

More Than Ever Before,
Research and Targeting are
Essential in Building Media
Relationships and Getting
the Best Results



A Cision Executive White Paper
When In Doubt, DON'T Send It Out

Quick tips for *targeting* the media.



WHEN IN DOUBT, DON'T SEND IT OUT

Ask most PR professionals to describe their job and they'll probably answer, "We help create awareness, influence public attitudes and, hopefully, change behavior." Or many might say, "We help improve our organization's or client's corporate reputation."

But ask a journalist what a good PR person does, and you will likely hear: "They understand what I do, and help me do it better."

Yet one aspect of the professional communicator's job description that rarely gets mentioned is how absolutely essential targeting the correct media – and, in turn, the correct audiences – is to a successful campaign and a positive relationship with the press.

While most PR professionals understand this basic principle of media relations, many would say they don't always have time to research or target as effectively as they should and take more of a "when in doubt, send the release" perspective.

But if there is one key message you should take away from this paper, it is this: *"When in doubt, do NOT send the release!"*

Spamming Causes Short- and Long-Term Damage

Many editors, bloggers, freelancers and analysts are frustrated by generic – and often irrelevant – email pitches. Complaints about PR people "spamming" them with one-size-fits-all emails flared up in the 2009 blogosphere, and some "A-list" bloggers even threatened to "blacklist" offenders.

Still, some PR people are not aware of the damage this type of indiscriminate and impersonal communication causes to their industry, their organization or client, and their personal reputations. If you – a person tasked with helping journalists do their jobs better and faster – cannot quickly and clearly articulate why the story you are proposing is important to a journalist's specific audience, *don't make the call, don't send the email, and don't send the release.*

First and foremost, PR professionals serve as matchmakers between organizational messages, the media, and their audiences. Targeting the right outlet and appropriate reporter is essential to successfully reaching the desired audience.

By failing to correctly target the media and reporters with story ideas that are a good match, you could damage or destroy your chance of receiving any coverage. Worse, you potentially harm your long-term reputation with those media outlets. Your chance of building a relationship with their editors and reporters becomes far more challenging.

On the other hand, when you take the time to research the right reporters and provide the correct information, it's much more likely you'll achieve the coverage you desire and nurture a rewarding, long-term relationship with a key journalist.

With that in mind, the goal of this paper is to emphasize traditional tactics of targeting and why it is so important to rethink and reinforce the basics.

Don't Make It a Numbers Game

First of all, what is targeting, and why do so many PR professionals fail to do it well?

Targeting involves researching the best reporters for a particular story using several criteria such as beat, location, writing style, their role at the outlet, their influence in the market they are writing about and, perhaps most important, the target audience.

Ask a PR person why they often skip over this type of research and instead send out the infamous "blast" or "shotgun" emails to hundreds of reporters not appropriate for their story, and you'll hear, "If I contact a lot of people, the chances are better that I'll get more responses," or "I don't have time to research

"It's not about how many editors you've contacted or how many have responded. It's about building a relationship..."

- Leading Technology Editor



everyone's background and beat. It won't hurt to send out more emails rather than less."

While most PR people have improved their efforts to target the media and refrain from an all-out "blast" approach, it still takes place in a more limited form due to the "when in doubt, send" mentality.

But ask journalists the number one reason they do not cover stories that are pitched to them and they say, "Poor targeting." Inadequate targeting does indeed do harm to any PR campaign, and to any attempt at establishing a relationship with a reporter.

"Don't make it a numbers game," advises one leading technology editor. "It's not about how many editors you've contacted or how many have responded. It's about building a relationship with me so that I can trust that you will deliver a great story with the resources I need."

The fact of the matter is that everyone is under more pressure – journalists as well as PR professionals. Both have more work to do with much less time.

Ask journalists how their job has changed and you learn that their resources have shrunk significantly while they are required to file more stories every day. They no longer have copy editors and proofreaders to control the quality of their output.

With inboxes now clogged with hundreds of emails, many reporters say they are spending upwards of three hours a day just reading emails, many of them untargeted and irrelevant to them. They're striving to find ways to be more efficient, but instead they're faced with a backlog of emails and phone calls that impede their ability to do their jobs.

"I have to be highly efficient in order to do my job. If you want to work with me, you need to make me more efficient."

- Leading Trade Media Editor

Many journalists and bloggers have resorted to blacklisting PR people who continue to send them unrelated news even after being asked not to. Any

emails from these PR contacts go straight into the trash, unread.

"The more emails you send to me that are not correctly targeted, the less responsive I can be to one that is," says a leading trade media editor. "PR people need to understand that I have to be highly efficient in order to do my job. If you want to work with me, you need to make me more efficient."

Help Journalists Do Their Jobs

So, what do journalists really want from you? Three words: DO YOUR HOMEWORK. How can you do a better job of targeting that will increase coverage and establish relationships with the right journalists? Here are five ways:

1. Understand Your Target Audience

Before you start compiling lists of outlets or reporters, think about your story and who your target audience is. For example, is the buyer of your product or service a CEO, an entry-level staffer, or a soccer mom? Where do they live and travel? Think about the type of media that will best reach this audience – print, online, TV or radio.

Once you have determined the profile of the audience you want to reach through the media, you can start your media research.

2. Research Your Target Audience

Many PR professionals have access to automated tools that help them dig deep into multiple levels of research, and there are many criteria you can use to search through hundreds of media outlets – beat, location, and format are just a few. If you are using the Cision Media Database, for example, you can search on 2,000 beats including some very specialized beats for a highly targeted search.

