

Navigating Public Relations in the Digital Age

How to Develop a PR Strategy
to Increase Brand Visibility



BRANDING + DIGITAL MARKETING + WEB + PUBLIC RELATIONS + SEO + DESIGN + PRINTING

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What Is Public Relations?

Public Relations is the practice of disseminating information about your brand or spokesperson to the public to raise awareness, build credibility and maintain a positive reputation.

PR practitioners employ a variety of techniques and processes to successfully maintain a brand's reputation and achieve coveted third-party credibility through media relations, crisis and reputation management, digital and online public relations, thought leadership and more.

Why is Public Relations Important for Your Brand?

A comprehensive, strategic public relations plan can help your organization gain credibility and build momentum. As part of a larger digital marketing strategy, public relations is key to amplifying your brand's message, key spokespeople and company news. It helps you to build trust with your target audience and stand out from your competitors. Continually invest in public relations, and you invest in the longevity of your brand's presence, image and reputation.

Public Relations is...



A strategic public relations campaign often utilizes multiple PR approaches to achieve your company's goals. From issuing company press releases for inclusion in business publications to pitching your spokesperson to a podcast, the PR world is constantly evolving alongside our media consumption habits. As the media landscape changes, so too does the practice of public relations.

Public Relations Strategy: Crafting a Vision for Brand Success

A PR strategy should align with the organization's goals and values. It's not just about pushing out content or securing media hits; it's about crafting a narrative that resonates, gaining the right kind of visibility, and engaging with your audience in meaningful ways. A robust PR strategy will leverage a mix of media relations, digital presence, community engagement, and crisis preparedness to construct a comprehensive approach that connects with broader marketing and business objectives. By strategically employing the right tactics at the right time, brands can navigate the complex media environment, adapt to the evolving digital landscape, and build a relationship of trust and loyalty with their audience.



Understanding the Media Landscape

How we consume news is ever-changing. In the past two decades, nearly one-third of newspapers in the United States have closed up shop. Conversely:

- There are 600 million blogs worldwide
- 5 million podcasts are available at our fingertips
- The digital newspaper and magazine industry is projected to reach a revenue of more than \$40 billion
- Nearly half of U.S. adults get their news from social media

With the rise of digital media and endless sources of readily available content, we produce and consume content faster than ever. In the competitive buzz of this digital age, standing out from the crowd requires a strategic approach.

Testing the newsworthiness of your story or message is crucial for any business or organization striving to make an impact. Whether you're reaching out to journalists, freelancers, podcast hosts or bloggers, your story must be worth telling. A few ways to measure if it is news or not include:

Relevance — Does your story resonate with the public? Media are more likely to notice if your story connects with a broader audience or is significant to a particular demographic.

Timeliness — The news cycle spins fast. Sharing an outdated story is as good as no news!

Uniqueness — Does your story offer a new angle or touch on an overlooked issue? The more unique your narrative is, the more likely it is to garner attention.

Impact — Stories that alter the status quo hold greater weight. Ask yourself if your news has substantial consequences or changes for its audience. Maybe you even know someone with a great story, and they are willing to share it with the media.

Human Interest — We are human, so it isn't far-fetched that we love stories that make us feel something. If your message pulls at the heartstrings or inspires, you might have a story worth sharing.

If your message or story is newsworthy, you should proceed. However, the job isn't over yet. Now, it's time to determine how you will strategically position your message for maximum impact.

Earned Media & Media Relations

Earned media can take various forms, such as live TV coverage of your event, a feature article on your CEO or your press release making it into a local business publication. Earned media is content written or produced about you or your organization from a third-party source you did not pay for. As such, it's extremely important in building your brand's credibility and influencing public perception. However, it's also important to remember that PR is a long game — to see results, you need to be continually dedicating resources towards strategic PR.

So, how do you land media coverage? There are a variety of methods to effectively share your story with the media and secure your spot in today's news cycle.

Issuing a Press Release or Media Alert

A **press release** is an official statement from your company that provides information or responds to a particular situation. It is a high-level, objective document that captures your company's news clearly and succinctly. All press releases should:

- Follow style guidelines. We follow AP Style guidelines.
- Include links (where applicable) to your company's website pages, partners, stakeholders, LinkedIn profile(s), relevant stats/studies, etc.
- Include a boilerplate paragraph about the company that gives a high-level overview of the company's story, mission, vision and values.
- Include the contact information of the person handling media outreach.
- Include the date and location of the news being shared (often where your company is located or where the news is originating from).
- Include quotes from relevant stakeholders (such as company spokespeople) that build onto the news you are sharing and align with your messaging.

