



Public Relations (PR) is one of the most powerful and under-utilized tools available to Concrete Promoters. Learn more about PR, and how it can help you build markets, in this fast-paced tutorial, assembled from articles saved in the WRMCA Marketing Archives.

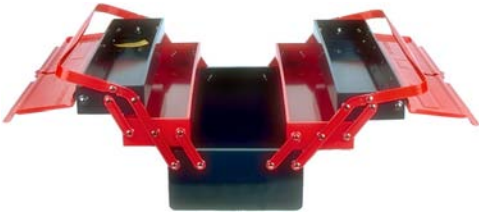
[Next Page](#) | [Table of Contents](#)



TABLE OF CONTENTS

For readers using Acrobat Reader 5.0 or later, page navigation links are activated for section titles and page designations. For readers using earlier versions of Acrobat Reader (AR), please click on your AR Bookmarks Tab for document navigation shortcuts.

Introduction	pages 3 - 4
Successful PR	pages 5 - 7
Press Release Tips	pages 8 - 11
How to Talk to the Media	pages 12 - 14
Use Op Eds To Advance Your PR Program	pages 15 - 16
Managing a Media Crisis	pages 17 - 18
PR First/Ads to Remind	pages 19 - 20
Dominate the Media	pages 21 - 22
The “Product” Called PR	pages 23 - 24
Your Positioning Statement	pages 25 - 26
Of Course Small Companies Can Do PR	page 27



INTRODUCTION

Tools for your PR Toolkit include:

- Press Releases
- Pictures
- Press Kits
- Press Room Section on Web Site
- Press Conferences
- Industry Fact Sheets
- Company Fact Sheets
- Company History
- Bios of Company Principals
- Conferences/Seminars
- Demonstrations
- Sponsorships/Donations
- Events/Celebrations/Fundraisers
- Stakeholder Newsletters and eZines
- Interviews
- Talking/Discussion Points
- Position Papers
- Letters to the Editor
- Press Release
- Editorials/Op Ed Pieces
- eMail
- Contests
- Corporate Web Log (Blog)
- Personal Blog
- Corporate Podcasts
- Personal Podcasts
- Corporate Flyers & Brochures
- Corporate Videos/DVDs
- Speeches/Presentations
- Bylined Articles
- White Papers
- Books (including eBooks)
- Annual Reports
- Book Reviews
- Chat Room Postings
- Community Service
- Corporate Apparel
- Trucks
- Plant/PitTours
- Entrance to Your Operations
- Image Advertising
- Customer Testimonials
- Awards
- Corporate Greeting Cards, and
- Holiday Gifts, to name a few.

What is Public Relations (PR)?

Public Relations is one of the most powerful – and least used – marketing tools available to Concrete Promoters. Defined as free communications about your company or industry, generated from your actions, PR can include articles carried by newspapers, newsletters magazines and web sites; reports on radio, TV, web logs, or podcasts; or information shared in formal or informal networks by word-of-mouth or word-of-mouse.

PR Benefits ...

- Free (almost)
- Believable and remembered
- Helps to establish an identity for your company or industry
- Positions your company as an authority
- Provides exposure to a large number of people
- Has decades of staying power through reprints, posters, ads, displays, web archives etc.

PR Drawbacks ...

- You have no control over the resulting editorial content
- You have no control over when (if) a story you pitch will be run.

PR vs. Advertising ...

PR is the best choice for Concrete Promoters because it: provides wide, but targeted exposure for minimal investment – far less than the cost of advertising; allows Concrete Promoters to tell their story in greater depth than is possible with ads; has third-party credibility and is trusted more than advertising; and is ideal for local 24-hour local news shows and the Internet, which feed on original content.

Match Made in Media Heaven ...

News about construction is especially interesting to media gatekeepers, because – based in part on the success of *This Old House*, *Hometime*, and *HGTV* – the gatekeepers believe every media consumer is a “sidewalk superintendent.” Since concrete placement is one of the first visually-interesting activities on a job site, print, television, and web-based media outlets are especially open to PR advances from Concrete Promoters.

Contacting the Media

Create a list of the newspapers, radio and television stations in your area, along with mailing addresses and telephone numbers. Call each media outlet to determine the editors or reporters to whom you should send information about your company’s activities. Verify the spelling of

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)



INTRODUCTION

continued from page 3

names and ask about deadlines. Also ask how they want to receive information, such as by mail, e-mail or fax.

Also, the Wisconsin Ready Mixed Concrete Association subscribes to the *All Wisconsin Media Directory* – a comprehensive listing of Wisconsin media outlets (and contacts) grouped by media (newspapers, radio, TV/ cable, and magazines) and city – and shares this resource as a free service for WRMCA members. To tap into the directory, contact Promotion Director Cherish Schwenn:

1.800.242.6298 | <mailto:cschwenn@wrmca.com>.

In general, ready-mix industry information for media should be sent to the following:

- the General Assignment Editor at trade publications and at small daily or weekly newspapers.
- Business Editor, Residential Real Estate Reporter, Commercial Real Estate Reporter, or Architectural Reporter at large daily newspapers.
- News director at radio and television stations.

Don't Get Discouraged ...

It is important to recognize not every story idea you pitch will be published or broadcast. So do not get discouraged when your public relations efforts are not used by the media. Instead, continue to look for good stories and angles that make stories about your company and/or ready-mixed concrete newsworthy.

Public Relations Resources

Additional PR resources for Concrete Promoters include:

Books ...

- *Guerrilla Publicity*. Jay Conrad Levinson, Rick Frishman, and Jill Lublin. Published by Adams Media Corporation, 2002
- *The Fall of Advertising and the Rise of PR*. Al Ries and Laura Ries. Harper Business Publications, 2002.

Online...

- Joan Stewart's *The Publicity Hound* web site – <http://www.publicityhound.com>
- Bill Stoller's *Publicity Insider* web site – <http://www.publicityinsider.com>

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)



SUCCESSFUL PR

by Jerry Fireman | Nov. 29, 2005

It's All About Understanding the Media

Public relations can be cost effective because the media – rather than the marketer – takes on the expense of delivering the information to the intended recipient. So instead of sending a direct mail piece to 100,000 prospects, the marketer can publish an article in a magazine that is delivered to these same prospects at the much lower cost of creating the article and convincing the publication to run it.

