In your DIY PR campaign you need to present information in a way that will have a personal impact on your stakeholders. You do this by incorporating the human perspective into whatever story you tell.

Whether it's a press release, a video or a blog post, here are a few tips to crafting a compelling story:

- Think about your organization and what makes it important to someone else. Don't just say why you think it *should* be important to your reader. Understand what it is that makes the reader tick.
- Whatever the focus of your campaign, always include examples using details of a person. Anecdotes, testimonials and quotes are excellent methods.
- Consider the impact your story will have on the reader. How will the reader's life be changed or improved by your story? Leave the reader feeling like they need to act on the information you presented.

To Tell a Good Story, First You Have to "Do Something Newsworthy!"

You and your organization make news more frequently than you realize. The following is a list of newsworthy events worth recognizing. This list is not exhaustive; try to come up with your own ideas.

- New facilities, personnel additions or partnership announcements
- Major company milestones and new service/product releases
- Events (Webinar, seminar, trade show, new content such as a white paper or survey)
- Nominate yourself for an award (Note: if you win, you win more than the award!)

You understand your business more intimately than anyone, which gives you a better perspective on your market. The hurdle for gaining attention for your "news" lies in your ability to recognize what makes a story and who will be the most appropriate journalists to tell that story.

Step Two: Identify Your Stakeholders

The Definitions

Public relations is the method in which you build relationships with the public via proper communications. The communication mix includes dealings with all of your stakeholders, including prospects and customers (through media relations), vendors (through direct communications), investors (direct investor relations) and employees (internal communications).

It's useful in every DIY PR campaign to define all of the stakeholders for your business and make plans to communicate to each and every one of those groups in the most efficacious manner.



Look in Unlikely Places

While you go through the process of identifying stakeholders, don't be afraid to consider possibilities outside the normal realm (i.e. your typical consumer who reads the local newspaper). Intuit—the 25-year-old company that created QuickBooks and TurboTax—experienced great success by looking beyond their typical consumer.

For a time Intuit focused on reaching out to accountants whom they knew were in need of accounting software. However, the company experienced a boon when something out of the ordinary happened. Intuit realized it was not the accountants who were spreading the word about their brand, but rather the individual entrepreneur who was using the software on their own.

In response to this discovery, Intuit created its own [online community](#) for entrepreneurs to share information, ask questions and connect with others in similar positions. By creating a place for current and potential customers to visit and return to, Intuit identified a new group of stakeholders and captured that audience.

Step Three: Listen to Stakeholders

How does your typical customer get their information? Are they high-ranking CEOs and CFOs dependant on *The Wall Street Journal*, CNN.com and *The Huffington Post*? Or are your customers 30-something entrepreneurs who devote the first hour of every day reading Digg and Facebook?

Before you do any of your own PR, listen to your stakeholders (customers and prospects) and discover how they want to receive information. It could be from any one of the following types of media:

- Print media (newspapers, magazines and trade publications)
- Television (network and cable TV)
- Radio
- Social Media (blogs, microblogs, bookmarking Web sites and social networking Web sites)

If you don't know how your stakeholders get their information, do your own market research with a simple survey or pay for existing research through a company like MarketResearch.com.



Proactive Listening Tactics Will Get You Far

Dell developed its own social networking tool in order to listen to its stakeholders closely. The Web site is called IdeaStorm.com, and it is designed much like the social news site, Digg. Visitors to IdeaStorm.com are able to submit ideas for computer and technology development, which are then voted on and commented on by other users. The tool is useful to Dell in many ways, but most beneficial because it allows Dell to hear what their stakeholders are saying and improve their brand accordingly.

Just like Dell, you should find a way to listen to your stakeholders too. Maybe you don't develop your own online networking tool, but you can certainly participate in the networks where your stakeholders are as well.

Step Four: Learn About Key Influencers

After you discover what types of media your stakeholders are listening to, it's now time to determine who the key influencers are within those media segments. In other words, find those particular journalists, bloggers, analysts, consultants, etc. whom write about or comment on your industry and whom your prospects and customers trust.

