30 PR TIPS

You Can Apply Today

Insights From PRGN Members

30 years PRGN

THE WORLD'S LOCAL AGENCY

Celebrating 30 Years of PRGN

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In 1992, members of 11 Edelman Affiliate PR firms in the United States decided to form the Phoenix Network. It was the start of what is now known as the Public Relations Global Network (PRGN).

We are now 52 agencies strong, on six continents and capable of providing our clients access to best PR practices, introducing products and services across many states and countries simultaneously, and bringing genuine PR thought leaders to the table.

To celebrate our 30th anniversary, we have collected 30 PR tips you can apply today. These are tips that will make useful reading for the management teams at companies, nonprofit organizations, PR firms and independent practitioners. Members from all over our PRGN world have contributed content.

Let me know what you think of these tips and whether you put one or more into practice. We hope you do.

Thank you for reading our 30th anniversary book. We enjoyed creating it for you.

Warm regards,

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This 30th anniversary book was created to celebrate a special moment for PRGN. It's a time when we look back at what we have achieved and think about who we want to become.

A big thank you to all of our anniversary book contributing members who marked this moment by sending valuable thoughts, advice and tips about our industry, profession and values.

Thank you to our founding members, Executive Committee, all our Committee Chairs, Regional Vice Presidents, Secretary, and Treasurer and Past Presidents during this special anniversary. Last and not least, I want to thank our Executive Director Gabor Jelinek for his amazing efforts and contributions to our amazing journey.

We're approaching a new era of PRGN's evolution, as one of the top four independent communications networks worldwide. We also want to preserve our core values, the quality of our membership and the close relationships among members.

PRGN members believe that by connecting and sharing best practices, all of our agencies, teams and clients benefit. We are driven to strengthen our capabilities so we can offer robust creative and problem-solving PR services on both a regional and global basis.

We hope to look back in another 30 years and be able to say we remain one of the leading PR networks in the world.

Alexandra Dinita
PRGN President
2021-2022

The **Threat of Social Media** Is Real

Given the advancements in online technologies and the constant evolution in social media, you should not treat public relations as if it were second class.

It takes many years to build a positive reputation, but it can take only a few seconds to completely ruin your reputation.

> "It takes many years to build a positive reputation, but it can take only a few seconds to completely ruin your reputation."

Invest in your public reputation wisely. Don't do it on the cheap. Treat it as a necessary line item in your budget and include a communications leader in your executive leadership. And don't assign an intern to manage your social media or reputation.

You must treat every tweet, Facebook post or TikTok video as if it were something you'd be sharing with a reporter at a reputable media outlet. Because you truly are doing just that!

Hire good people and manage your reputation as if it were your storefront.

Aaron Blank

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Kindness and PR

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Two years of a pandemic have made us regress in terms of relationships. Stress levels have increased, and the primary needs for safety, connection and fulfillment have been compromised. We are witnessing behaviors increasingly marked by aggression, rudeness, and controversy (especially on the web, but not only).

This situation, as epigenetics teaches us, is causing the value of kindness to be lost. It is urgent to regenerate this virtue, to root this value at the basis of the evolution of a happy community in every system from the family to school, from healthcare to organizations, from religion to politics. A small kind gesture can change the world!

Kindness is a personal and social value, a competence that we can learn, a positive practice that allows us to regenerate the point of contact with every human being.

As entrepreneurs, managers and PR professionals, we can do a lot to promote the culture of kindness as a tool to bridge, create value, well-being and sustainable development in the organizations where we operate and in the companies we collaborate with.

In kindness lies the revolutionary power of change.

The internet and world are waiting for a bit more of the human spirit and your brand can provide it. There's a touch of authenticity that comes with building a brand that inspires people to unite and connect rather than divide. But be careful. Kindness is not just a tactic. It is a key part of the process of building genuine relationships.

Kindness is a positively contagious viral wave, which spreads by involving people, organizations, businesses and institutions to give life to concrete projects capable of having a great social impact.

Brands and organizations that thrive in the future will not necessarily be the strongest and most competitive, but the most empathetic and inspiring can produce a better and kinder world.

> "Kindness is a personal and social value, a competence that we can train."