Obviously, many companies that have products to sell compete for the limited space in these media outlets. Those that are able to obtain more than their share of this valuable real estate have a tremendous competitive advantage, and sometimes a decisive advantage if competitors are closely matched in other areas.

Just as understanding the requirements of your market is important in selling a product or service, understanding the needs of the relevant media is critical in a successful public relations effort.

[Reliance on Contributed Material ...](#)

The most important differentiating factor among media is the amount of editorial matter they generate themselves versus that which is contributed by outside experts. Typically, publications that target a very large audience (newspapers, national business publications and the largest trade journals) generate

most of all of their own editorial material.

For example, the editorial staff of *Information Week*, which covers the entire enterprise information technology industry, creates nearly the entire magazine. The critical factor in success in working with such publications is your ability to keep in close contact with the editors and generate topics of interest for them to write about. The best way to reach these publications and stay in contact with them is to either hire a full time marketing person with successful public relations experience or to outsource your public relations function to a consultant PR agency.

On the other hand, the vast majority of trade journals specialize in narrower fields that do not generate enough circulation or advertising revenue to support a large editorial staff. These publications by necessity rely on outside companies to provide a large proportion of their editorial material.

Although these publications are willing to publish material submitted by interested parties, they are typically highly selective regarding the type of material they publish. So, success is determined, first and foremost, by your ability to produce often quite technical yet clearly written articles. Another important success factor is to stay

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)

SUCCESSFUL PR

(continued from page 5)

in touch with the publications to determine what subjects they are interested in at that particular time.

Reliance on in-House Editorial ...

These publications and online media require a different mix of public relations efforts. Conventional public relations agencies typically do not have the necessary skills to reach them, because they often lack the technical writing skills that are most in demand by these publications.

Another drawback of traditional public relations agencies is that they typically require a substantial retainer (often ranging into five figures per month) for a substantial period of commitment. This retainer limits the flexibility of the marketer in responding to ebbs and flows in the public relations workload.

Several other types of public relations suppliers have stepped in to fill this void. One type is freelancers, with technical knowledge in a specific industry. Often former magazine editors, they can provide knowledge in producing articles in a specific technological area. Freelancers, on the other hand, are typically individual operators who handle only the writing and not the associated tasks of working with editors to place the articles, working with information sources on approvals, obtaining illustrations and so on.

Another option is the emergence of a new breed of project-oriented public relations provider that combines technical expertise in providing contributed articles in a range of technical fields, along with a staff that can fulfill the ancillary tasks required to bring an article to publication. Project-based agencies are typically paid only for work completed, such as an article written. They often charge only for success in their placement efforts.

Matching Material to Outlet ...

The next step is to look at the mix of contributed articles that you are producing.

There are two major types of contributed articles: Case histories, also known as success stories or customer stories, feature a real customer talking about how your product solved a real problem; thought-leadership articles, also known as bylined articles or sometimes white papers, appear under the name of your company's executives and technical staff.

Most technical publications publish both types, but each publication has its own specific editorial mix. For example, some publications focus the great majority of their editorial coverage on either case histories or thought-leadership articles. Other publications write most of their own thought-leadership articles but publish many externally written case histories.

To get the best and fastest placements for your articles, it's important to know the editorial mix of the publications that you are targeting. For example, several of the leading publications in the chemical industry — *Chemical Engineering*, *Chemical Engineering Progress*, and *Hydrocarbon Processing*—use many externally written thought-leadership articles but no externally written case studies. On the other hand, *Chemical Processing*, another leading publication in this field, accepts many externally written case histories. Knowing these distinctions is important in choosing among various article topics.

Product Publicity Opportunities ...

It's also important to stay on top of opportunities in product publicity, which typically requires less-specialized technical writing skills. In-house staff members, even those who do not specialize in public relations, often write these releases. Public relations agencies, freelance writers and project-based agencies write them, too.

Most print and online publications are short-staffed and first priority is given to feature articles, so there is very little time left for editing product announcements. Thus, first priority is generally given to announcements that have been written in such a way that they can fit right into the publication, with little or no editing. An equally effective

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)

SUCCESSFUL PR

(continued from page 6)

way of increasing the publication rate is to unobtrusively follow up with key editors to be sure that they received the release, to otherwise bring it to their attention and to ensure they have all the information they need and so on.

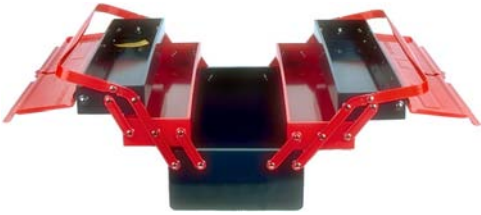
Public relations offers the most credibility and best bang for the buck of any marketing communications vehicle. For just that reason, there's a huge amount of competition to get space in media that reach major buyers.

To maximize your return on your public relations investment, be sure that your effort fits the operating practices of the media you are trying to reach.

Jerry Fireman is the president of Structured Information, a company that provides project-basis marketing communications services.

- e-mail - mail to: jerry_fireman@strucinfo.com
- web site - <http://www.strucinfo.com>

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)



PRESS RELEASE TIPS

Adapted From Postings on PRweb.com

- [Press Release Content Tips](#)
- [Tips for Press Release Formatting](#)
- [Press Release Template](#)
- [Sample WRMCA Press Release](#)

The following information is designed assist you when writing a news release for distribution to media representatives in Wisconsin and Michigan's UP.

A well-crafted press release captures the attention of journalists and is optimized for distribution by fax or "snail mail," over the Internet, through e-mail, and over specialized, online network feeds.

Press Release Content Tips

Content refers to the news story you are telling. Keep the following points in mind when writing your press release.

Is Your News "Newsworthy"?

The purpose of a press release is to inform the world of your news item. Do not use your press release to try and make a sale. A good press release answers all of the "W" questions (who, what, where, when and why), providing the media with useful information about your organization, product, service or event. If you read your press release and it reads like an advertisement, rewrite it.

