

Lollipop PR Library: Telling your PR Story

PR is five times more effective, on a space comparison basis, than advertising. Think about it – do you spend any time reading or watching adverts, or are you more likely to skip over them to get to a piece that's of real interest to you?

The new products or celebrity stories you read about are about 90% the results of PR people. So how can you get the media to write about you?

Make it newsworthy

- Whenever a journalist reads your PR material, they will be wondering whether their audience is going to be interested in it.
- If your copy is boring, self-promoting with no relevant news value – you've wasted your time.
- What are you doing that reflects something else in the news, presents one side of a debate, is linked to a seasonal idea (Christmas, summer holidays etc)

Write like a journalist

- The more like a news article your copy is, the less work for the journalist and the more likely you are to get included. Journalists are hard pressed for time and if they need to fill some space with content – the one that is interesting AND well written is going to the top of the queue.
- Understand what a journalist wants and give it to them. For example:
 - Provide quotes in your press releases.
 - Commission someone to take pictures of your event or news story that is a good photographer (start by asking a newspaper picture desk for recommendations).
 - Sell whole 'package' - pad out the story by thinking about pictures and interviewees.

Be creative!

- Borrow other people's ideas!
- Start a 'good ideas box'. Keep copies of great print materials, cut out good photos from local papers, list things that other organisations have done successfully to raise their profile. Once every six months hold a creative brainstorm. Check out websites of PR companies who work for the kind of business you run – and think about if you can try the kind of stuff they're up to.

Press releases

- Press releases are the staple diet of many PR professionals and a small business really needs to be getting issuing at least one press release every month.
- Press release headlines should be informative - they should tell the recipient what this story is all about. Catch the journalist's attention. The headline and first paragraph of your news release are the most important parts. Concentrate on what is news and put it at the top.
- Use short words, sentences and paragraphs and keep the release itself short – 1-2 pages. Consider using a copywriter or PR to do this for you. They are not that expensive!
- Use images in your release that tell the story for you – and that you could imagine appearing in your target publication. For local papers a great image is critical!
- Your reasons for sending out a press release could include:
 - Business launch
 - New or enhanced product/ service
 - New contracts/ orders
 - Personnel Changes
 - Picture Story
 - Events
 - New Venture
 - Survey of customers

Format and style

- Use A4 letterhead and an agreed format, double-spacing or one-and-a-half line spacing, all on one page, or two at the most. 'News release' and date in large print at the top.
First paragraph - It is absolutely vital that this is short, to the point and newsworthy. It must clearly state the 'five W's': who, what, where, when and why (in any order). This paragraph must be able to stand on its own as a concise piece of information
Second paragraph - This should provide the next piece of information: either more details about the above, or new information.
Third paragraph / additional paragraphs - always include a quote if you can. This paragraph could be a quote from someone involved who is willing to talk to the press if necessary.

Building your media and social media list

- Decide where you would like to see yourself / your products and services appearing. Start building up a database of the names and addresses of these media. A good place to start would be any relevant trade, professional, or national press that you receive. Build in your social media library too – key bloggers, Twitter contacts, influencers.
- Check this website out: **www.mediauk.com** a free resource for building your media list.

Summing you up

- Don't forget to add a standard This is Us or Notes to Editors paragraph, right at the end of the press release. This gives a thumbnail sketch of your organisation. It'll tell them what you do; when you were founded; how big you are (turnover, number of staff); where you operate; recent developments, and anything else of this nature that you feel is relevant. You can then use this paragraph at the end of each of your press releases.

Contact details

- Your name, title, telephone number and home or mobile phone should be included in clear, bold print at the bottom of the document. Provide a contact number for when you are out of the office. This can make the difference between your story being covered or not

Building relationships with the media

- On balance, it is more important to have a good story to tell, than lots of well established media contacts to tell it to. However, time spent cultivating a select group of key contacts will pay handsome dividends. Keep trying different approaches and ideas - but above all, keep communicating!

A range of free PR guides are available at www.lollipop-pr.com in the Free Stuff section!

Emma Beck, Lollipop PR Ltd

M: 07932 763 015

E: emma@lollipop-pr.com

T: @lollipopprlady