The People Behind the Brands –
Living Happily Ever After

The relationship between organizations and professional communicators is a very complex and intimate one. It takes time for both parties to know and understand each other to achieve success. That's why we should always aim for long-term partnerships, the kind that can be compared to a marriage.

When you marry, you bind yourselves to a contract in your pursuit of happiness and your visions of happiness coincide in mutual interest and shared benefits. In business, happiness means being successful and success is often measured with money and reputation. But it is more. It also means having fun, living a balanced life and making a difference for the ones around you. You can't do this alone, and you can't do it with the wrong partner either.

Whether you have a conversation with a prospect, evaluate an upcoming pitch for a big client, or a smaller client approaches for assistance, look closely at the person in front of you –your future client, stakeholder or business partner. Use your experience, intuition and body language to figure out what kind of person you are about to deal with.

Try to see each other more than once before deciding whether to enter into a business partnership with the company behind the person. Don't go further with someone who doesn't match your personal life principles and values. Don't do it for money or because it seems you have no better choices at the moment. It might evolve into a relationship where the negative side-effects outweigh the lucrative possibilities.

Have you ever heard this famous quote? "We both said 'I do' and haven't agreed on a single thing since then." Be wary not to make that quote happen to you. Remember it will be you, not the client, who'll have to make most of the compromises.

Too often, companies expect things to work according to a written contract. Sometimes, a relationship becomes toxic because one expects the other to act, react and behave like a machine. We are all human. Never forget that on the other side of the conversation with a potential client is a real person. You need to decide whether the person or persons are people you want to work with even when they are having a bad day.

As in life or in love – behind business there are people. Look for the ones you can be happy with.

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How to Pitch
PR to C-Suite Leadership

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In 2019, I wrote a piece for Forbes called "Don't Go Dark in a Downturn." In the article, I shared how to leverage marketing and PR during enduring times, such as a recession. Luckily, the advice still held true for 2020 and beyond.

Brands need marketing momentum to get through economic downturns – but it can be challenging to convince C-suite leaders to make the investment. CMOs and CCOs may be best equipped to go to bat for the resources they need. And yet, even they can struggle to build buy-in at the highest levels when sales have dipped or projections are off target.

That's a tall task. Going into the conversation prepared will increase your chances of securing the resources you need for success. Not to worry – I've spent half of my career selling marketing and PR to the C-suite. Here's how you can make the case for marketing, no matter the state of the economy.

Demonstrate You Know The Customer

As a key player for your brand, you likely interact daily, or at least weekly, with customers and key stakeholders. You have insights on their needs, wants and brand affinity – all of which are incredibly valuable to the C-suite.

As you present your desired program, start by including brand learnings from recent PR and marketing campaigns. Share direct customer quotes from surveys, product feedback from social media and brand interactions through digital campaigns. Present ways to improve the customer experience or ramp up engagement around a popular product, service or campaign.

You have a unique perspective that can positively influence outcomes for the future.

Present Efficiencies

CEOs love efficiency. It shows smart resource investment and the ability to do more with less.

Be honest about what's gone stale, what needs to be revitalized and where you can provide a deeper perspective to take the brand further, faster. Is it time to refresh your brand standards? Should you invest in more digital outreach? Is the brand's messaging falling flat, especially in a time of massive societal shifts?

Rather than showing weakness or admitting fault, honest evaluation and proposed changes signal your thoughtful and strategic approach to best marketing the brand.

Align to Business Goals

One of the greatest mistakes PR and marketing leaders make is to take their eye off the business plan. What metrics are driving your C-suite's benchmarking? What delivers value to the brand's mission? That may be top-line revenue, sales, registrations or community impact.

Tie your program to the metrics that matter most and show how PR and marketing can contribute to the organization's targets.

Show Total Impact

Above all else, think about how your PR and marketing efforts contribute to the organization's mission and purpose. Quantify and qualify how your program will move the needle and position the brand for success. Help senior leaders understand the value you're creating, and can create, with the right tools and resources in place.