Start Strong ...

Your headline and first paragraph should tell the story. The rest of your press release should provide the detail. You have a matter of seconds to grab your reader's attention. Do not blow it with a weak opening.

Write for the Media ...

On occasion media outlets, especially online media, will pick up your press release and run it in their publications with little or no modification to what you send. More commonly, journalists will use your press release as a springboard for a larger feature story. In either case, try to develop a story as you would like to

have it told. Even if your news is not reprinted verbatim, it may provide an acceptable amount of exposure.

Not Everything is News ...

Your excitement about something does not necessarily mean that you have a newsworthy story. Think about your audience. Will someone else find your story interesting? This is a common problem. Let's assume that you have just spent a lot of effort to launch a new online store. Announcing your company's opening is always an exciting time for any business, but the last thing the media wants to write about is another online store. This is old news and uninteresting. Instead, focus on the features of your online shopping experience, unique products and services. Answer the question? Why should anyone care? (Avoid clichés such as "customers save money" or "great customer service".) Focus on the aspects of your news item that truly set you apart from everyone else.

Does Your Press Release Illustrate?

Use real life examples about how your company or organization solved a problem. Identify the problem and identify why your solution is the right solution. Give examples of how your service or product fulfills needs or satisfies desires. What benefits can be expected? Use real life examples to powerfully communicate the benefits of using your product or service.

If you are reporting on a corporate milestone make sure that you attribute your success or failures to one or more events. If your company has experienced significant growth, tell the world what you did right. Show the cause and effect.

Stick to the Facts ...

Tell the truth. Avoid fluff and exaggerations. If you

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)

PRESS RELEASE TIPS

(continued from page 8)

Adapted From Postings on PRweb.com

feel that your press release contains embellishments perhaps it would be a good idea to set your press release aside until you have more exciting news to share. Journalists are naturally skeptical. If your story sounds too good to be true, you are probably hurting your own credibility. Even if it is true, you may want to tone it down a bit.

Pick an Angle ...

Try to make your press release timely. Tie your news to current events or social issues if possible. Make sure that your story has a good hook

Use Active, Not Passive, Voice ...

Verbs in the active voice bring your press release to life. Rather than writing “entered into a partnership” use “partnered” instead. Do not be afraid to use strong verbs as well. For example, “The committee exhibited severe hostility over the incident” reads better if changed to “The committee was enraged over the incident.” Writing in this manner helps guarantee your press release will be read.

Economics of Words ...

Use only enough words to tell your story. Avoid using unnecessary adjectives, flowery language, or redundant expressions such as “added bonus” or “first time ever.” If you can tell your story with fewer words, do it. Wordiness distracts from your story. Keep it concise. Make each word count.

Beware of Jargon ...

While a limited amount of jargon will be required if your goal is to optimize your news release for online search engines, the best way to communicate your news is to speak plainly, using ordinary language. Jargon is language specific to certain professions or groups and is not appropriate for general readership. Avoid such terms as “capacity planning techniques” “extrapolate” and “prioritized evaluative procedures”.

Avoid Hype ...

The exclamation point (!) is your enemy. There is no better way to destroy your credibility than to include a bunch of hype. If you must use an exclamation point, use one. Never do this!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Get Permission ...

Companies are very protective about their reputation. Be sure that you have written permission before including information or quotes from employees or affiliates of other companies or organizations. Any dispute resolution will favor the other company, meaning that your press release may get pulled.

About Your Company ...

Your press release should end with a short paragraph (company boilerplate) that describes your company, products, service and a short company history. If you are filing a joint press release include a boilerplate for both companies.

Formatting Your Press Release

How you present your news is just as important as its content. Some of these suggestions are specific to online distribution services.

Mixed Case ...

NEVER SUBMIT A PRESS RELEASE IN ALL UPPER CASE LETTERS. This is very bad form. Even if your release makes it past an editor (highly unlikely) it will definitely be ignored by journalists. Instead, use mixed case.

Correct Grammar Usage ...

Always follow rules of grammar and style. Errors in grammar and style affect your credibility.

Excessive errors will cause your press release to be rejected by most media editors.

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)

PRESS RELEASE TIPS

(continued from page 9)

Adapted From Postings on PRweb.com

No HTML ...

Never embed HTML or other markup languages in your press release. Your press release will be distributed over a wide array of networks. Including such formatting will negatively impact the readability of your press release.

More than One Paragraph ...

It is nearly impossible to tell your story in a few sentences. If you do not have more than a few sentences chances are you do not have a newsworthy item

Word Processor ...

Write your press release on a word processor instead of composing online. Writing online will not achieve best results. Take time to do it right. Write, print, proofread. Rewrite, edit...

Do Not Include Your e-mail Address in the Body Copy ...

Do not include your e-mail address in the body of your press release. Online network feeds have a special place during the submission process for you to include your e-mail address. If you include your e-mail address in the body of your press release you run the risk of receiving Spam. This is because your e-mail address will be available to the public. Spiders routinely scour the Internet harvesting e-mail addresses for Spammers. Provide your e-mail address only in the space(s) provided during the submission process.

Ticker Symbols ...

Never include ticker symbols of other companies without their express written permission.

Follow a Standard Press Release Format

Make sure your press release looks like a press release. The following can be used as a template for your press release.

Date:

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Contact Person
XYZ Company
Phone: 555-555-5555
Fax: 555-555-4444
Web Site:
E-mail Address:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Headline - Be creative. One sentence. Use proper title case, capitalizing every word except for the following: of, it, the, a, an, from ...

Lead Paragraph - City - Grab their attention here. A strong introductory paragraph should cover who, what, when, where, why and how.

Body - Put the body of your press release here. Expand on the information provided in your introductory paragraph. Include quotes from key staff, customers or subject matter experts.

The body of your press release should contain more than one paragraph. The final paragraph should restate and summarize the key points of your news release.

Last Paragraph - About XYZ Company
Include a short corporate background, based on your company's value proposition.

XXX (signals the end of your release)

Adapted from information found on PRweb.com

A sample WRMCA press release follows.

