

Twelve Tips Before You Start A Public Relations Campaign

by Rickey Gold

Sometimes it seems easier to discuss what not to do when working with the media than it is to cover the “to do’s”. There’s a bit more leeway in the latter whereas the “not to ever do’s” are pretty firm.

Here are some examples:

- Do not blindly blitz reporters with press releases. Know who you’re contacting and what they cover.
- Read the publication before you send out a press release. Make sure the magazine, trade publication, website or e-newsletter deals with the type of news you’re sending.
- Never assume that media lists are current. Editors and reporters move around a lot, especially lately as staffs are cut back. A media list can be out of date in a matter of weeks. Get on the phone and confirm that your contact is still there, covering the same beat.
- Find out how different editors like to receive news. Most prefer e-mails but others have no problem listening to a short pitch on the phone.
- Speaking of short pitches, that’s a must! Journalists are busy with interviews, fact checking and deadlines. They don’t have time to listen to a rambling dialogue. Know what you want to say and get to the point quickly. 30 seconds is ideal. Don’t waste the media’s time.
- If you’re emailing a release, craft a subject line that says “open me”. Try and come up with something clever... something that will stand out in an inbox filled with a few hundred emails.
- Lose the fluff. Write simply and succinctly. If you load up a release with hackneyed adjectives, your hard work will end up in the trash.
- Keep the body of your email short, to-the-point and tightly focused. Use bullet points to break up copy. Keep it to less than a page, if possible, and make it easy for a reporter to scan for the highlights.
- Include contact info in case you’re fortunate enough to get your email opened and catch a writer’s interest. Include office and cell numbers and email addresses.
- If a writer does contact you and leaves a message, respond quickly. That means ASAP... evenings, weekends, after hours. Journalists can work round the clock. If you don’t respond, you may not get another chance.
- Do not call and ask an editor if “she received your release”. You won’t make a friend. You’ll annoy a busy journalist. Do follow up to see if you can supply any additional information or if you have some relevant news that came out after you sent your release.
- Just because an editor picks up the phone doesn’t mean she has time to talk to you. If you listen, you’ll often detect a harried (or hurried tone). Ask if this is a good time to talk or if you should call back. Respect the other person’s time.

Public Relations

Page 2

Public relations is not about sending out press releases. It's about building relationships with the media in the hope that they'll cover your product or service....at some point in time. It may not necessarily be on your time schedule. And that's the tough part.

However, if you're honest, respectful of a reporter's time, responsive and professional, you're moving in the right direction. Now be prepared to face some rejection (it's part of the business), learn to think on your feet when your first angle doesn't click. And don't expect immediate results. PR takes time. But when it clicks, it's all worthwhile.

© Rickey Gold & Associates, 2006.

Rickey Gold & Associates is a small, hands-on marketing communications firm. They craft marketing messages that turn prospects into clients. Visit them online at:

www.rickeygold.com

rg@rickeygold.com

773.348.4973.