[Checklist] Maximize PR for Year-Round Impact Requiring Less Work

Goal: Create procedures, guidelines and scheduling so your PR efforts are an easy and smooth-running machine year-round. If releases are laborious or after-thoughts, your efforts are largely wasted.

Strategic Preparation

Internal PR Point-Person (PPP) selected to coordinate all efforts

Cell phone (possibly dedicated) give to PPP who can answer ~24x7

PPP cell phone # added to site 'Contact Us' as option "For journalists & bloggers only please"

PPP adjusts online bios (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to reflect role

If Public Company, or considering IPO, PPP to obtain written guidelines from Investor Relations

PPP coordinate with affiliate marketing manager to determine procedure to get hot news to affiliates before it hits the general press

Add company spokesperson to ExpertClick or YearBookofExperts to seek interviews

PPC news-hook Campaign pre-planning: PPP to train or pre-plan coordination with PPC manager to quickly and easily promote news-hook driven releases in future

Landing pages: PPP to coordinate/train with IT or web department to be able to post new landing pages for press releases on a dime. (Note: Consider using a WordPress site or marketing automation system that allows non-technical folks to build landing pages on the fly)

Vanity URLs: PPP and IT to determine easy procedure to create vanity URLs on the fly for use with releases

Site Press/News Section: Set one up. PPP to learn content management system to be able to post news on the fly without involving IT

Finding PR Opportunities

Set-up:

Set up Google email account PRbrand@gmail.com and sign it up for keyword-based News Alerts for all your brands' keywords & competitor brand names. Note: do not send email from this account, just troll incoming news seeking ideas for PR-worthy campaigns

Set up Twitter account for PPP's purposes. Follow all relevant Twitters and search hashtags routinely. Use for research and interaction with influencers, not to reach general public

Place annual Potential PR Opportunities Calendar on Intranet & revise at least monthly. Include promos, financial news, launches, possible "data" or stat reports, major conferences, etc. Include at least one item per month

Ongoing Activities:

Note: Bear in mind, the news stories your target market wants to read are about themselves or about news that's directly relevant to their personal passions. They care far less about news on you. Only Wall Street, your competitors, and your C-suite deeply care about your financials. Only your affiliates and your marketing team deeply care about your promotions. During your monthly meeting, consider the following topics:

Newsy-news hooks – Can your brand tap into the power of a news item that's red hot on Google News or Huffington Post?

Human interest news hooks – can you "invent" human interest news stories relevant to your market? Consider the types of stories that are featured on Yahoo's homepage

Stats – Everyone loves stats about themselves. Can you survey your users/target market or review their use of your site to create some target market stats to reveal? Best practice: do an annual stats report

Top 10 – Rankings reports tend to get picked up. Bestsellers, hot items, favorites, most despised, pet peeves, tips, factoids, myths, inspirational items, best, etc.

Your own branded awards & competitions – invent your own for your target market to participate in. PR to gather entries and then PR for winner announcements. Best practice: make it annual

3rd party awards & competitions – create a calendar of awards to enter. Publicize the fact that you are "nominated" (even if you nominated yourself). Publicize any wins

Other: _____

Crafting a Press Release

Set-up:
Create a "sample" press release – before you work on any "real" ones – to run through the process and get format approved prior to your first under live fire. Post the approved sample and any guidelines on the intranet

Ask SEO point person to post on intranet and routinely update keyword list so PPP can refer to the list whenever needed

Specific Release Activities:
Determine keywords to be included/targeted in the release

Craft headline. Consider if you need separately targeted headlines for different niche outlets. Keep headline under 100 characters for most wires

Set up landing page and any vanity URLs

Craft summary if needed (only some wire services offer a summary distribution service). Include link in summary

Write first paragraph. Must include click link and enough details to understand the story without reading further (no meandering or broad intros)

Write remainder of copy. Release must be at least 300 words. Keep keywords to roughly 10% of total text. (More can hurt you.) Include 24x7 cellphone number and named-person's email address

Doublecheck spelling of any partner, personal or brand names. Remarkably most releases contain errors here

Create/select image to accompany release (important to boost clicks on Google News and other online sources). Humans, action shots, not logos. No larger than 80x80 pixels

Get permission from IR or anyone else required on final wording

Distributing a Press Release

Set-up:

Select a distribution service for releases to be sent beyond your internal contacts lists. Service should reach Google News, Yahoo News, and include ability to add a graphic to the release. You only need one service; entirely free services generally do not have worthwhile online reach

Determine wire payment methods. Company card?

Set up internal contact database specifically for PR, blog, Twitter, etc., contacts. Should include tracking of multiple contact types (LinkedIn, Twitter, email, phone, URL). Should include ability to easily add copies of email sent to each contact. (Note: Subscription Site Insider staff have used two low-cost SaaS' for this purpose, HighriseHQ.com and Batchbook.com)

Build press list – journalists and columnists who routinely cover your brand or marketplace

Build Twitter influencer list – influential Twitter users who routinely Tweet about your brand and/.or to your target market. Add to internal CRM for tracking

Build blogger list – bloggers who routinely blog about your brand, your niche or your target marketplace

Build talk-radio, online radio show, and podcast contacts list. Note: Niche radio shows often desperately seek guests and welcome suggestions. Radio PR can be higher impact than print, online, or email because it engages a difference physical sense

Join relevant LinkedIn Groups – PPP joins. Have announcements sent to PR gmail account if possible for easy tracking by others in company

Join relevant Facebook Groups – PPP joins. Have announcements sent to PR gmail account if possible for easy tracking by others in company

Join relevant Yahoo Groups – PPP joins. Have announcements sent to PR gmail account if possible for easy tracking by others in company

Distributing a Press Release, cont.

Specific Release Activities:

Post release on your site

Determine the primary "reach" goal to know how it needs to be distributed:

SEO and Google & Yahoo News – requires wire service

Wall Street – requires specialist wire service, ask Investor Relations

Affiliates – use internal affiliate list, discuss with external partners

Social media – post news on your site on special landing page, and a company blog (if applicable) then contact each social media influencer directly with a personal note & link. If Twitter, include suggested post plus hashtags

Personal outreach: ask key executives to post notes about the news on their own social media accounts

Customer outreach: is the news worthy of sending a special email blast to your customer list?

Niche media – email release (as in-line text) with a brief personal note one-on-one to each journalist and/or blogger

Results Measurement

Set-up:

Ask analytics department to report on traffic relevant to releases, including SEO keywords, traffic from social media, and traffic to specific release landing pages

Track "pick-ups" for each news via your PPP Gmail account (use your own URL and brand name as keywords) and PPP Twitter account (search for relevant terms and then count tweets)