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)

PRESS RELEASE TIPS

(continued from page 10)

September 1, 2006

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Cherish Schwenn, Promotion Director
Wisconsin Ready Mixed Concrete Association
Phone: 1.800.242.6298
Fax: 608.250.6306
Web Site: <http://www.wrmca.com>
E-mail Address: <mailto:cschwenn@wrmca.com>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Call for Entries: Construction Projects Sought for 28th Annual Concrete Design Award Competition

Madison – The Wisconsin Ready Mixed Concrete Association has issued a call for entries to the 2006 Concrete Design Awards. The awards are a part of a prestigious program showcasing best uses of ready-mixed concrete in Wisconsin and Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.

The Wisconsin Ready Mixed Concrete Association and the Wisconsin Chapter of ACI International cosponsor the annual award program, now entering its 28th year. A distinguished panel of Wisconsin/UP educators and construction professionals determines award winners.

The award program recognizes excellence in the ready-mixed concrete construction in the following categories: Agricultural, Commercial, Decorative, Education, Healthcare and Public, Environmental Management, ICF Commercial, Industrial, Municipal/Building, Parking Lot, Pervious, Residential, ICF Residential, Site Cast Tilt-Up and “Other” projects.

Award winners benefit from industry recognition, networking opportunities, and free publicity in WRMCA publications and press releases. The Concrete Design Awards provide a great opportunity for members of the Wisconsin/UP construction industry to showcase cutting edge applications in structures such as farms, schools, bridges, public buildings, and residential homes.

Projects that have been completed in 2005 or 2006 are eligible to enter. Engineers, architects, contractors, project owners, developers and producers are encouraged to apply. The ready mixed concrete producer must be a member of the Wisconsin Ready Mixed Concrete Association.

The deadline to enter is December 1. For an entry form or more information, call 800-242-6298.

Based in Madison, the Wisconsin Ready Mixed Concrete Association (WRMCA) represents the producers of ready-mixed concrete in Wisconsin and Michigan’s Upper Peninsula and advances industry interests through legislative action, promotion, and education.

XXX

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)



HOW TO TALK TO THE MEDIA

(Even When You Don't Want To)

Have you watched too many well-meaning interviewees torn to bits on 60 Minutes? Heard your peers reel from being misquoted in the local paper? Do you worry that the media won't "get it" when it comes to the ready-mix industry?

Working with the media is no picnic. When done strategically, however, it has the power to increase your company's visibility, boost your status as an expert in your field and drive business to your door.

Having a strategy in place to get reporters to notice you is only the first step. Once they are interested, you need a system in place to work with them effectively.

1. Do Your Homework

The media is not monolithic: mainstream media reporters have become corporate employees who cover stories that "sell." Trade reporters also have an eye on the bottom line, but the specificity of their field makes them more receptive to industry experts and their pitches. To ensure that your message is clearly understood, speak the language of the media outlet you are targeting.

- **Learn About the Reporter ...**

Your PR counsel should provide you with an overview of that person's body of work, approach and pet peeves. When setting up an interview, don't be afraid to ask whether the reporter is planning to talk to other sources for the story, how much time he or she planned for the interview and what the format will be.

- **Remember Whom You are Trying to Reach ...**

The media is your third-party conduit to your target audiences. Who are they? What do they think of you? What do you need to tell them to affect their thinking in a way that will trigger positive results? View the reporter as a facilitator who can help you get your message across to stakeholders, prospects and clients.

- **Keep Things Simple ...**

The more muddled the message, the more likely it is that the messenger – and as a result, the audiences – will misinterpret it. You need to clearly communicate who you are, what you do and for what purpose. A positioning statement helps you crystallize your key message in succinct, easy-to-remember sentences.

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)



HOW TO TALK TO THE MEDIA

(continued from page 12)

- **Message Your Message ...**

Message delivery is as important as message content, and it is not enough to simply regurgitate your positioning statement. You need to make the message your own, until it becomes the crispest, most effective part of your discourse.

- **Understand the Risks of Media Exposure ...**

While the benefits are obvious (increased exposure, added credibility, your positioning as an expert), the risks—save for the fear of being misquoted—may not be readily apparent. For a start, you must face the potential skeletons in your closet to make sure they'll withstand media scrutiny. Audiences will forgive your mistakes, but they will never trust you again for covering them up.

Sometimes, media exposure is too little, too late. Catching up to negative publicity is an uphill battle, and focusing on doing good instead of fighting a media war may be the best strategy to restore battered reputation.

2. Practice

You should never meet the media without being able to present yourself as a polished interviewee, but you shouldn't be over-rehearsed, either. Finding the right balance is a tedious exercise, but it is crucial to avoid miscommunication. Before any media interview, you must...

- **Know your message and how to deliver it ...**

You have only seconds to articulate your message. Then you must reinforce it as often as you can. You need to practice variants of your “elevator speech” over and over to make sure your message sticks.

- **Go through media training ...**

Even if you have had media training before, you will benefit from timely media refreshers, particularly those that include simulated interviews. Going over interview techniques, including tactics to deal with tough questioning, can greatly influence the outcome of the story.

3. Sharpen Your Presentation Skills

Appearance does matter, nowhere more so than on the small screen. You need to dress in a way that does not shift the focus of the viewer from your message to the way you look.

To be an effective on-screen communicator, you must get rid of any distracting behavior – the use of filler words, exaggerated gestures, or fiddling with various objects.

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)

HOW TO TALK TO THE MEDIA

(continued from page 13)

On screen is not the place to scratch, wipe your eyes or nose, stroke your chin, or chew on a pencil, pen, or the stems of your glasses.

4. Don't Be A Chum, But Be Courteous

Reporters are not your friends, but they are professionals, just like you. Treat them the way you'd like to be treated.

After the story appears, send a quick thank-you note. Don't patronize, threaten or get angry. Remember that this is a mutually beneficial relationship: you gain exposure in return for the reporter's getting the story that he or she was looking for.

If the reporter gets a fact wrong, simply call or write to correct the error. Do not swear him or her off your list. Mistakes happen. Set the record straight, and move on.

5. Evaluate Your Performance

Finally, you must be brutally honest with yourself after each interview. Did you connect with the reporter? Were you on message the whole time? Did you provide enough specific information to make it worth the reporter's time?