It can be daunting to make the case for marketing and PR in a tough economy, but I'd argue it's a solid investment in the long-term viability of your brand. Stand firm in the value it can deliver. Equip yourself with solid facts and a clear understanding of the business's goals. Appeal to measurements that both the C-suite and your team see as success.

By demonstrating clear impact, you'll make the case for PR and marketing investment no matter the current climate.

The key to **building winning brands** today and tomorrow!

It is without a doubt that businesses and brands need to reinvent and reimagine for the future marketplace. Today, the purpose agenda dominates discussions in boardrooms. Importantly, the ability to communicate our corporate purpose well is very rewarding as it helps build trust and solidify relationships with investors, customers, employees and other key stakeholders.

In this regard, we must realize that our purpose journey is not just about announcements. That would be PR's worst nightmare.

For example, environmental, social and governance (ESG) commitment has to be at the heart of an organization – its leaders and team members must walk the talk. That's how the world decides whether it can trust a brand or organization. Thus, it is key that everyone in the organization is walking together in this journey of purpose.

After all, if our PR and communication efforts are built on hollow promises – would our stakeholders, especially our people, believe in them? Would they last? Will they backfire?

These are five key questions we need to answer with clarity to start building a brand that stands above others in the market.

1. Why is this important to us?

Help your people gain clarity about what your company stands for. Have clear mission, vision and values. Explain why it matters and the expected behaviors in light of them.

2. Who are our stakeholders?

Having clarity about target audiences and stakeholders helps provide a better understanding of what matters to them, especially their expectations and current perceptions of a brand's commitment to ESG.

3. Where do we want to be?

For ESG goals to be meaningful, the organization has to have clarity on its direction and outcomes. Clear short-, mid- and long-term goals set the stage for planning what needs to be done.

4. How will we get there?

Having clear plans and processes in place to achieve these goals will also provide clarity on the costs and efforts needed to succeed.

5. What are we doing to communicate?

Our purpose and what we are doing to achieve our goals must be shared with our stakeholders for us to succeed in the marketplace. We need to win their trust by consistently showing them what we are doing to deliver on our promise.

By being authentically purposeful, we will have more engaged employees and stakeholders. They will naturally want to be ambassadors for the brand. After all, we live in a shared marketplace today. Brands that consistently deliver on their promises and share their stories well with stakeholders will indeed win hard-core fans. These fans will in turn help co-create and share their stories with friends and families. This, essentially, is the heart of PR.

Andy See Teong Leng

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An **Overlooked and Undervalued** PR Tip

"Become a regular consumer of news."

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The strongest PR tip I have to offer is neither glamorous nor original – but it has stood the test of time.

Become a regular consumer of news.

Make it a practice to read at least one daily newspaper every day. Regularly listen to news on the radio. I am an ardent fan of NPR. Watch the evening news.

You don't have to give up Google alerts; they certainly have their purpose. But do not let alerts replace regular consumption of the news.

PR now encompasses a variety of story-sharing tactics ranging from TikTok videos to speeches. But the Holy Grail of PR remains earned media coverage. It is difficult to trump a timely placement in a respected media outlet. Earned media is viewed with higher credibility and has the added benefit of enhancing SEO.

That's why becoming a regular student of the media is so valuable.

If you make news consumption a regular habit, I guarantee you will enjoy the following:

- Your mind will begin to churn with ideas for your organization or your clients. When I finish reading a paper, I often have multiple story ideas for clients.
- This is one of the best ways to find stories to "news hijack" your company or clients into.
- You will become a better writer.
- You will learn what constitutes a good story.
- You'll gain an appreciation for "news hierarchy," especially if you hold a paper in your hands and notice where stories are slotted in the paper.
- You will develop a deeper sense of which reporters like which stories. This goes beyond the beat information you will find in a media database.
- You'll be able to counsel your leadership or clients better because you understand the media better.
- You will be able to converse easily on a wide range of topics.
- You'll stand out from the competition. Few take the time these days to truly consume the news.

Yes, it's a pretty basic suggestion. But it's one you can implement today and start seeing immediate dividends.

Listening to Our Employees is More Important Than Ever

Successful brands understand the importance of listening to their customers and based on feedback they can optimize customer satisfaction, increase revenue and drive growth. Many, however, still underestimate the importance of listening to their employees. In today's workplace, retaining employees and recruiting top-level performers is critical to success. Thus, we must begin by carefully listening to our employees, while encouraging our clients to do the same.