Press Release

DO'S AND DON'TS

| | |
|---|--|
| ✓ Write clearly and concisely | ✗ Use jargon, acronyms, or slang |
| ✓ Assess the topic's newsworthiness | ✗ Write and send a press release simply to do so |
| ✓ Send to a specific, target audience | ✗ Send to every news outlet you can think of |
| ✓ Announce relevant, timely news with an objective tone | ✗ Use a press release for promotional purposes |
| ✓ Include expert quotes that enhance the story | ✗ Forget to include links, a boilerplate, and photos |

Pro tip: For maximum exposure, a press release should be issued on the newswire — an online service that allows you to post press releases to the public that subscribing journalists and outlets can access. Newswires increase visibility and enhance your company's online presence, but most are paid platforms. Press releases should also be added to your company's news or media webpage, which is a great resource for reporters and stakeholders alike to learn more about your organization.

A **media alert** is another piece of content most often used to secure in-person coverage of your upcoming event. A media alert captures the logistics of your event (who, what, when, where and why) and what a reporter can expect to learn by covering your event.

Press releases and media alerts should also be pitched to a targeted list of relevant reporters and outlets for larger features, interviews or in-person coverage, if applicable. Depending on their news, a company could issue both a press release and a media alert.

Building a Comprehensive Media List

To increase your chances of the media taking notice of your news, you must identify the best contacts to pitch to. You may have a great story, but pitch to the wrong contacts, and it may never see the light of day. Plus, you could miss your chance to build great media relationships!

Building a media list can only be done through thorough research. Whether it's using a free search engine or paying for a more robust service (popular platforms include MuckRack, Cision and Meltwater), here are a few tips for creating custom media lists that increase your chances of securing coverage:

- Research recent articles the journalist or outlet has covered. If they closely align with the news you want to share, chances are they are a good fit!
- Research the "beat" (area of subject matter) that the reporter covers. Frequently, reporters will have this information on their social media. X and LinkedIn are good platforms to check for this!
- Review the reporter or outlet's social media to get a better feel for the kind of news that interests them and for the writer's or publication's tone.

If you want to take a hands-off approach, partner with 1905 New Media and have our PR team use their experience and tools to craft media lists and leverage our established media relationships.

Best Practices for Building Relationships with the Media

Before you hit the ground running, it's important to remember there are a few key principles that good PR professionals follow when reaching out to the media. Remember, journalists are not obligated to cover your story. Help make their jobs easier (and your story is more likely to be covered) by:

- **Providing all relevant information upfront.** Don't make a reporter hunt down key pieces of your story, like where an event is taking place or your spokesperson's bio.
- **Sending multimedia.** This can include having images, videos, and other relevant multimedia in your original outreach.
- **Being personable.** Remember, you are emailing a real person with deadlines and other assignments, just like you!
- **Personalizing your pitch.** Do your research and get to know the contact you are pitching so you can find commonalities or reference their previous work before you pitch your news.
- **Following up—when appropriate.** Be intentional about how many times you follow up with a reporter after sending your initial pitch. You don't want to end up on a spam or blocked list! But don't be afraid to get on the phone to reach reporters. They might not be available, but leave a voicemail when appropriate.
- **Being available.** If a reporter gets back to you and says that they would love to interview you but can only make today work, be flexible. If you aren't available, there's a chance they will look for another source quickly because they are on a deadline.

Pitching Content for Publication

A press release isn't the only form of content the media are interested in. Pitching thought leadership articles, op-eds or other types of long-form content can help secure your place in an online magazine, newspaper or other form of digital media.

If you have too many content ideas to count, consider creating a content calendar. This way, you can be held accountable for upcoming deliverables and align other team members on topics and story ideas. Your well of content will never run dry with a robust, up-to-date content calendar.

Pro tip: When pitching content to publications, remember that most outlets these days have strict contributor guidelines and only accept exclusive content. Do your due diligence by reading their guidelines and crafting content accordingly. Also, try to find who reviews submissions so you can personalize your outreach.