"The reporter got it all wrong" is just an easy way out; it is your job to make sure the reporter understands what you are saying. There are very few "off-base" interviews, but plenty of missed opportunities to deliver the message.

USING OP-EDs TO ADVANCE YOUR PR PROGRAMS

Here's an oft-debated subject among writers, journalists, PR practitioners and other pursuers of the trivial: Does "op-ed" refer to "opposite" the "editorial page or is it short for "opinions and editorials"?

Webster's says the former. But here's the important point the debate passes over: Incorporating such articles into your PR program significantly advances your organization's positioning as an expert on specific topics, trends and issues.

Op-ed articles in newspapers or magazines express an opinion and are generally found on the page opposite where editorials are located. It's where columnists' pieces (think George Will or Maureen Dowd) can be found, along with letters to the editor and, in some cases, articles longer than letters that are contributed by experts with timely perspectives or in reaction to news coverage.

Each publication, however, is different in terms of what it publishes. For example, it's very difficult to place a piece in the op-ed pages of major consumer publications like the **New York Times** or mainstream business publications like the **Wall Street Journal**.

The competition is fierce – a lot of people would like to get their names and opinions printed in these widely read newspapers. On the whole, these op-ed contributions respond to a recent article or issue of the day and, generally, are oriented toward politics.

For the vast majority of consumer publications, an op-ed concerning a business issue would have to center on a trend or issue with a high level of public interest, like the Enron and Arthur Andersen scandals.

Professional and trade publications, on the other hand, are often interested in op-ed contributions on topics

generally of interest to the industries they cover. Such submissions to *Brand Week*, *Ad Age* or *Industry Week*, for example, need strong points of view but need not necessarily respond to articles that have appeared on their pages.

Op-ed article development and placement is one of the media strategies we use for one of our consulting firm clients, targeting such publications as *Brand Week*, *Automotive News* and *CMO Magazine*. Authored by partners of the firm, these articles have helped position them as experts on their specialty area – integration of brand; business and marketing strategies – as it relates to a variety of industries.

One such piece placed in *Automotive News*, for instance, provided an overview, from a branding perspective, of why the Oldsmobile line of cars and brand died. The author's strong convictions about the failure helped to solidify his standing as a brand specialist with expertise in the automotive industry.

As a component of a strategic public relations plan, op-eds are probably underutilized. Here are two reasons why:

1. Too many organizations are unwilling to take a stand and commit in writing to a strong point of view. There's a fear of alienating clients or prospective customers, or being too controversial for public tastes.
2. Developing op-eds (as with any initiative revolving around contributed articles) requires substantial research. Each publication has its own spin, a different audience that these articles must speak to and different requirements on everything from length to orientation.

Also, you need to double-check back issues (or query

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)

USING OP-EDs TO ADVANCE YOUR PR PROGRAMS

(continued from page 15)

the publication) to make sure that someone else hasn't already said what you want to say. Some want to see the finished piece; others want to see the idea first. Either way, the articles must be well written, using this sort of intelligence to serve as general guidelines. Even then, whether the article is accepted or not is still subject to the human factor: Your subject matter and approach may or may not appeal to the deciding editor for no logical or obvious reason.

This all combines to require more work to write one op-ed than it does to send out 500 copies of a single press release. That's an important consideration when so many PR practitioners still go by (and are judged by) clip counting versus message quality as a performance measurement.

Our recommended approach for developing an expertise-based PR program incorporating informational articles as well as op-eds is to...

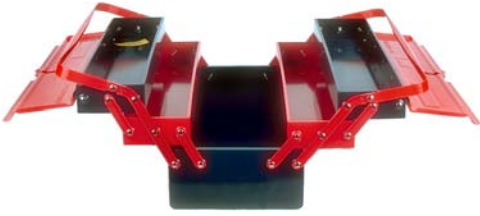
1. Identify and prioritize your key buying audiences and identify which professional and trade publications cater to their interests.
2. Research those publications for their orientation and writing style. These days, most have web sites you can go to, and many include writers' guidelines – whether they accept outside contributions, sections for which they accept them, length of submissions, etc. They also have media kits outlining reader demographics.
3. Prioritize your targeted media markets according to parameters that fit with your objectives, such as percentage of their readers that are your buyers; total circulation; fit between their needs and your messages; and opportunities for contributed articles.
4. Together with your leadership team, or designated spokespersons, identify the trends, issues and concerns that the firm can speak to and which underscore its credibility and expertise. At the same time, determine leaders' comfort with the idea of expressing strong

opinions through op-eds, so that such articles can be phased in. In terms of expectation management, you must stress that self-promotional articles must be avoided if the program is to be successful.

A single op-ed will not change the way you or your organization is viewed overnight. But combined with other related initiatives—from informational or tutorial bylined articles to systematic survey development and dissemination—they are an integral part of an expertise-oriented PR program that will help solidify your firm's standing as an expert in its field.

From Marketing Profs web site

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)



MANAGING A MEDIA CRISIS

by Susan Solomon

Not all marketers wear public relations hats. But even if the public relations professional is just down the hall, it makes sense to work in tandem. Marketers are all about messaging, and so are public relations staff. The difference is that public relations professionals often have to show their mettle during a crisis situation.

Having served on the frontlines as a public relations lead, I can assure you that the 30-second sound bite provided by a spokesperson during a crisis usually evolves from considerable behind-the-scenes strategizing. It's just fast-paced strategizing, and there's rarely a focus group or finely crunched data to back you up.

There's an irony to the situation that's not lost on the public relations person. In the 24/7 media environment, networks and reporters are willing to give your organization that coveted 30 seconds of notoriety for free. In fact, most reporters are just waiting for something to happen or for someone to say anything profound (think of those bored reporters and cameramen from all corners of the world awaiting action at the recent Jack Abramoff lobbying trial).

The only problem is that your organization may not relish having

such visibility at the time that opportunity arises.

Even good public relations people feel anxious when a media barrage occurs—and, granted, it doesn't initially feel like an opportunity to communicate strategic messages.

But it can be done by following some basic rules:

Develop four or five key sound bites.