Today, more than ever, employees want to be heard. A recent study showed that more than 80 percent of employees believe they have ideas that can have a meaningful and positive impact on business. So why not listen? Equally important is establishing a culture that allows for open ideas and collaboration with employees – letting them feel as though they have a personal and vested interest in our success. Also don't forget our employees are our ambassadors – with our clients, with other employees and with prospective staff. We want them to feel great about where they work and passionate about what they do.

This tip is particularly relevant because unfortunately we live in a time when job loyalty isn't what it used to be. Think about this. My dad had two jobs his entire 45+ career. Before starting my own firm, I too had just two jobs. Today's employee will likely have between 4-5 jobs before they reach the age of 30. You must give them a reason to be enthusiastic and loyal to the company to maintain a high level of retention. It starts by listening, engaging regularly with employees, acknowledging their contributions and sharing success.

Lastly, failing to listen can equate to losing talented employees and the cost to recruit and replace is far greater than the cost to retain talented members. So, take a time out, stop and listen. You may like what they have to say.

> "A recent study showed that more than 80 percent of employees believe they have ideas that can have a meaningful and positive impact on business."

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Observing **Integrity**

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> "Many marketing gurus have highlighted that reputation once lost will take years to recover, if it is at all."

One of three tenets upon which Mileage was built, and which guides interaction with clients, partners, staff, vendors, the media and other stakeholders, is observing integrity.

Integrity refers to being honest, reliable, and trustworthy. It is about seeking to always do the right thing, standing up for what is right, and addressing conflict respectfully.

Over our 30-year history, we have faced our share of moral quandaries and risen to the challenge each time. There was one time when a staff member placed an advertisement on behalf of an important client on the wrong date. The client refused to pay for the advertisement. We promptly took out another advertisement on the correct date at no extra cost to the client.

On another occasion, a major client poached one of our junior staff and claimed in their defense that she had applied for the post. In our retainer contract with the client, there was a penalty clause which prohibited both parties from recruiting each other's employees. We opted to enforce the penalty at the expense of losing the client, and collected a fee (equal to one year's worth of salary of the employee in question) that was one-fifth of the annual value of the retainer. It did not make financial sense but we felt that we had to stand up for our principles, and set an example for our staff and other clients.

Any unethical behavior can have disastrous consequences on a company's reputation. Many marketing gurus have highlighted that reputation once lost will take years to recover, if it is at all. On the flip side, ethical behavior can attract and retain customers, engender employee loyalty and foster collaboration with like-minded companies.

It therefore pays to observe integrity always.

From **Fax Machines** to **Artificial Intelligence:**
Adapting to Evolving PR Technology

Over the past three decades, technology has advanced at a rapid pace and rapidly transformed the way we communicate. Early in my career, I can remember snail mailing press releases, faxing media advisories, loading slides into projector carousels, setting up our first email address (which was shared by the entire firm!) and developing our first website.

Today, thanks to high-speed internet and smart phones, communication moves at a much faster pace. There are always new technologies around the corner, from TikTok to the metaverse. The following are three technologies that are likely to be the most transformative for public relations professionals in the years ahead.

Podcasts Bring Targeted Content to Niche Audiences

Podcast listenership has grown 30 percent from 2018 to 2021, with over one-third of Americans listening on a regular basis. Public relations professionals ought to look at podcasts as radio shows that reach very targeted niche audiences. Podcasts can be pitched in a similar manner as mainstream media. Using iTunes or Stitcher, you can easily research podcasts to find shows that reach your target audiences. You'll find there are shows that cover nearly any topic you can think of, ranging from mining to makeup and everything in between. They can be great platforms for your subject matter experts to position themselves as thought leaders.

Marketing Automation Engages All Stakeholders

A key part of any holistic digital communication strategy, marketing automation is a great way to make repetitive tasks more efficient, while providing your audiences with personalized information. Savvy public relations professionals are leveraging marketing automation platforms not only to engage with customers, but to reach all key stakeholders, including employees, the media and the communities in which they operate. They're achieving this through the platforms' capabilities to create and distribute targeted content via emails, blogs, landing pages, social media and advertising. Then, they're harnessing the robust monitoring and tracking tools to identify which channels and messages are most effective. Armed with this information, they are making future communications more and more effective.

