

The Public Relations Book

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



by Ashley Wirthlin

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hi! My name is Ashley. I am the author of Public Relations Blogger and coordinator of the Public Relations Specialist (PRS) program, among a few others at BusinessTraining.com. 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 on how to utilize the tools available to you. Please consider completing our public relations training program, it is a self-paced 100% online training program and designation that you can complete online from anywhere in the world: <http://businessstraining.com/Public-Relations-Certification.html>

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 EEPS'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 its 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.

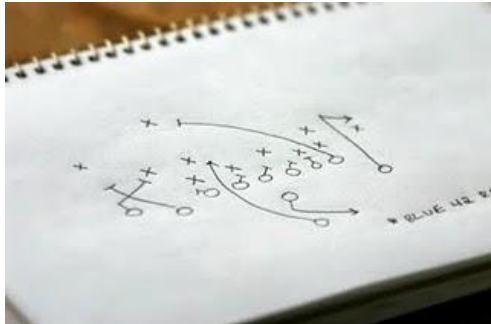
1. **Know your company's or client's current situation.** This is essential to knowing where the company now stands, where the company is able to go, what the company's market/industry looks like, and what direction the company is headed. This helps to put things in perspective.
2. **Know your resources.** 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](#))

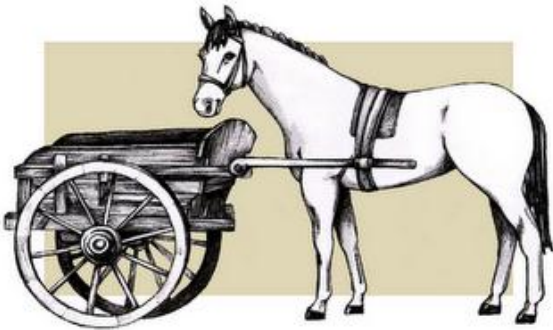
Tactic: *noun* a device for accomplishing an end. ([Source](#))

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



yourself.

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

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.

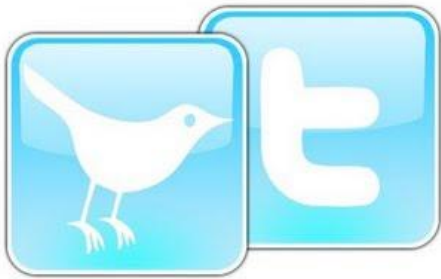
Here are a few things to consider when launching a social networking PR plan:

- 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 you 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 Tweepers, 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.

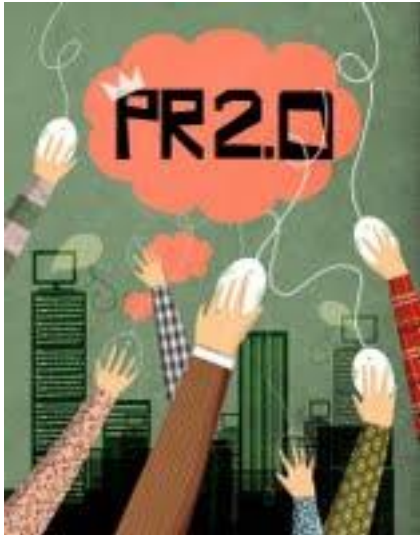
A social networking site to utilize your real life network connections from business and education, LinkedIn allows you to can connect with classmates, professors, coworkers, employees, and employers. This is a great tool to utilize your networks already in place, and to increase the size of those networks 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 preceding 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.

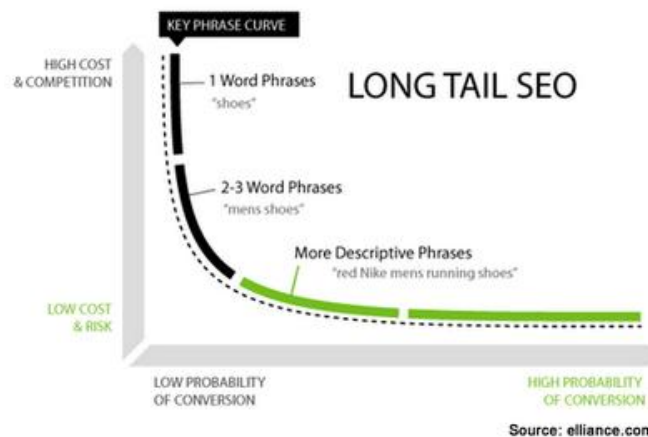
Rostin Reagor Smith goes on to elaborate on SEM and why it is so critical: "Search engine marketing blends SEO, pay-per-click advertising, and social media strategies to give your company a higher level of visibility within the search engines' listings. But, visibility without sales is useless. And therein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

PR TIPS: DIY PUBLIC RELATIONS

5 DIY Public Relations Projects



Public Relations can be a scary thing to take on if you've never done any. Whether you are an experienced PR pro, or if you've just begun getting your feet wet, these following tips can help you do public relations yourself, instead of hiring a PR firm/agency.

- 1.) **Spread the word.** You'll need help from others, especially in the online world. You need to position yourself as a credible resource for information as well as an industry professional who knows what they're talking about. Being personable and 'real' can greatly attribute to the success of your PR efforts. The word can be spread with a press release, commenting on forums, getting involved offline, and/or having a website.
- 2.) **Start a blog.** (Another way to spread the word.) The stigma that blogs carried a few years ago is slowly dissipating. Blogs used to be places where teenagers could rant and rave about their daily tragedies. No longer! Blogs are essentially a website that allows for creative writing and a more personal touch to the information being written. A blog can open doors, inviting consumers to come in and get to know you. The great thing about blogs is that they are easy to manage and personalize. With websites teeming with templates, you can create a blog that really relays who you are (or who you think you are), and there is little to no maintenance needed. You don't have to be a whiz at HTML or CSS, unless you want something even more personalized. Some companies have started blogs, and made that their only website. Other bloggers or professionals online can even pick up your blog, spreading what you have to say around the Internet.
- 3.) **Start a Podcast/Videocast.** What a great way to reach readers (now listeners and viewers)! A podcast is simply an audio file you record with any information you wish to share with others, while a is a video file. These two forms of media have evolved from the combination of radio, television, and the Internet. If you get a lot of emails with questions regarding your expertise, why not make a podcast, reading some of these emails and answering them? It is a quick way to reach thousands of listeners, providing information that may be of use. For some information on how to create your own podcast, visit About's how-to.
- 4.) **Read.** This will keep you up-to-date. Read other blogs, read news, read 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 you 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.

If you would like to take your public relations knowledge and abilities to the next level please explore our BusinessTraining.com platform and specifically our [Public Relations Specialist \(PRS\)](#) program.

This is a 100% online, self-paced public relations training and certification program that you can take in combination with 2-3 other niche marketing and sales programs on our platform: <http://businesstraining.com/Public-Relations-Certification.html>