Provide solid information in your sound bites (remember the 5 Ws from journalism school) and always be literate. Don't sound like a 12-year-old answering parents' questions (e.g., avoid "stuff" and "kinda").

Sound intelligent, and paint images with words. The best and most eloquent quotes are repeated by the media. Consider this line from Nelson Mandela at a recent AIDS concert: "We live in a world where the AIDS pandemic threatens the very fabric of our lives. Yet we spend more money on weapons than on ensuring treatment and support for millions infected by HIV."

You can bet those are the words quoted from the event. Only a few sound bites are necessary. Too many will muddle the message and would be too cumbersome for the spokesperson to remember.

Choose the right spokesperson

Most likely, the right spokesperson isn't the public relations person. Unless the public relations staffer has completely studied the issue and can speak with the authority of someone intimately involved in the situation, choose someone else. The public relations person has a big enough job behind the scenes.

The CEO isn't always the best choice, either, especially in a time of crisis when he or she could become easy media fodder.

The best choice is someone close enough to the top to be believable and a person involved in a well-regarded profession. A chief scientist or, in my line of work, a doctor is always preferable. Make sure whoever you choose is properly trained ... before the cameras roll.

Have more than one spokesperson

In a 24/7 media barrage, one spokesperson can easily burn out, increasing the possibility of mistakes. Get a backup to share the job and make sure he or she is as well trained as your lead person.

A Spanish-speaking spokesperson is also critical, considering the extent of Spanish-language media throughout the United States (not

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)

MANAGING A MEDIA CRISIS

(continued from page 17)

just California and Florida). Don't think you can rely on an English-speaking spokesperson for Spanish or other non-English press. It makes you look unprepared and insensitive to your community.

Become a media news source

This many sound outlandish, but don't be afraid to pitch another story even in the midst of a crisis. Reporters are always looking for stories; and, even if they're focused on the story du jour, they'll remember an interesting pitch. Also, read reporters' blogs. You can find out quite a lot about where their interests lie.

Work together with marketing

There are practical issues that need to be determined, including whether to continue running advertising during a media crisis. More important to your strategy, however, is formulating

communications that are consistent with the messages relayed to the public during calmer times.

This is not to say the spokesperson should repeat branding taglines or quote your commercials. Instead, consider the themes you want carried forward after the crisis subsides. For example, if your brand stresses service excellence and the media is reporting the wrongdoing of an employee, don't ignore the mixed messages. Provide assurances that the matter is being addressed and service excellence will continue.

Last but not least, know that all crises do pass; the media will move on, and once again you'll be challenged to get your organization more visibility. It's all in a day's work for marketing and public relations pros.

Susan Solomon has been in healthcare marketing for more than 20 years. She teaches marketing communications at two Southern California universities. Reach her at SSolomon@memorialcare.org.

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)



PR FIRST; ADS TO REMIND

From the Marketing Profs Web Site

Trying to build your brand with advertising? Don't!

Attempting to convince your target audience of your brand's claims through paid space or time lacks the key ingredient vital to branding success – credibility.

What do you believe: what's reported on the evening television news, or the advertising which precedes and punctuates it?

As customers we're cynical, suspicious, and cautious. We see the majority of advertising as biased, self-serving, and company-oriented rather than consumer-oriented. So we turn to independent, authoritative, third-party sources for recommendations and advice — friends, relatives, neighbors, and the media.

When we've made up our minds, advertising serves as a reminder.

Some business people say they rely on “word of mouth” marketing, leaving that process to its own devices. Others feel the outcome for their bottom line is too important to leave to chance.

In simple terms, public relations applies research, creativity, and planning to assist the third-party brand perception-building process.

PR builds brands

Advertising doesn't build brands. Public relations does. You should use advertising to defend your brand against competitors once it's been built, and its credibility established, through PR.

That is the main conclusion and key piece of advice offered in *The Fall of Advertising and the Rise of PR*, a book by US-based marketing guru Al Ries. Ries, with Jack Trout, wrote *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind*, a long-time marketing classic based on a series of articles the pair wrote in 1972 for “Advertising Age”. In his latest effort, Ries collaborates with daughter and business partner Laura.

How do ad agencies build their brands?

This book is going to upset a lot of people. As they say, “some of my

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)



PR FIRST; ADS TO REMIND

(continued from page 19)

From the Marketing Profs Web Site

best friends” are advertising people, but sorry guys, what Ries has to say needs to be said.

Things like:

- “Advertising has no legitimate role to play in brand building. Advertising’s role is defensive in nature. Advertising can only protect a brand once it’s established.” This is Ries’ central thesis which he illustrates copiously with case studies.
- Advertising agencies often sell advertising to clients on the basis of their own creativity. “Creativity wins awards, but does it also win sales?” asks Ries. He has chapters of evidence to the contrary.
- “Advertising agencies do almost no advertising themselves. Instead, they rely heavily on PR techniques to build their own brands.” True again.
- People tend to judge the value of a discipline by its numbers and ad budgets are invariably bigger than PR budgets. But more money doesn’t necessarily mean more effective.

Ries cites Dell Computer’s advertising/PR budget ratio as typical (\$430 million on advertising last year, \$2 million on PR).

“Yet Dell is a good example of a brand built by PR, not advertising,” he says. “Early on, Dell made sure that computer analysts for all the trade publications received Dell machines for testing.”

“*PC Week’s* rave review of the Turbo, Dell’s first IBM-compatible machine, appeared shortly after the product was introduced in 1985. Almost immediately, the company began selling more than a thousand Turbo machines per month. And the rest is history.”

PR should come first

Perhaps a word of caution is needed, just in case you think I’m anti-advertising.

Like Ries, I believe advertising has its place. It should be a reminder of a perception that has already been established by more credible means. Public relations should come first, establishing perceptions and credibility. To quote Ries: “Brands don’t need ‘creative’ advertising (the brand has already been created in the mind by PR). They do need ‘reminder’ advertising.

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)



DOMINATE THE MEDIA

Public relations should come first, establishing perceptions and credibility for your company and its quality products and services. But advertising also has its place in maintaining and expanding your brand appeal, a reminder of the perceptions already been established through your public relations efforts.