There are two simple ways to do this. *One*: read, read, read. Read a variety of publications and learn as much as you can about the publications relevant to your business. Pay attention to the bylines and take note of the people writing about your industry. *Two*: Locate the journalists covering your beat. An excellent resource for finding journalists is through Twitter. This is a very Web 2.0 method and one that is updated often. The two Twitter pages to try are [Media on Twitter](#) and [Twittering Journalists](#).



Now that you know what publications to pay attention to and who to contact at those publications there is more research to be done.

- Has the journalist/key influencer already covered a story similar to the one you are pitching? Can you find a new angle?
- Does the journalist have a blog? If so, read it and comment.
- What other publications does he or she write for?
- Can you find this person on any social networks?
- How does he or she prefer to be contacted? Is there an e-mail address listed on any of these Web sites? If not, can you locate a phone number?

Bloggers are Journalists Too

In today's media landscape the professional blogger is gaining relevance within the news making community. In fact, some blogs are better read than many traditional newspapers and magazines. In light of this fact, the bank HSBC built a Web site resource to connect its entrepreneurial customers. Coined the [HSBC Business Network](#), the site allows users to author their own blogs, participate in forums and post videos. The network is a place where each user can become a key influencer in his or her own right.

Step Five: Engage Key Influencers

To effectively engage a key influencer you must first develop a relationship. There are a few ways you can reach out.

- Comment on their blog or news article. Attend events along with other media, e-mail him or her and offer yourself up as a source. Call to introduce yourself
- Visit Web sites like PRLeads.com and BeatBlogging.org to offer up your story ideas and expert opinions when appropriate.
- Keep in touch even when you don't have any news; you might be able to help them with something they're working on.
- Develop a "news" page on your own Web site. Include the basics like contact information and actual news of your organization, but also post industry information, videos and links to blogs, social networks, etc. Not only will you be able to communicate with your stakeholders directly, but key influencers could use your Web site as a resource.

Take advantage of the fact that you know your brand better than anyone and are able to engage a key influencer effectively. Intel did just that and as a result developed a network of social media touch points with its software communities. On one single [Web page](#) Intel lists relevant blogs, forums, virtual worlds and other social media sites beneficial for the stakeholder and the key influencer.

With these resources Intel now has an engaged audience, and the company is able to tell the stories it wants—often.

The second step of engaging key influencers is to pitch valuable stories.

- Practice your pitch. Is the story idea objective and trendy? Do you have an interesting angle? Is there a timely element to your story?
- Be prepared to answer a variety of questions. The journalist is looking for something new and edgy so it's likely you'll be asked a few hard hitting questions.
- Find the publication's editorial calendar and time your pitch with the themes of upcoming issues (Hint: look in the "advertise with us" section of the publication). If possible, get in touch with someone at the publication—an editorial assistant, if possible—as editorial calendars are subject to change without any notice at all.
- A traditional method for pitching stories is through a press release, which is an excellent way to tell your story the way you want it to be told, but it is also an increasingly difficult way to reach key influencers.
- A personalized and editorially tailored "pitch letter" can be effective. Brevity and relevancy to the journalists' editorial interests are necessary, not to mention a strong subject line if the pitch letter is being sent in the body of an e-mail.

Conclusion

You are prepared. You have identified your stakeholders. You are paying attention to who your stakeholders are listening to (key influencers). You have learned about the key influencers. You are ready to engage the key influencers.

These five steps encompass DIY PR. If you follow them closely, then a DIY PR campaign can yield great results that are credible, cost effective and produce wide coverage. And remember, in today's media landscape public relations is about providing valuable information in all of the places where your stakeholders are listening; not just in the traditional newspapers and magazines. Your DIY PR campaign must cover the entire media landscape including online news sources.

This white paper is brought to you from BuzzGain, a disruptive media engagement solution that helps companies and individuals to "Do it yourself PR" (Public Relations). Our online solution helps discover, engage, analyze and report on their PR outreach efforts in an actionable fashion and reduces costs of PR by at least 80%.

If you are looking for a simple Web based application that can automate the steps presented in this white paper, please visit us at <http://www.buzzgain.com> or contact us at (650) 353 2748.

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