Securing Press Interviews

Don't have any newsworthy content in the bank? No problem. You can still pitch your spokespeople for interviews on topics they are experts on. First, identify your relevant reporters and then create a compelling pitch that conveys why they should interview your spokesperson and what they will learn.

Pro tip: This is a great time to send a press kit so reporters can access company information and learn more about your organization.

Great news! You landed an interview with a reporter...now what? If you have a PR professional on your team, they will make sure you are ready for your interview. However, there are also some basic tips and tricks for knocking it out of the park:

- Help the reporter out** - Your interviewer wants to create good content, so help them. Answer questions thoroughly. If asked a yes or no question, elaborate. Avoid saying "yes" or "no" as a response. Help lead the reporter with great information and your messages their readers would find interesting.
- Key messages** - Take time to review key messages and talking points before the interview, but don't worry about memorization. Use your own voice to communicate information and make your responses conversational rather than canned.
- Arrive early** - Plan to arrive (or log on) well before your scheduled interview to allow time to get settled.
- Relax and connect** - Make eye contact with the interviewer and speak to them as if you are having a conversation with a friend. Smile and use natural hand gestures. Have fun with it.

Pro tip: The reporter is the ultimate architect of the story. Be aware that they may ask questions you aren't anticipating. Be comfortable enough with your subject matter to pivot and guide back to your messages.

While being proactive with media outreach is a no-brainer, resources are available for being *reactive*. Platforms such as Qwoted or Connectively (formerly HARO) allow reporters to post "source requests" or stories they are working on that require either an interview or content from an expert source. Scan these platforms often to see what opportunities may be available to you.

Crisis Communications & Reputation Management

In today's world, no industry is safe from experiencing a crisis. From small family businesses to major corporations, having a crisis communication response in place can safeguard your organization's reputation and help maintain trust with your stakeholders, customers and the general public. Not having a plan can harm your organization's future longevity and public perception.

While any organization can experience a crisis, companies in the following industries should have an emergency communications plan in place:

- Healthcare/Pharmaceutical
- Energy and Utilities
- Food and Beverage
- Transportation/Travel
- Internet Services
- Financial Services
- Technology
- Retail

Managing your reputation in times of crisis isn't just a smart PR approach—it's a smart business practice. Team members who know what to do when a crisis happens, how to respond and who to speak with can make important decisions on behalf of the company with confidence. They can act and respond quickly, making all the difference in an emergency, especially if it involves public safety.

If you don't have an internal communications team, it's important to find and partner with a vendor who can work with you and your team to develop a customized communications plan tailored to your specific industry and organization. Team members should be trained on using the crisis communication plan and walk through a number of scenarios they could encounter. Along with executive-level team members, legal and other internal stakeholders, your social media, marketing and web teams should be aware of current and ongoing crises so you can work together to keep consistent messaging across all channels.

Regardless of the industry, a thorough crisis communications should:

- Define your crisis communications team. Keep this up-to-date regardless of internal changes.
- Define everyone's responsibilities in the event of a crisis.
- Include a list of possible scenarios your team may encounter.
- Include a checklist your team can follow for each scenario.
- Provide templated messaging that your team can plug and play for each scenario. Get these statements approved by leadership and your legal team.

Pro tip: Managing your perception with the public is an organizational effort that requires time and effort and should be continually updated throughout the year as you encounter new challenges and situations. Investing the resources into a crisis communications plan *BEFORE* encountering a crisis is investing in your team and the organization's future.

Event & Conference PR

Public relations takes many forms. Conferences and company events are more than just networking and sales opportunities—they offer a chance to enhance your brand's visibility and position your spokespeople as experts in their industry.

Events can be excellent avenues for forming lasting business connections, and they allow your spokespeople to share their expertise and message with key audiences in your industry. Some conferences may even film or record your speech, so you walk away with great content that can be repurposed for other speaking proposal submissions and marketing materials.

A speaker's bureau program helps identify and submit your company's leaders to conferences, panels, breakout sessions, industry events and more. To streamline the process, create a comprehensive grid outlining conference and event information such as dates, submission deadlines, themes, audiences, and proposal requirements. This ensures all opportunities are thoroughly evaluated and prioritized based on strategic alignment with the company's goals and the potential visibility for its leaders.

You can (and should) pitch these conferences and company events to the media for in-person coverage or as a hook for a larger story. Events are great ways to get face-time with reporters and writers. Make sure you ask for a media list from conferences so you can research the reporters before attending the conference.

