

Silicon Valley World Internet Center
Understanding the PR Process

May 22, 2001

Session Panelists

- Mary Leddy, Vice President, C.H.E.N. PR
- Shelly Eckenroth, Vice President, C.H.E.N. PR
- Kathy Durr, PR Manager, Juniper Networks
- Mike Antonucci, Popular Culture Writer,
San Jose Mercury News

Outline

- Role of the press
- How to establish relationships with the press
- Understanding editors' needs
- How to write a press release
- Compelling pitches
- Distributing the news
- Measurement
- Selecting an agency
- Selecting clients

Role of the Media

- Reporters will cover bad as well as good -- most strive for fair coverage that is well-balanced and completely accurate

Understanding Editors' Needs

- Different press groups have different levels of understanding/needs
 - Trade: features, problem/solution, ship date
 - Business: trends, technology, marketing
 - Consumer: trends, features, ship date, price
 - Broadcast: breaking news for the masses
 - Online: breaking news, rumors

What Makes a Good Relationship with the Press?

- Credibility, patience
- Respect and understand their needs
- Provide facts -- know your subject matter
- Access, not obstruction
- Responsiveness
- Go the extra mile ... always

Press Releases: Mouthpiece to the World

- Press releases should be issued when there is hard news
- The headline needs to be clear
- The first paragraph needs to present the facts
 - Who, What, Where, When and Why
- Do not make the reporter dig or guess
- General rule is no more than two pages

Press Releases: Mouthpiece to the World

- Use exec quotes to explain why the announcement is significant to the company issuing the news
- If possible, provide other third-party endorsement
 - Market stats, retailer quote, customer quote
- Provide PR contact info and a boilerplate

Press Releases: The Good, Bad and Ugly

- Handouts
 - Anatomy of a press release
 - Examples of good and poor releases

Style Reference Resources

- Stylebook and Libel Manual
 - The Associated Press
- The Elements of Style
 - William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White

Distribution of News

- Wire service
 - Blast the news out to 1000s of outlets simultaneously
 - Customize your distribution list
 - Attaching photos, images, audio, video
- Email
 - Make sure your contacts want to receive!
 - Be wary of attachments
- Company Web site
 - Post news releases so reporters can access
 - Always provide PR contact info

Exclusives: Pros & Cons

- Be wary of giving news exclusives
 - Playing favorites is a short-term strategy
- All reporters want to be the first to crack the news
- If the competition breaks the story first, reporters answer to their editors
- If a story is given under embargo, make sure the terms are very clear to all parties
- Use exclusive story opportunities for trend/issue or human interest pieces

Crafting Compelling Pitches

- The big ink lies in the ability to identify, craft and pitch a proactive story idea
 - “Diamonds in the rough”
 - The people behind the technology
 - Customer success stories
 - Off-beat, quirky angles
 - Trends/issues
 - Controversy

Crafting the Proactive Pitch

- Be crisp and concise
 - The one-page rule
- Hit the story idea head-on, out of the gates
 - Don't ramble and make the reporter dig
 - Don't state the story idea in the closing paragraph
 - Do provide background that supports the idea
 - Do provide color behind the story
 - Do provide a fresh angle or a new twist

Placing a Proactive Pitch

- Know your subject matter
- Research appropriate outlets
- Read 4-5 back issues of the publication that you plan to pitch
- Get a feel for the reporter's style who you are pitching
- Make sure the publication/reporter has not covered the topic in the past 6-12 months
- Don't blast out the same pitch to multiple outlets

PR Measurement

- Quality, not quantity
- Engage a clipping service
- Analyze the coverage
 - Good, neutral, poor
- Weight placement by outlet
 - Circulation
 - Does it reach your target audience?
 - National, local, syndicated, daily, weekly, monthly
 - Print, online, broadcast

Selecting an Agency

- When should you hire an agency?
 - 6+ months prior to when you want to hit the road and tell your story
 - Involve agency in creation of corporate and product messages for the media and analyst communities
- Finding the right agency
 - Do your homework!
 - Big vs. small shops
 - Retainer vs. projects
 - Meet your entire team

Selecting an Agency

- Ask all the right questions
 - What is the agency's reputation ... ask around
 - Who are the current clients on the agency's roster?
 - Who will service your account?
 - Will you have senior level support?
 - Ask about client and staff turnover
 - Review press coverage and ask for background behind the significant hits
 - Ask for media and client references - call them
 - Where will you sit among the herd?

Selecting Prospective Clients

- Value proposition
 - What problem/issue does the product solve?
- Leadership position
 - Currently a leader or in top ranking within segment?
 - How crowded is the space? Is leadership attainable?
- Management team
 - Seasoned, professional and accessible
 - Does the exec team value the PR function?
- Funding
 - Solid funding required to maintain momentum

Selecting Prospective Clients

- What makes a good client?
 - Keep the agency informed
 - Extension of your internal team
 - Seek and value the firm's counsel
 - Inside PR person must have respect of exec team
 - Assist in setting expectations with internal groups
- What makes a bad client?
 - The opposite of everything above!
 - Lack of respect for the agency team
 - Stepping away from agency when it gets tough

Agencies: Retainer vs. Project

- 12-Month Retainer
 - Most agencies prefer retainers
 - Commitment to function and firm
 - PR doesn't happen overnight
 - Assign full-time resources
- Projects
 - Ideal for product launches
 - Smaller agencies more likely to take on projects
 - Be sure that you are getting a quality team

Q&A

C.H.E.N. PR Contact Info

- Web Site
 - <http://www.chenpr.com>
- Bay Area Offices
 - 650.357.8749
 - Mary Leddy or Shelly Eckenroth
- Boston Offices
 - 781.466.8282
 - Chris Carleton or Barbara Heffner