Think about where your audience lives, works and travels. Is your current customer base mostly in the Northeast – but your sales team is trying to attract new customers in the Midwest? Do you want to target by city or by designated market areas (DMA)?



If you search the city “Los Angeles” in the Cision database, for example, it will display contacts with a Los Angeles address. A DMA is a broader category that corresponds to a radio market. If you search Los Angeles by DMA, you’ll unearth contacts from a more regional market – including LA proper, Hollywood, Santa Monica, and Orange County.

Next, think about the kind of story you have and the format it requires. Is it breaking news that needs to be covered by 24/7 news outlets? Or is it a longer, feature story that requires more space and attention from its readers? These questions will help you determine which outlets will best tell your story and reach the right audiences.

3. Select the Right Contacts

Once you’ve compiled your list of publications, your next job is to research which journalists to contact. Let’s say you want to search telecommunication reporters and writers using Cision’s media database. Beats are broken down into different categories, so if you search a category like technology, you can drill into the subcategories, including telecommunications. Checking telecommunications will search all of the beats under that sub-category, or you could drill-down even further.

You can also quickly view lists based on beat, outlet or editorial calendar opportunity. For example, opening an outlet or EdCal list in the contacts

screen will allow you to view the contacts associated with outlets or EdCals saved on the list. If you want to target specific outlets in the telecommunications market, you can build a list of those publications in the outlet screen and save it. When you select your essential criteria for individuals, you can find all the contacts that are responsible for a particular EdCal opportunity.

“Take the time to see what I’m covering and what I’m interested in. Take the time to understand the internal structure of the publication, instead of sending the same email to multiple reporters.”

- Leading Online Publication Editor

Some media services, including CisionPoint, provide customized, automatic notification of media changes. When a journalist changes titles or moves to another outlet, you are alerted right away and can make the adjustments to your campaign outreach.

If you have done your homework but still aren’t sure if your information will be relevant to a particular reporter, it’s okay to ask. If your topic may be a little out of a contact’s area of interest, send a quick note saying, “I’m not sure about this, are you interested?” Introducing yourself with a two-line email and asking, “What are your guidelines and what information do you want to receive?” can often elicit a helpful response and open up a dialogue.

“Read up on my blog’s content, follow my Tweets, and then you’ll better understand where I’m coming from.”

- Leading Social Media Blogger

4. Remember, It’s a Conversation

When you know which reporters should be interested in your story, you can approach them. But bear in mind that the old-fashioned PR “pitch” is rapidly going the way of the rotary telephone. Marketing has become a mutually beneficial conversation, and your communication with editors and writers needs to be a constructive dialogue, not a sales call.

Don’t send the same email to all 25 contacts at a publication – something many journalists say happens all of the time. Read their past articles, understand their different beats, and look at their writing style.

“There is no excuse for poor research with the availability of Internet searching and today’s PR tools,” says an editor at a popular online publication. “Take the time to see what I’m covering and what I’m interested in. Take the time to understand the internal structure of the publication, instead of sending the same email to multiple reporters.”



Adds a prominent blogger on social media: “Read up on my blog’s content, follow my Tweets, and then you’ll better understand where I’m coming from. There are plenty of smart PR professionals, and I respect the ones most who I see participating actively in the space.”

Your initial email to a journalist shouldn’t be a “cold call” so much as an offer of information that will help him or her do his or her job better. Be concise and get to the point – don’t waste their time.

“The subject line better tell me what I need to know,” warns one reporter. “I want to see the name of the product, company and subject in the subject line.”

And avoid hype. Nothing turns a journalist off quicker than overblown claims – whereas constructive information about your company, your product, the market and even your competitors will help build a relationship based on trust.

“When you are sending me an email, think about how you can use it to build a relationship with me, not just to send me a press release,” the same reporter says. “Have an interesting story prepared, and have every detail ready. If I can trust that you will ‘deliver the goods’ when you contact me, then I’ll give you my time.”

5. Be Prepared, and Follow Through

If you are contacting the media with a press release, or even just a story idea, you should have the right spokesperson available and the necessary product information lined up. What’s more:

If you are contacting the media with a press release, or even just a story idea, you should have the right spokesperson available and the necessary product information lined up. What’s more:

▶ If you are suggesting a story that needs to include opinions from several different people, have their contact information and availability ready for the journalist.

▶ If you are trying to have your product tested by the magazine, make sure your product is ready to ship on a moment’s notice.

▶ If you need a customer’s involvement, make sure the customer is easy to reach and willing to make the extra effort.

Finally, make sure to follow through using all communication vehicles, the more interactive the better. Make your press releases and other communications available through an RSS feed. Set up corporate accounts on Facebook, LinkedIn and other social media sites and post your announcements on them.

Follow your target contacts on Twitter, engage in the conversation, and post relevant Tweets with links to your news when it can add to the dialogue. This will increase the odds of your communication being seen not only by a journalist on your refined target list, but also that new contacts interested in your story will find you.

Be Thoughtful, Be Selective

We hope these tips will help you to improve your targeting and ultimately improve your campaign results. Be thoughtful about your target audience, and invest the time in being selective of the editors and journalists you contact. The more selective you are, the better you will be at building productive relationships with editors, reporters and bloggers. You will be rewarded tenfold for your efforts.

CISION US, INC.

332 SOUTH MICHIGAN AVENUE CHICAGO, IL 60604 866.639.5090 US.CISION.COM

CISION CANADA INC.

1100-150 FERRAND DRIVE TORONTO, ON M3C 3E5 877.269.3367 CA.CISION.COM