

# Silicon Valley World Internet Center Understanding the PR Process

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# Session Panelists

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# 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

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