Artificial Intelligence Makes PR More Efficient

While artificial intelligence (AI) isn't new to business, recent developments in natural language processing have led to a rise in its application. AI has proven to be an effective tool in the hands of public relations professionals who seek to streamline processes and provide the best possible service to their clients and customers. Some of the ways that AI is supporting public relations initiatives include producing news releases with natural language generation; performing sentiment analysis on news coverage and social media posts; converting speech to text from media interviews, podcast episodes and meeting presentations; and translating content into multiple languages for global distribution.

The best public relations professionals stay on top of emerging technologies, beta test them and implement them into their overarching communication strategies.

Brad Kostka

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How to Build a PR **Crisis Team**

Christina Rytter

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When a crisis hits, you need to have a team of key people in place, so you can respond quickly and effectively before the situation escalates. So, let's look at who you need on your team—and how the team should operate.

The Crisis Communicator

This is the person on your team with the experience and expertise to plan and execute the right communications response in any kind of PR crisis or internal crisis. Ideally, this person will also exude a calming influence on the team, while knowing how to manage the crisis response narrative. If you don't have an internal crisis communicator, this role can also be managed by the crisis advisor.

The Key Leaders or Spokespersons

When a major PR crisis hits, it's inevitable that the CEO will be involved in some way—making key decisions, delivering a message or providing a face for the company as a spokesperson. But who else on your team can pivot from their day-to-day work and take on a key decision-making role in the crisis response? Ideally, you will have at least two or three of these key leaders.

You need someone who is an accomplished communicator and a clear thinker to help the crisis communicator and the CEO formulate a response. This person will have a proven track record for making smart decisions with limited information on short timetables. You will also need someone to manage the internal crisis response, has the authority to control and monitor what your team says and to whom, and has a calming influence for the rest of the team.

Every key leader who acts as company spokesperson can also always secure a higher success rate by participating in media and message training—especially in a crisis. This will also secure the alignment of the company's key messages.

The Media Manager

At some point in your crisis response, you will need a person whose sole duty is to manage the media. From moderating social media to responding to media requests and connecting the right messages with the right people, this can be a full-time job during a crisis.

The Crisis Advisor

When you're very close to a situation, you can miss details or make assumptions that diminish the effectiveness of your crisis response. That's why it makes good sense to bring in an outside advisor who specializes in crisis communication. This person or team has a different perspective that can prove invaluable in formulating and executing a crisis response.

Your crisis advisor will work with you and your in-house team to build a narrative and implement a crisis response that will minimize the damage to your brand's reputation and put your company in a better position to begin the rebuilding process.

When facing a PR crisis, your crisis communications advisor also has an extensive list of key media contacts with whom they have developed good working relationships. When speed really matters and you need positive earned media, knowing exactly who to call is a vital aspect of an effective external crisis response.

Put Your **Best PR** Foot Forward

Public relations continues to evolve. Emailing or calling a reporter is only a sliver of your overall PR strategy. Blogs, paid and organic social media, podcasts…the list of tactics goes far beyond what anyone could have imagined a couple of decades ago.

These days anyone with a phone, a social account and a following can and may talk about and/or engage with your brand. It could be as a customer, as a self-proclaimed journalist for the day, a paid influencer or someone with nothing better to do than to cause your brand harm. Make sure you are thinking about how and why you do what you do is relevant and impactful to your stakeholders and potential stakeholders. It is important that your messaging is thoughtful but also transmitted appropriately across multiple channels to have the most impact.

> "Make sure you are thinking about how and why you do what you do is relevant and impactful to your stakeholders and potential stakeholders."

Meeting people where they are can be tough and time-consuming but authenticity and showing you're listening to those important to your bottom line seems to be getting lost in many brands' communication strategy. While it is important to communicate through the media your stakeholders covet, don't spread yourself too thin if you don't have the capacity to fully support and engage on those channels.