Pre-Event Media Engagement: Engaging media before the event through pre-event interviews with your speakers or issuing press releases can create buzz and anticipation. This draws attention to your participation and positions your brand as an active industry participant.

Pro tip: Prepare media kits for reporters that include your press releases, a company backgrounder, leadership bios, high-resolution images, and contact information. These kits make it easier for journalists to cover your story accurately and comprehensively.

Post-Event Follow-Up: Following the conference, maintain the momentum by following up with contacts and media personnel. Send thank-you notes, press package recaps of your participation, or answers to follow-up questions. This fosters relationships and enhances the likelihood of continued media coverage.

Whether holding a local business event or attending a larger national conference, be sure people know about it—conduct media outreach, post a teaser on social media or make an announcement in your company's newsletter.

Submitting for Awards

Ever wonder how some companies seem to rack up all the awards? Chances are they have a dedicated PR professional who constantly scans for upcoming awards and regularly submits their company and spokespeople for them.

Winning awards for your company has a variety of benefits, including:

- Building credibility and trust
- Boosting employee morale and loyalty
- Standing out from the competition
- Helping attract top talent

Many organizations that award these designations also publish their own content, from social media posts to newsletters, which leads to additional exposure and publicity for your organization. Awards can even help boost company revenue—according to the Best Business Awards, small businesses that won awards saw a 63% increase in income and a 39% growth in sales.

A strategic approach to submitting for industry awards can be a fantastic way to highlight your organization's accomplishments and help build its reputation. Create an awards program by:

- Identifying Relevant Awards** - To identify awards that resonate with your brand, start by researching relevant industry awards, subscribing to newsletters, and engaging in professional networks. Check out what awards competitors are winning.
- Preparing Your Submission** - Begin by collating your company's key successes, project outcomes, and unique selling points. Weave these elements into a narrative that tells your company's story and aligns with the values and expectations of the awarding body. Remember, it's all in the storytelling.

- Understanding the Criteria** - Carefully dissect the award criteria. Each award will have its benchmarks for excellence, so customize your submission to mirror these requirements. Address each criterion carefully to ensure your application is comprehensive and compelling.
- Timeline and Deadlines** - Map out an annual awards calendar to keep track of submission windows and deadlines.
- Budget Considerations** - Know award submission fees and budget these costs well in advance. Also, if attending the award ceremony, allocate funds for travel and accommodation to ensure you make the most of the event.
- Following Up** - In cases where it's advised, follow up post-submission to confirm receipt and express your eagerness to participate. If your entry wasn't successful, don't hesitate to seek feedback. It's a chance to refine future applications and gain valuable insights into the awarding body's expectations.
- Leveraging Networking Opportunities** - Awards events are hotspots for networking. Attending these ceremonies, whether you win or participate, opens doors to networking with industry peers and thought leaders – creating opportunities for growth, collaboration, and partnerships.

When your organization wins an award, maximize your win by posting it on social media, adding it to an appropriate page on your website and announcing it in your newsletter. You can even add a link in your email signature and purchase a plaque for your office.

Winning awards amplify your brand's visibility and reinforce its credibility. The process of submitting for these awards also provides valuable content that can be transformed into case studies for your website and sales presentations. Fundamentally, maintaining an awards strategy ensures a continuous and updated portfolio of successful work and outcomes, keeping your achievements at the forefront of your communications strategy.

Internal Communications

Internal communications are a foundational pillar within an organization. They regulate the flow of information among team members and ensure everyone is aligned with the company's core values and message. This internal outreach is about transmitting information and creating an environment where employees feel informed, engaged, and driven.

What is Internal Communications?

Internal communications encompass all the organization's methods and channels for sharing information with its employees. This includes emails, intranets, newsletters, meetings, tools and any platform that supports the distribution of messages from the leadership team to the staff and vice versa. Internal communication serves as a conduit for dialogue within the organization, facilitating a two-way exchange that encourages feedback.

Why It's Important

Without effective internal communications, companies risk creating an environment of uncertainty and disconnection, directly impacting employee morale and productivity. Here's why HR or PR professionals must oversee an organization's internal communications strategy:

- **Inform:** Keeping every team member up-to-date with key developments, changes, and events within the organization ensures that employees understand their roles and how they contribute to the company's broader goals.
- **Engage:** An informed employee is an engaged one. Asking for feedback and making regular updates make employees feel involved and valued, enhancing job satisfaction and loyalty.
- **Motivate:** Sharing successes and recognizing achievements through internal communications boosts morale. It motivates employees by showing them the impact of their work on the organization's success.
- **Align:** Continuously reinforcing the company's values, mission, and strategic goals ensures that every employee, regardless of position or location, is working towards the same vision. This alignment is crucial for maintaining a cohesive corporate culture.

