



## Old-Fashioned PR Legwork for High Tech Marketers

By Julie Gross Gelfand, Vice President & Director of Public Relations HLD/Blankman Public Relations

Creating buzz, making the phone ring, cultivating demand and ultimately driving sales for your product is the goal of a good publicity campaign. And successful publicity placement is all about knowing who you are trying to reach and why.

### Choose Targets Wisely

In choosing your publicity targets, aim for the media vehicles most often used by your customers and prospects. Research can direct you to print titles, Web sites, TV networks and radio stations in the competitive sets that are most used by your target audience. Create and maintain a media database with contact information, areas of expertise, history of relationship and other information that may be valuable in developing and maintaining a good working relationship.

The best way to develop "A" lists is to know the media you are pitching. Review editorial calendars to know what topics will be covered and when so you can pitch editors with relevant information. Read the print titles regularly, watch news programs you'd like to cover your story and visit Web sites for which you think your story is a good fit. Flag stories by journalists who cover your niche and keep a "hit parade" file. Visit their Web sites-most offer listings with names of staff that cover certain areas. You can also contact the advertising departments to request media kits that contain sample issues and DVDs as well as demographic breakdowns of the readership.

Once you've developed your hit list, it's time to contact the right editor, beat reporter or columnist. Pitch the highest-ranking vehicles used by your target customers first, especially for exclusives. Publications usually have dozens of copy contributors, so getting in touch with the right person will save time and increase the odds that your story will be covered. Media databases that provide comprehensive online directories as well as the capability to build and maintain customized lists also are a good way to build your resources and target appropriate vehicles.

### Build Relationships

Reporters are most likely to respond to people they know give good leads. Building relationships with the press can take time and persistence, but the results pay off. Be consistent in demonstrating that you are reliable and credible by providing solid story leads that pan out-that means keeping track of all your sources and leveraging your technical specialty to provide accurate, current information and access to experts for comment and analysis.

Remember, the press is bombarded with publicity pitches all the time. Save your calls for truly



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newsworthy stories; it will help build your credibility so that when press contacts hear from you, they'll know it is for something worthwhile.

### Have a Killer Pitch

Since reporters and editors are swamped with emails, the good old telephone can be more effective for making initial contact. A phone pitch should be pegged to a current news development or trend, or reflective of something the journalist has recently reported. For example, "*I saw your piece in the current issue and have some new information that can help you stay on top of the story,*" or "*Everyone knows that ABC company is doing XYZ, but did you know that...?*" are good openers.

If you're pitching a new product or service, try to avoid golden nugget words like "unique" or "breakthrough." These are red flags for reporters. Focus instead on the key attributes or functionality of your brainchild, "*XYZ Sheds New Light on Industry Problem...*" is a better approach for your voice mail message.

### Create Your Own News

Creating your own news can be fodder for a good pitch. For example, if you're launching a new gaming product, consider staging a competition in an unusual or fun setting. The visual may attract television coverage, and the viral marketing will help drive sales.

If your company is exhibiting at a trade show, get press kits into the press room and reach out in advance to schedule booth-side interviews with your executives and media trained product managers, or to meet with spokespeople in your company's press suite. Try to arrange interviews with your customers whenever possible-reporters like to speak with end users.

Demos are a great way to attract attention. Virtual product tours are received well, but are not always a substitute for taking your show on the road to meet with journalists in their offices. And a full-blown publicity tour creates buzz and gets your product or service out there for the media to pick up.

When you want press coverage, knowing your audience, finding the best channels to reach them and delivering your story with a punch is a time-tested formula for success. There's nothing like seeing your name on a magazine cover or watching a news story about your product-the next big thing.

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