From Roy H. Williams, a true marketing master, and author of the brilliant *Secret Formulas from The Wizard of Ads*, we learn these fascinating and profit-generating methods of getting the most from your ad investments in the media:

- You achieve dominance in a medium by having the greatest share of voice. Share of voice paves the path to share of market.
- You must avoid making the mistake of doing two things halfheartedly when you can do one thing wholeheartedly. If you're going to use a medium, always strive to dominate it.
- If you cannot dominate all of radio, dominate a single station.
- If you cannot dominate a single station, a single day-part of that station.
- If you cannot dominate all of television, dominate a single hour of the day.
- If you cannot dominate a single hour, dominate a single TV show cable channel. When your business has grown, dominate a second and third.
- To schedule a special event on radio, schedule a spot to run just before your event begins, then move backward in time, scheduling one spot per hour until you have run out of ad budget.
- If you can persuade a station program director to let you air two spots per hour, do it.
- To become a household word, you have got to invest in at least 21 radio spots per week per station, from 6:00 a.m. till 7:00 p.m., 52 weeks a year on as many radio stations as you can afford.
- Expect minimal results during the chickening-out period --- the first eight to thirteen weeks. (Ouch!) That is when you give more than you receive, but it is the dues you must pay to succeed.

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)

DOMINATE THE MEDIA

(continued from page 21)

- Got too small a budget and too large a station? Solve that problem by scheduling 21 spots a week, 52 weeks a year, between 7 PM and midnight. You will reach less than half the station's audience, but have dandy repetition to the segment you are reaching.

Williams wants you to know the greatest advertising bargain in America is radio advertising between 7:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.. He also shares that to dominate the media:

- Consider investing in radio on Sundays, one spot an hour, for 13 consecutive hours, 7:00 p.m. till midnight, 52 Sundays in a row. Fewer people listen on Sundays; rates are appropriately lower. Again, you get good repetition among a small but certain segment of the station's audience.
- Don't believe TV viewers are loyal to TV channels. They are loyal to shows but not to channels. Channels do not have specific demographics. Shows do. Most channels have the same kind of audiences. Shows don't.
- Smart way to assure repetition on TV: run spots on the same show over and over again.
- Smart way to get the most from your TV investment: find a placement agency who understands what you are trying to accomplish and will keep your best interest at mind when informing you of new opportunities.

Jay Conrad Levinson

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)



THE “PRODUCT” CALLED PUBLIC RELATIONS

- by Michael
Fishler

There’s a company I encountered the other day that had just won a top 100 slot from a magazine in its space. A press release on its site announced the award—and quoted the company President: “This demonstrates our success as vertical enterprise experts in solving the essential challenges that are of vital nature to our customer’s business.”

OK. You’re the reporter—who-what-where-when-why-how tip-toe—who gets this release. Read it again. Not a Who What Where When or Why in the litter, is there? Just squealing blather with zero news value. Since it doesn’t satisfy the basic requirements of any press item, how could it ever get picked up?

And since, at least in that release, that was the President’s sole “sound bite,” what a complete opportunity waste for the company.

(Remember, this was the company’s own press release. That quotation – massaged, discussed, tweaked, reviewed and authorized – was what they considered their best shot.)

I’m not picking on them at all: they’re not alone. In fact, that’s what you’ll find most everywhere you look—online and offline: who knows, you might have a couple lying around yourself.

Approach This Marketplace Like a Marketer

At issue is not how to write better press releases. The real problem, and what this example is meant to underscore, is that we have failed to understand the

nature of the marketplace we’re dealing with, and we therefore don’t deliver the product it wants. As a result, we’re not achieving the results we expect from that marketplace.

Let’s apply a very basic market framework to the question. Let’s ask/answer 3 fundamental questions:

1. What is the Marketplace?

The marketplace comprises people who succeed by appearing to be experts, or expert chroniclers. They are under stress. They compete hard with other organizations, and with their own colleagues. They have to be smart. And they have to be smart quickly.

Companies are all the time doing just what you’re trying to do in that marketplace: get their attention and generate some coverage. It’s a buyer’s market. If you want them to pay attention to your product, it has to be the right product.

While the content distributed to each differs, the press and analyst communities have much in common. They are in a very competitive business. First to publish – for both the press and the analyst community – wins.

And those reporters and analysts run a risk every time they publish, so their decisions are based on how well they trust the source.

And they are much more likely to publish something that they can cut and paste into an article or column

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)

THE PRODUCT CALLED PR

(continued from page 23)

than something they have to write or retype. Time is everything.

2. What is the Product?

The product is information, the form and content of which is tailored for each customer.

Quality PR is a customization process; it focuses on making sure the business editors only get business news, that your product analysts get white papers only on products they cover. And you focus on delivering the content according to customer specifications: some want e-mail attachments, others want faxes, yet others some other method of delivery.

3. What Value Must the Product Bring to its market?

The core value is efficiency. The least-available personal resource for the entire community is time. And that time is primarily consumed with two things: research and writing – whether it's a weekly column or a commissioned market study.

When you bring something to them, you can either add to their burden or relieve them of some of it. If you want them to print something, they have to trust it: that eliminates research – fact checking, due diligence and so on.

And they have to get it into their story: that's writing. They want to feel confident that they can simply cut and paste from your product – which means that you have to deliver professional material that a professional reporter or analyst can use ... as is.

Good Product Gets Good Value in Return

This is true online and offline. It's not just irrelevant releases that indicate a lack of market sensitivity. I can count on three knuckles the number of concrete industry web sites I've seen that have a targeted area for the reporters and analysts that cover them.

Is there anyone out there who thinks reporters are going to stop what they're doing to come to a Web site and look through press releases – especially those that are weeks and months and years old?

Delivering material in preferred formats can be done immediately – all you have to do is ask what each member wants. Developing a trusted relationship with these communities takes time.

Your success will be measured by the quantity and quality of relationships you establish. When you call your reporters and analysts, do they take, or at least return, the call? Do they call you for interviews, opinion, resources?

It will also, of course, be measurable in the simple increase in press and analyst coverage you get.

I invite you to look at your own press initiative and see how close it comes to this simple framework. Do you know your marketplace, and know how to reach each member of it? Are you continually building trust? Are you delivering only what people need, and only in the way they want it delivered?

