

Top Ten Tips: How to Conduct a Successful Media Campaign

These steps are designed to walk you through the development of a media campaign strategy. They will help you stay focused, select the right media, and help you write your press release.

1. Choose Just One Publicity Project

Select just one product or service you want to launch or an activity or any aspect of your business you want to publicise. Keep it simple - don't try to cover every aspect of your business in one media hit. It's a common error, especially for those who are just starting out on the publicity trail. If you do have several announcements, apply these 10 steps to each one separately, and set your timing so that you don't bombard the same media with your stories. Two weeks apart is acceptable. Of course, if you have announcements of major news interest, this rule won't apply! Here are some of the categories of story that fit with the way most media outlets approach their editorial planning:

- Event announcements - media alerts, diary items, or invitations to attend
- New products or services
- New business wins
- New partners
- New appointments
- Contests, giveaways
- Reseller success stories
- Customer case studies
- Research results
- Human interest (opinion, personal stories)

2. Seek Approvals from Stakeholders

You must get signoff from partners or customers mentioned in your press release. At the very least it's common courtesy, but even a simple unauthorised statement can come back and bite you if your customer/partner isn't warned in advance.

3. Identify Your Business Objectives

List and clarify the objectives or benefits you hope to gain from your media campaign. By writing these down you are also beginning to formulate your press release. You must include the timing and geography. Objectives could include:

- Increased sales
- Brand building - local, national, international
- Raising profile of your company CEO or other individual as an expert
- Attracting investment or pre-float publicity
- Attracting members or support to your cause

4. Identify Your Target Customer Markets

Before you write your press release or select the media you want to receive your release, you need to understand your end customers - you need to get them where they live.

Who are your customers or the influencers you hope to reach with your publicity and promotional activities? These could be direct customers, business partners, business associations, government agencies, politicians, board members, etc.

- How old are they?
- Where are they located?
- What do they do for a living?
- What do they do in their spare time - hobbies, entertainment?

5. Keep it Simple

When writing an unsolicited press release, keep it simple. You need to grab the reader in the first couple of paragraphs, even the first few words. Make these words matter. Many publications will print only a few paragraphs. Others might not use your release immediately, but hold it on file for later publication, for example, as part of a larger feature. You have about 400 words to tell your story.

The NewsMaker Press Release Wizard allows you to include a short 'boilerplate' company profile, and a link back to your website. This cuts down the number of words you need to use in the body of your press release, and gives an interested journalist a little more background. The NewsMaker Wizard also makes sure you can't forget important little details like how to get in touch with you.

6. How to Get Your Message Across

Australian media don't like the hard sell. Most of the time they are going to be cynical about your 'unique selling points'. Your job, as a Press Release publisher, is to get across the issues, features and benefits you want to communicate without sounding like a marketing brochure or advertisement.

Reduced costs, greater efficiencies, time savings, greater health, wealth or happiness, are all good things to communicate, but be realistic about it - don't exaggerate the benefits.

7. Creating a Media List

To be an effective media commentator, you need to keep your eyes peeled and your ears tuned. You need to immerse yourself in your target media so you write what they want to hear/read.

Don't only target the general news desk on the major newspapers (known as "metropolitan dailies"). Each metropolitan newspaper contains weekday and weekend special sections and magazines inserts. Glossy magazines have numerous subject-specific columns (food, travel, health, web, etc). These offer excellent avenues to reach specific target markets, as do trade publications related to your industry.

At NewsMaker, we never send your press release to "The Editor" on a metropolitan daily, because this person is usually far removed from daily copy choices. General releases of a news nature are sent to Chiefs of Staff, who make daily copy decisions, as well as Section Editors (computers, food, lifestyle, health, etc), and individual staff journalists and freelancers. In radio and television, we send your release to people such as producers, researchers, reporters and sometimes presenters. NewsMaker abides by the Australian Privacy and Anti-Spam Acts.

8. Illustrate Your Story

There is a strong visual element to most mainstream media. Even a mediocre story can get coverage when accompanied by a great pic. This is best taken by a professional photographer with experience in press photography. Graphs, charts, illustrations and screen dumps can also help support your story.

For television, paint a visual picture - make sure they know what they would need to film to tell your story. For example, if you are inviting media to a launch, tell them what the venue will look like, any dignitaries or celebrities that will be present, or any activities that will look good on screen.

For radio, the 'visual element' needs to be painted in sounds or words - so if you have a sound byte let them know - engines revving, people singing, the roar of the crowd. Remember the TV commercial about the silence of eating an ice cream? How effective was that!

9. How to Increase Your Chances of Press Coverage

Sending out press releases is only part of your publicity campaign. Here are some related activities you can pursue to stay in the news.

- Hold a press conference if you must, but remember that media may not show up unless you have something or someone compelling to show them. Make this compelling element very, very clear. Include any photo opportunities in your media invitation.
- Write down and practise your responses to potential interview questions.
- Send product samples to key journalists.
- Develop "champions" - high-profile individuals benefiting from your product or service.
- Monitor the press for opportunities to respond to reported issues that allow you to talk about your own business.
- Watch what your competitors are doing in the press - imitation is the sincerest form of flattery!
- Monitor speaker opportunities and other editorial/seminar opportunities - then send a press release about them!
- Follow up your press release by phoning journalists directly - this is by far the best way to ensure placement.

10. Other Avenues for Positive Publicity

Now you know how to target mainstream print, radio and TV media with press releases, you can start to ramp up your publicity profile with some of these activities.

- Start some social media pages: blogs, Facebook, MySpace
- Enter awards. The AIIA iAwards, Telstra, Yellow Pages, Business Export Awards are just a few
- Fairs, field days and exhibitions pertinent to your industry
- Advertorials - whereby you pay the advertising department for the space for your editorial-style stories
- Noticeboards - especially in universities and shopping centres, anywhere your customers hang out
- Public speaking
- Networking - never miss a chance to talk about your product/service!
- Sponsorships
- Lastly, put yourself in their shoes - give media a story of interest to their readers, viewers or listeners.