

## Far More than Press Releases: The Public Relations Strategy Cycle

For over 60 years, our agency has represented companies in a broad spectrum of industries. Pharmaceutical packaging, niche-market manufacturing machinery, banks and credit unions, cosmetics packaging and innovation, consumer products and professional services are a few categories that – both past and present – only begin to do justice to our client roster.

Each company we represent has its own unique products, services and audiences to consider and address toward the goal of gaining media exposure and, in doing so, positively impacting our clients' bottom lines. But despite vastly varying client products, services, audiences and goals, a turnkey mantra prevails: **a proven, four-step marketing methodology** that – when combined with tried and true communications expertise and creativity – serves to eliminate guesswork, clearly define goals, and succinctly communicate the most important messages to their respective audiences.

With that, a brief look at our step-by-step public relations methodology:

### **Step 1: Analysis.**

At the inception of any public relations campaign – and any individual project *within* a greater campaign – an honest and thorough assessment must be made of exactly what the product or service is, what it offers, who its primary and secondary audiences are and, most importantly, what makes it different from its competitors.

Is your widget the newest? The fastest or most efficient? The most compact? Is it a brand-new, sought-after invention that others have been trying to develop but that you figured out first? The more “mosts” your product can boast, the better. A thoughtful and complete examination of what sets your product apart serves as the foundation upon which a solid marketing campaign can be built.

Editors receive dozens – if not hundreds – of press releases, pitch letters, phone calls and e-newsletters each day. Amidst all the clutter, your differentiators help achieve a marketing writer's top goal: keep the reader reading.

### **Step #2: Planning.**

Planning is, at its heart, analysis in action. Now that we have our differentiators and a deep understanding of the client's products and services, what are we going to do with it? A common misconception about public relations professionals is that we sit around writing press releases all day. That's far from the case, as the planning stage showcases.

Don't get me wrong: press releases are a vital component in launching any new product or service. But they are just the tip of the iceberg or, more precisely, the top of an open umbrella. Once a press release is approved, we have the ammunition – in the form of pre-approved verbiage, executive insight and high-resolution photos – to approach editors with varying needs from varying angles.

Here, editorial calendars and outlet familiarity help PR professionals treat each publication individually; and in practice, the first-name relationships that we build with editors keep us and our clients top-of-mind. Like any solid business relationship, editors pay more attention to PR professionals with a history of providing information that is enticing to them and relevant to their readers.

The myriad of other public relations tools, then, all have a common ancestor. Pitch letters, photo captions, e-newsletters, bylined articles, and executive interviews are direct descendants of the press release because they stem from the information therein.

So now that we know what we want to say (i.e. our differentiators and supporting facts), what tools are we using to communicate, and over what timeframe? In other words, how and when are we delivering our messages to the media marketplace to maximize editorial exposure?

### **Step #3: Creation.**

In marketing, this is the step that separates the contenders from the pretenders.

Materials creation – and the creativity the process demands – is the most subjective of the four steps. We know the messages, we've identified the tools. Now it's time to do those steps justice by developing publicity materials that honor the diligence and foresight of our analysis and planning efforts. We also come to a cruel crossroads, of sorts:

There's no other way to say it: some things are just better than others.

Marketing writing can be a traditional inverted pyramid of facts... or it can engage readers through succinct, crisp language, starting a discussion that paves the way for meaningful editorial coverage. Photos can "look pretty good," or they can be dynamic, exciting, and suitable for the needs of a wide swath of media outlets. Pitch letters can be solely composed of a product's merits... or can take into consideration the wants and needs of a PR professional's most important audience: editors, who serve as the conduit to our clients' audiences.

Marketing is a meritocracy that rewards those who think creatively. And for all the things that can be taught – grammar, Photoshop, the ins and outs of a particular industry – creativity is an X factor that is entirely innate. You either have it or you don't.

### **Step #4: Distribution.**

The value of a complete, relevant and updated media list cannot be overstated. The foundation of the Distribution step is a client-specific – even product-specific – editorial list that has been extensively researched and continuously vetted. The work put into developing the best possible editorial list is key to taking full advantage of one of public relations' most alluring attributes: PR isn't pay for play.

Public relations is the yin to advertising's yang – both are important counterbalancing components in a full-fledged marketing campaign. The media space that advertising occupies is sold; the editorial space that public relations seeks to occupy is not for sale. Money put toward advertising buys a defined, pre-determined amount of exposure; money put toward a public relations retainer fee does not include definite exposure or complete message control, but has one huge upside: PR has no ceiling.

A press release might be covered in 5 outlets... or it might be covered in 50. Two factors determine this outcome. They are, in order, strength of message and strength of editorial distribution practices.

The best media lists have not only the right publications, but also the right contacts (editors) at those publications. These lists are utilized not only via distribution en masse, but through one-on-one pitch letters and conversations that build new relationships and bolster existing ones. In all cases the list is a living, evolving entity that becomes the lifeblood of a communications campaign.

For decades, Turchette's team of communications professionals has generated positive publicity for clients on the local, national and global stages. We utilize the potent "force multiplier" of public relations as a key pillar in any integrated marketing campaign. For more information on how a well-rounded public relations campaign can impact your business, feel free to contact Jim Gorab at **973-227-8080 x36** or send us an inquiry to [www.turchette.com/contact-us](http://www.turchette.com/contact-us).