Internal communications are more than just an operational requirement; they are the backbone of an organization's culture and employee relationships. By effectively implementing internal communications strategies, companies can foster a workplace where information flows freely, feedback is encouraged, and every team member is aligned with the company's values and voice.

This strategic effort elevates the employee experience and paves the way for higher productivity, employee retention, and overall organizational success. Engaging in open and effective internal communications is not merely an investment in the workforce; it's an investment in the company's future.

Thought Leadership

A thought leader is an individual or organization recognized in their field for their expertise and authority. Thought leaders are sought after for their unique perspectives, expert commentary, and insights, whether by the media, conference organizers, or podcast hosts. A strategic thought leadership campaign captures and amplifies this unique perspective, thus boosting your thought leader's presence and brand visibility and establishing your authority as an expert. It can even spur meaningful conversations among key stakeholders in your industry and drive change.

So, how does one become a thought leader? There are many avenues a thought leadership PR campaign can take (many of which we have already covered in this booklet!), including:

- Speaking at industry conferences and events
- Pitching thought leadership articles to targeted media outlets, bylined by your spokesperson. These articles cover a specific topic and seek to inform and inspire readers
- Pitching your spokesperson for media interviews and content opportunities
- Posting thought-provoking commentary for social media followers, especially on LinkedIn, and engaging with other users on topics of interest
- Paying to join a content contributor platform where you can submit written content on a regular schedule
- Submitting op-eds to local or national news outlets
- Recommending your spokesperson to be a guest on podcasts of interest
- Regularly monitoring for source requests by reporters

Have something unique to share with your industry but need help getting in front of the right people? That's where a comprehensive PR thought leadership campaign can be impactful by driving awareness and educating topics related to an area of expertise.

Leverage the Results of Your PR Campaign

***Congratulations!** You followed some helpful tips in this PR booklet, and your organization achieved media coverage. However, it doesn't end there. We recommend leveraging your media coverage:*

- **Share the media hit to social media**, tagging the reporter who covered your story and the outlet they write for. Thank them for their time and for letting you share your message. Encourage team members to like and share the post for increased exposure.
- **Include the media hit in your next newsletter** with a direct link to the story. The organization's network will be able to see the great things happening!
- **Publish a link to the story on your company's website.** This is a great way for customers, investors and even reporters to get a glimpse into the work being done.
- **Add it to your sales brochures, pitch decks and investor presentations.** Third-party credibility is crucial to these audiences.

Remember, effective public relations never "ends." Make sure your media coverage goes the distance!

Incorporating PR into your Marketing Strategy

Incorporating public relations into an organization's marketing strategy isn't just about racking up media hits—it's about building trust, authority, and a lasting connection with its key audiences over time.

PR should never operate within a silo. Your public relations campaigns should align with other marketing initiatives to ensure a consistent brand message across all platforms. Also, cross-functional collaboration is key: Pair PR placement with paid advertising for wider reach, use creative and web teams to produce compelling press materials and leverage social media to share PR achievements.

A successful PR strategy integrates smoothly with the wider marketing plan, contributing to a stronger and more visible brand. Any PR activity should support and enhance the marketing goals, creating a cohesive message that resonates with the target audience and effectively promotes the brand.

Let's Elevate Your Brand Together

Are you ready to amplify your organization's brand voice, establish authority, and forge lasting connections with your audience? At 1905 New Media, we're experts in blending the art of public relations with comprehensive marketing strategies to help your brand stand out.

Whether you're looking to integrate PR seamlessly into your existing marketing efforts or starting from scratch, our team is here to guide your organization. We offer tailored solutions that align with your goals and boost your brand's presence across both traditional and digital platforms.

Don't miss out on the opportunity to transform your brand's narrative and connect with your key audiences like never before. Let's create impactful stories that resonate with your audience and pave the way for your business's success. Contact us today to start your journey towards a more influential brand presence.

Have a Project?

We can't wait to hear about it!

Give us a call or send us
an email to get started.

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