

Media Relations on the Internet

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I. Journalists

- A. The web is often a journalist's starting point in working on a story.
- B. On deadline, need answers fast.
- C. Too busy to search for information.
- D. Easily grow impatient with poorly organized websites.
- E. Free-lancers may have slow connections.
- F. May not have latest plug-ins, such as Flash, PDF, etc.

II. Your Website

- A. Clear "news" or "media" or "newsroom" button on home page. "Contact" button on all pages.
 - 1. Provides alternate pathways for information
 - 2. Support for press conferences/media campaigns
- B. Media contacts
 - 1. Name, area of responsibility
 - 2. Phone number, e-mail address(es)
 - 3. After-hours procedure
- C. Press Releases
 - 1. Should contain date posted.
 - 2. No outdated material, unless marked as archive.
 - 3. Well organized, understandable page titles or summaries.
 - 4. Product information.
- D. Fact Sheet(s)
 - 1. Check freshness monthly.
 - 2. Organizational history.
 - 3. Investor Relations information.
- E. Images
 - 1. Photos (lo and hi resolution).
 - a) Executives
 - b) Products
 - 2. Downloadable logos (color and b/w).
- F. Multimedia
 - 1. Advertising
 - 2. Executive speeches
 - 3. Press conferences
 - 4. Product demos
 - 5. Video News Releases
- G. Coordination
 - 1. Post release on website as it is being released to media.
 - 2. Make news announcements on home page.
 - 3. Include web links in printed releases.

III. Your Procedures

A. Relationships

1. Always ask reporter for e-mail and website info. Be sure to ask for their unpublished e-mail address.
2. Keep track of reporters' preferences for e-mail and/or telephone contact.
3. Make sure your e-mail and website info is on your business cards and all printed materials.

B. Pitching

1. Use e-mail and telephone in conjunction with each other. Often, phone pitches wind-up with "let me e-mail more information to you." Also, a phone call can follow-up an e-mail with "I sent you an e-mail yesterday about my organization."
2. Send all e-mail in plain text format, no attachments. Put headings in ALL CAPS, or use dashes or asterisks to set off subheadings or bullet points. Headings can be a little longer than in non-digital releases (the headlines are used by electronic databases).
3. PROOFREAD!!
4. Most important: the subject line. Bad: "News from XYZ Agency." Good: "XYZ Awards \$1.2 Million in Grants."
5. Tight introductory paragraph – respect the reporter's time. Give more details later in the e-mail.
6. Include hyperlinks to more information on your website, such as lengthy studies, photos, etc.
7. Include media contact phone numbers, e-mails, alternate contacts, after-hours procedures.

C. Responding

1. Respond quickly to reporter queries via email, at least to let them know if you can help and by when.
2. Some reporters will only respond to email queries and don't answer the phone.
3. Find out if a reporter can receive documents as attachments.

IV. More information

- A. "Corporate Websites Get a 'D' in PR": <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/20010401.html>
- B. "Want Reporters to Use Your Web Site? Start Thinking Like They Do": <http://www.twna.org/mediasite2.htm>

Jonathan Lehrer is a marketing communications expert, specializing in creation or redesign of Internet sites, strategic planning and message development. His experience includes assignments in telecommunications, healthcare and non-profit organizations.

He worked for many years as vice president of public affairs for the AAA-Chicago Motor Club, where he was the chief media spokesman and editor of the membership magazine, Home & Away. He is currently a board member and webmaster for the Publicity Club of Chicago.

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