

Bianchi PeRpectives

An e-newsletter offering PR-related info to use, challenge and amuse.

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WORD NERD

E-maul *n.* a really brutal, nasty e-mail; - *v.* to send someone a really brutal, nasty e-mail.

NEW CLIENT

[Women in Defense-Michigan](#) (WID-MI) has selected Bianchi PR as its

Media and Relationships

At the heart of most successful PR programs is an unheralded activity generically known as media relations. And while it may not sound as exciting as developing strategy or creating messaging, media relations is the everyday stuff of good PR.

It's more than just knowing who the right journalists are. It's knowing their beat and their needs, knowing who and what they cover and how much they know about a subject. It's understanding their perspective, researching their editorial calendars, determining ways to serve their needs (often before your own) and earning their trust through solid performance. It is, in short, a lot of work.

You need to attend the same events and conferences they do. You need to actually read/watch/listen to their reporting and follow their blogs, so you'll understand their style and approach. You need to answer their questions, even when you don't have time to or want to. And sometimes, you need to quit pitching them and just listen.

A good relationship with a journalist can often mean the difference between a pitch that generates a great story and an unreturned phone call or e-mail. It can open the door and give you a chance to be heard while your competitors are being ignored. The typical journalist is literally bombarded with hundreds, perhaps thousands, of phone calls, news releases and e-mail pitches each week. Sometimes a good relationship with a reporter may be the only thing that can help you rise above the clutter.

In this issue, we're offering some insights on a few aspects of media relations because it's so important. In fact, it's one of the foundations of our business.

Jim Bianchi, APR

President



7 Tips for a New Media Interview

Whether it's your first time or you're a seasoned pro, doing a media interview can be a nerve-wracking experience ... and the state of news reporting today doesn't help make things any easier. Stories and images can be posted in a variety of outlets - both in print publications and online - practically in real time.

The secret is preparation and remembering some tips. Sounds

pro-bono public relations firm. WID-MI is a professional networking and development organization for women across Michigan who contribute to national defense and security. The group, open to men and women, aims to cultivate the advancement of leaders in government and industry, provide its members with opportunities to interact and exchange ideas, host diverse and inspiring events and work with the Michigan defense industry for mutual benefit.

Recent Results

In 2008, Bianchi PR was pleased to help the [American Iron & Steel Institute](#) communicate its key messages within the North American automotive industry through a strategic PR program including multiple news releases, a series of key media interviews and PR support at several major events - generating more than 700 news stories and reaching an audience of nearly 1 billion.

simple enough right? But we're not just blowing smoke here. Using a few key pointers really does a lot in the way of confidence.

Remember that the journalist is looking to you for information. You're the expert. You know your company and products better than anyone. By having a collection of messages, data, images, supporting material and discussion points at the ready, a smooth and successful media interview is in your grasp.

Here are seven tips to give you a hand when you're preparing for media interaction:

1. Be **prepared!** Know what you want to cover and how it relates to what the reporter wants. Whenever possible, offer to send supporting images, video clips or other visuals to the reporter so they can craft a complete story.
2. Focus on three or four **key points** you want remembered. Emphasize and repeat them. If you don't treat them as important, the reporter won't either. Also try and weave search engine optimization (SEO) keywords into your messages. More than likely, any article that runs will also be posted online and using the right language can help increase your visibility.
3. **Don't guess** if you don't know! It's perfectly fine to admit you don't know the answer to a question. If possible, offer to get back to the reporter with an answer. And do it.
4. Be **honest!** If you can't answer a question because of confidentiality agreements or a proprietary situation, say so. If you can, offer some information (e.g. percentages instead of actual figures) that provides perspective without divulging confidential information.
5. Don't say (or show) anything you don't want to see **in print** or online. Reporters assume anything you say or display is fair game for publication or posting. There is no "off the record" except in very special, pre-arranged situations. Make sure to use approved language, images, video clips and examples - especially since things can be posted online almost immediately.
6. Be **conscious** of feedback. Many of today's articles are posted online in a blog format, meaning that readers can comment on the article and discuss what is being said. Keep that in the back of your mind and try to work in key discussion points. These comment sections are a good place to gather feedback and see what readers think about your company, products and opinions.
7. Be friendly and **have fun!** A little lively banter or small talk up-front can relax everyone involved.

An added tip - in today's online "instant news" environment, many reporters are posting more frequent, yet shorter, articles instead of focusing on lengthy stories that take longer to craft. Since news can be reported faster and faster these days thanks to the Web, journalists have to be able to keep up and post accordingly.

Therefore, making yourself available as a quick reference or expert

Latest Bianchi Biz Blog Post:

"Don't Take the Cheese Off the Pizza: Marketing in a Recession"

Visit the

[Bianchi Biz Blog](#)

CLOSING QUOTE

"Publicity builds brands in different ways than do advertising, promotion and direct selling. As opposed to, say, a commercial or sales pitch, readers, listeners and viewers voluntarily consume publicity ... The customer who voluntarily invests money and time in publicity stories tends to believe those stories, is influenced by those stories and has greater recall of the message than if experienced through advertising."