Or are you shooting words like rock salt from a shotgun – hoping some of it will stick somewhere but resigning yourself to most of it becoming additional unread content on a Web site?

Michael Fischler is founder and principal coach and consultant of Markitek (markitek.com), which for over a decade has provided marketing consulting and coaching services to companies around the world, from startups and SMEs to giants like Kodak and Pirelli.

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)



VALUE IN YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION

- Denise Shiffman

With all the emphasis these days on getting your message out using PR, blogging, viral marketing, e-mail marketing, online text, image and video advertising, and so on – we often simply forget to focus on how to develop the right message.

Many a company goes to market without having fully defined its customer value proposition. Instead, companies market a nice list of “powerful” benefits (which their competitors most likely state they have too).

For a customer value proposition to be persuasive, it must be distinctive, measurable, defensible, and sustainable. It is critical to define and support the value in such a way that your customers will pay more for your product than the competition’s, or substantially more customers will desire your product over the competition’s. Developing a value proposition is the most difficult and time-consuming of all marketing activities.

That’s probably why so many companies go to market without one. But a value proposition is critical to your company’s success, consistent in your firm’s marketing, public relations, sales, and business

communication activities.

The value proposition sits at the top of the marketing hierarchy, where positioning and messaging should be derived. To develop a strong, defensible value proposition, you will need to get the attention and time of top executives for hours or days. That may sound impossible, but the only way to do this right is to get at the core thinking of the people that define your company. You can do some homework first to shorten meeting time. You can also delegate research and other work that is better done outside of meetings.

Your job is to uncover the core value that your company offers, and which your customers and prospects will want to buy; your job is not to develop a long list of benefits. Because your competitors will have the same list: Isn’t every product easier, faster, cheaper? So how do you differentiate in a way that encourages more customers to buy from you?

The following list of activities is a methodology that can be used to get to the best possible answer:

1. Start with core competencies

Develop a list of the internal

capabilities your company has in developing your services or products. In some cases, your core competency can be internally developed technology you use to deliver your product or service. Do not state a value for a competency your company doesn’t own (for something you outsource, for example). Make a list of the following: what you brought to market first, what you offer as the only provider to the market, and what makes your offering clearly superior to any alternative. You are looking for what makes your company unique. These are good differentiators and will help the process.

2. Study your customers

What problem do you solve for your customer? What problem do they want solved (which no one has fixed yet)? Is there a new trend in any of your key customer segments? If you don’t know what your customers are thinking, you must do the research.

3. Turn competencies into values

Using your customers’ language, redefine your core competencies as values. In other words, translate a technological advantage into a customer stated advantage. List proof points for each.

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)

VALUE IN YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION

(continued from page 25)

4. Study the competition

Choose only the top three or four competitors in your industry and look at the language they use to market their company and products. Determine what their value proposition is and whether you believe they can defend it (with proprietary technology, patents, monopoly market share, etc.). On a chart, map out their core competencies versus yours so that differentiation or sameness becomes apparent. It is worthwhile to highlight any area where the market believes your competitor has an advantage but you now have parity. You will make a point of this to your customers to level the playing field.

5. Track trends in your industry

Is your industry old or new? Are things changing? Can you take advantage of a trend to get out in front and grab an exciting position in the market?

6. Articulate your vision

Where will the company be in 3 years, 5 years, 10 years? The value proposition must align with your long-term strategy.

7. Identify one (1) core value

Prioritize your core values. Determine which one of the top 3 values differentiates you from the competition. What is the one thing about you the customer should remember when she/he is ready to buy? List the proof points and how you can defend this position in the

market. Decide whether you're willing to put the lion share of marketing dollars behind it to build your reputation in the market for that value. Remember, you can't be everything to everybody. Focus on one core value (or two at the most).

8. Build a value chain

Determine whether you can support your top value across every part of the company, from product design to your channels for delivery to your process for support. Make sure to identify areas in your company where you are weak, where you may break the value chain. Commit to beef up that area to support the value.

9. Create your value proposition

You should develop a value proposition statement that everyone can use as the starting point for developing sales, positioning, or marketing for products or services. If you can, back up your assertion by documenting what the customer saves or earns by choosing you.

10. Test the value

Test the final value proposition with customers to see whether it resonates.

As you go through this process, continually ask yourself these questions:

- Are you being honest, or are you using wishful thinking when you list your core values?

- Can you defend the value? What are the proof points?
- Can you quantify the value to your customers?

Don't be afraid to segment your audience. Most companies big or small want to go after the whole pie. If you are more likely to have quick success in a clearly defined market, then start there. If your value is strong, it will likely apply to a broader market over time.

Finally, watch the market, track your competitors, and listen to your customers. If you can no longer defend your value proposition, it's time to review, adapt, adjust, or start over in order to stay ahead of the curve.

Denise Shiffman owns the marketing consulting firm Venture Essentials and publishes The Marketing411, a marketing and career blog targeted to young professionals.

[Next Page](#) | [Return to Table of Contents](#)



OF COURSE SMALL COMPANIES CAN DO PR

by Kevin J. Clancy and Robert S. Shulman

By investing a little energy and initiative, public relations can help take the business of any WRMCA member company to a higher level.

And, you do not need a PR specialist on staff or the services of an outside PR consultant to support your company's PR efforts, though there may be times when outsourcing your public relations efforts makes sense.

PR can be as simple as a ready-mix producer picking up the telephone, calling the editor of the local newspaper, and saying: "I think we have something your readers may be interested in."

Explain to the editor what your company has done that is newsworthy and ask the editor two additional questions:

- "Is this something the paper would be interested in covering?"
- "What can our company do to help make covering the story easier?"

Every newspaper reporter, every magazine editor, and every local television and radio newsperson needs local stories (no stories ... no publications or broadcasts). Your company's accomplishments are real local news, and your local news outlets will welcome the opportunity to share your success with their audiences.

Generating favorable press can be as simple as picking up the phone.

Adapted from Clancy and Shulman's book, **Marketing Myths that Are Killing Business**

[Return to Table of Contents](#)