

Social Media & Public Relations

Tips to Build Reporter Relationships & Grow Brand Awareness



Before: Do Your Homework

You only get one reputation, so ensure you know the space before you act.

1. Follow the media outlets **AND** reporters' social media channels. Work with your PR contact to help build a list if you need; most media databases now include all social handles for outlets and reporters.
2. Another way to find the reporters for an outlet is to look at the publication's main Twitter account or for some their Instagram account, especially broadcast. Many will have a List that showcases their on-staff reporters and editors. The other area to find potential contacts is the outlet's website and under About Us or Staff lists.
3. Just as with all individuals, some are more active on social media than others. Spend some time looking at that target reporter/editor's social feed; if they are not actively sharing daily and interacting on social, assume email and phone are the best ways to reach the reporter when you have a story idea.
4. Watch what they post and think about how you can add value. Watch what types of graphics or visual content they use or formats that appear frequently.
5. Every now and then outlets and reporters post queries on social media for sources and submissions on different ideas. Watch and reply if so.
6. Like, share and/or comment on posts that are relevant to your subject matter. For your share or comment text consider a takeaway point, your perspective, an additional idea to build on, etc.
7. In addition to watching their online coverage, for trade/industry press many outlets publish an "editorial calendar" or "media kit" that lists the future months focus area so you can pre-plan for outreach. You can usually find this detail on the website under Advertising.
8. Ensure you have just one "owner" of this approach in your company.

During: Create a Game Plan

The advent of the internet and social media has forever changed the media game. Most individuals now get all their news online only, with many using social media as the primary channel so media outlets think online first. Content is available (and expected to be refreshed) 24/7/365 and at the same time media outlets have fewer on-staff writers and editors, so the need to “feed the beast” with fresh, relevant, timely content is more present today than ever before.

1. Identify what you have that is “newsworthy” to share **AND** who from your organization would be the person quoted or interviewed. Think of both evergreen topics as well as where you could support a breaking news or time-sensitive topic.
2. Ensure you have a point of view and perspective. Can you support that with facts, stats, anecdotes, examples, etc.? Help make the reporter/editor’s job easier and pre-package other interview sources, background materials, etc.
3. Think visual impact. Do you have photos, charts, infographics, videos, stats or other items that are quickly visible and scannable that could provide value for a content piece a reporter may like. If you are going to promote a specific person in your organization to be interviewed, ensure you have a professional, high-resolution headshot photo to provide if requested. Ensure that you have copyright permission to share the visual content and let the reporter know – they all care about intellectual property protection. Provide the source credit, as appropriate.
4. Before you reach out to a media outlet with a pitch or news release, make sure that your official spokesperson is available that day and the following two days. You lose face quickly if you get a reporter’s attention and then can’t produce your interviewee that same day.
5. Ask yourself: Is it relevant to the outlet’s readers/viewers? Is it timely? Are you qualified to comment on this topic? And, do you have something interesting to say?

Time is of the essence for breaking-news formats. For example,

- A craft brewery could reply to coverage/offer to be a source on the recent Beer-To-Go legislation that just passed the Texas legislature.
- A lawyer can comment on recent law enforcement items and court cases.
- A staffing firm, HR person, economist could comment on the local impact for company relocations, layoffs, unemployment numbers.
- A consumer product company could look at ties for seasonal stories for gift guides, holidays, trends.

During: Make the Ask

Once you know what you can talk about, it's time to understand HOW to reach the reporter or editor successfully.

1. If the topic is breaking news related, reach out via direct email to the reporter if you have that detail. If not, send a DM (direct message via social media) with your quick details about what value you add as a source for that story.
2. If it's a developing story that will be updated over a day(s), consider DM as the social media folks at the outlets are actively monitoring those channels for these topics. They especially are active on Twitter.
3. If the topic is more evergreen, reach out via direct email first and give 2-4 days for the reply. Reporters also love the ability to have an "exclusive" for the first release of a story. If you offer an exclusive for the reporter/outlet, it's helpful to provide a deadline request for them to confirm so that if they are not interested, you can move on to another outlet.
4. Be short in your pitch...think social media short. You want to share your perspective as efficiently as possible and mention any supporting graphics, videos, introductions, etc. that you can make to help the reporter. Editors and reporters get easily 200+ inbound emails daily so help your pitch stand out.
5. Consider the Subject Line for your email so that you can pique interest. Think about positioning it as a news headline might read.
6. For daily news formats, many reporters prefer email and DM for follow-up versus a phone call. If you do phone, always after you introduce yourself, ask the editor or reporter, "Is this a good time? Are you on deadline?" This helps to schedule a call for a future time. For longer format/trade publications, after email first, phone is often a good step as they tend to have more flexibility in their days.
7. Reporters start their days early to plan out writing that day. It's best to reach them via email between 6 – 9 AM when they are checking their emails and planning their days. For broadcast and daily news, most stations have production planning meetings around 8-9 AM and then again around 2-3 PM. For daily news most will turn a story in about 3-4 hours. For industry media outlets, most reporters have longer lead times and work on content over a few weeks or even months.
8. And, if the reporter or outlet has just covered a story on a certain topic, they won't repeat it again soon. It's old news. You can reply via email and comment on that you liked the story and want to offer up a resource for them when it's time to revisit that topic in the future. Then include a short detail on who/what you have to offer for them to keep in their files.

SOCIAL MEDIA & PUBLIC RELATIONS

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After: Share the Love

Just like with your social media engagement and metric goals for your organization, media outlets and reporters also measure their engagement. They actively watch what topics secured the most interest and engagement and use as a guide for evaluating future stories.

And, they also are keen on engagement and sharing as so much of their revenue models have moved to online advertising formats. Be a good partner to share the love.

1. Once you know that coverage will be coming, ask the reporter what the anticipated publication timing is. Then, be proactive to monitor and watch for coverage on your own. Set up a Google Alert notice for your company or individual. Subscribe to a media clip service that will alert you. Do not expect the reporter will have time to share the article when posted as they are busy on the next story.
2. When the coverage appears, like the post and comment with a thank you for the opportunity.
3. Share the post (or article on the outlet's website) on your company's social channels. If a significant feature, consider making this a pinned post on your own channel.
4. Forward the link to coverage to your leadership to like and share in their networks.
5. Feature the coverage on your website in your "News" section and include in any email newsletter you may do with your clients and prospects to share your thought leadership and provide more visibility for that article or story.
6. Thank the reporter directly for the time and coverage as well as that you would be happy to chat on other topics in future, etc. (This is best via direct email though you can use DM as well and even publicly thank in the comment section of the outlet's post and tag the reporter.)

Have Questions? Need Help? We'd love to chat about your organization and how increase your brand awareness and social engagement with PR. Just visit www.mpdventures.com, call 214-744-6188, or DM [@MPDVentures](https://twitter.com/MPDVentures).

This tip sheet was created by [Paige Dawson](#) of [MPD Ventures Company](#) as a follow-up to her panel discussion for [Social Media Breakfast Dallas](#) on how social media has changed public relations, held June 2019. She presented alongside [Dom Difurio](#) of [The Dallas Morning News](#) and [Eline de Bruijn](#) of [NBC DFW](#).