- Management and marketing guru and author Jeffrey J. Fox, in his new book "Rain: What a Paperboy Learned About Business"

[Fox & Co.](#)

source can be a good way to promote your company and strengthen your relationship with reporters. It's a mutually beneficial situation.

To find out more about how to make the most out of media interaction, formulate key messages and SEO keywords and make yourself and your company more visible, [contact us](#).



Maximizing Your Trade Show ROI with PR 2.0

If you build it, they will come. That may be true for the Field of Dreams and baseball fans, but it certainly doesn't hold true for trade show displays and reporters. Just exhibiting at a trade show or participating in a conference doesn't guarantee you visits, or media coverage, by trade press. You have to work it.

It's amazing to see a company spend hundreds of thousands of dollars (or more!) to design, build, ship, set up and staff a trade show booth ... and then do absolutely nothing to bring media to that booth.

Think about it. You have your best products on display. You have your technical experts and top executives on hand, perhaps some from overseas. You have developed your messaging. You have created a unique booth experience for your customers and prospects.

Wouldn't it be worthwhile to:

- *Spend some extra effort to invite the press in, engage them in interviews and demonstrations, and have them help you reinforce your message ... with stories that will appear online or in a magazine or a newspaper?*
- *Extend the reach and frequency of your brand messages to the thousands of customers and prospects who couldn't attend the show?*
- *Earn media coverage that supports and adds credibility to your advertising?*
- *Validate your prospects' and customers' enthusiasm for your company as they read about your products in a publication they trust and respect?*

PR support at a trade show or conference simply helps **maximize** your program's **return on investment**. And best of all, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to do it. Here are some basics:

1. **Reach out** to media several weeks before the show, sharing what you'll be offering at the event - products, demonstrations, experts and executives available for

interviews - and insights/perspectives on industry trends or issues your people can address;

2. **Follow-up** with key reporters a week or two before the show to lock in interviews or demonstration appointments;
3. **Prepare press materials**, including video demonstrations, product images, fact sheets, FAQs and news releases, and save on flash drives that can be distributed electronically or from your booth (so you can meet reporters face-to-face);
4. Create a **micro-site** on the Web and promote to media and customers to make all of your press materials, videos, etc. easily accessible;
5. **Media train** (or at least brief) your key spokespeople to maximize the value of media interactions;
6. At the event, have your PR expert "**troll**" the exhibit floor and hallways during the show to pitch reporters on the spot (without encroaching upon their refuge, the media center); and
7. Follow-up with media **after** the show, making sure their questions are answered and their photo and video needs handled, and continue to drive them to your micro-site for additional content captured at the show itself.

By integrating PR 2.0 techniques into your mix, your trade show or conference appearance can keep generating earned media and interview opportunities for months and months. And that's an ROI that is hard to beat!

Media Relations in Troubled Times

To say the recession is affecting the B2B communications world is putting it mildly. With dramatic declines in sales, many companies are cutting or shifting marketing budgets, slicing advertising, scaling back shows and sponsorships and eliminating events, as well as freezing travel and other "unnecessary" expenses.

Some companies are protecting - or actually expanding - their PR budgets to maintain visibility, while slicing other activities' budgets, but the recession is having further effects upon B2B PR as well, especially on the media relations side.

For example:

- Media outlets are **cutting** staff - and offering buy-outs to experienced reporters;
- Newspapers and magazines are **consolidating** or simply folding; and
- Magazines and newspapers have fewer pages of editorial content, due to **fewer pages** of ads sold, so the available "news hole" is shrinking.

And consequently, we in B2B PR are seeing:

- **More competition** for less news space;

- **Fewer reporters** who know and understand their beat, and in some cases, fewer reporters overall to pitch at a media outlet;
- Surviving reporters are **scrambling** more than ever, as they're being asked to cover more territory and produce more copy, more frequently for an outlet's online components;
- Fewer reporters are **attending** press events; and
- **More freelancers** covering a press event or story for multiple media outlets.

How do we adjust for this environment? Here are a few thoughts:

1. Spend more time **building/enhancing relationships** with reporters - if they're new on the beat or pressed for time, they need a good PR person more than ever to provide them the info, background, access and perspective they need. And when the heat is on, they will turn to someone they trust. Hopefully it's you.
2. Look for new ways to **reach out** to your key beat reporters -- such as social media tools LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, RSS feeds, etc. Don't wait for them to come to you.
3. In between pitches, look for ways to truly **help** key reporters. Ask them what they're working on. Offer them tips, background and contacts that don't necessarily involve your company or client. They will come to view you as a valuable source.
4. Focus more effort on **freelance** writers. Good freelance writers are busier than ever, and they can often slice and dice the story or interview you provide to make it work for multiple media outlets. They win, you win.
5. Keep **telling your story** using various tools, while you pitch various angles tied to current issues, trends and hot topics in your industry.

New technologies bring you new ways to build your relationships. But remember, technologies are still just tools. Good PR is still all about relationships. You can, and should, use technology to strengthen your relationships, but the "secret sauce" is the human connection.