For instance, it is recommended to be a master at one or two media than to simply have a lackluster presence on many. Take social media for instance. While there are dozens of platforms these days, really only three or four generate the most engagement. If you or your PR team don't have capacity to commit to all of them, be experts at the one or two and consider expanding to more channels down the road once those platforms have matured.

Chuck Norman, APR

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The Art of the Interview

Publicity is one aspect of your communications program in today's highly competitive marketplace. The magic comes when a TV or radio show or podcast is reposted on your company's social media platforms, giving it exponential exposure to your target markets.

When a reporter or editor wants to interview you or your CEO for a story, you need to keep a few things in mind. An interview is an opportunity to deliver key messages about your company that results in media coverage, supporting your company's sales and marketing.

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The goal of media interviews is to keep your company name in the spotlight, which will support brand building, increase awareness of your company services or products and reach your target market. The key is to form a valuable relationship with this reporter or editor for this story and future stories where you or your CEO can be quoted as an expert.

Always choose a spokesperson who is an animated speaker and speaks fluent English or Spanish in the U.S. marketplace. When you are interviewed, decide on the top three key message points you will make that will provide valuable information for your target market. Speak authentically and always truthfully. If you do not know the answer to a question, make sure you say so and that you will look into it and get back to the reporter.

When preparing for an interview, remember to speak slowly, clearly and concisely. Sometimes when people get nervous, they tend to speak quickly, so that is why you want to prepare.

Here are a few things you want to do:

- Choose your top three points you want to make and memorize them.
- If there are important points you want to make, control the conversation.
- Be a helpful resource to the media so they want to work with you.
- Always tell the truth. If you are not prepared to answer a question, you can say that you don't know.
- Always speak on the record. There is no such thing as "off the record."
- When speaking to reporters, answer their questions in a succinct and brief way. Once you are finished, stop speaking. There is nothing wrong with silence. Don't feel that you need to continue speaking.
- Look at the reporter. Eye contact with him/her is important.
- Correct mistakes on the spot.
- Answer one question at a time. If asked multiple questions, pick out the one you want to answer.

The great thing about gaining media exposure by doing a great interview is it not only informs your public about your company's products or services framed in a way that you want it to be understood, but it also encourages the reporter or editor to utilize you as an important contact when talking about your industry. The perfect scenario is to have your story seen on important media and then reposted to your company's social media platforms. That is when the magic happens.

The Why Should Drive Your PR

There is no company in the world that does not know what it is doing. Some also describe how they outperform competition (USPs, etc.). Only a few companies, however, know and tell WHY they do what they do. But that is precisely why we remember them, why they leap to front of our mind, why we feel good about them and like doing business with them.

If you are not yet using your "why" in your communication, we are sure you convey your enthusiasm and drive when you talk to clients personally. But only then do they get their best feeling about you and your company.

Great messages start with WHY

This deeper expertise, passion or drive are great messages to tie to the "what" and "how." Of course, we must continue to market what services we deliver and how good these are. But if we start with "why," our story will arouse emotion and change behavior. It will become the backbone of our communication! And it will also improve our personal pitches enormously.

ESG mandates the WHY

In a commercial world in which ESG is becoming increasingly important, it is not so much about what you think you should do, but what your company's contribution to the community really is.

ESG is one more reason why communication is no longer about what you do and how you do it, but why you do something. The purpose of your company must be real, not a made-up story. It must convey passion and drive that are shared by everyone in your company and valued by your stakeholders.

Promote that "why" as much as possible in everything you do, on your website, on social media and all other communication. Even when aiming at the "what"-oriented journalists, your WHY will provide a distinct advantage.

Coen Staal

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"If we start with 'why,' our story will arouse emotion and change behavior. It will become the backbone of our communication!"

What is Old
Is New Again

> "In 2022, the public is bombarded with information and a primary task of PR is to cut through the mountains of clutter to reach audiences."

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Over the past 20-plus years, no industry has been disrupted more by technology than public relations and communications. At the turn of the millennium, PR was largely earned media, working directly with journalists to spur stories or becoming a trusted source for inclusion in organic articles. Think about it. In 2000, most people got most of their news from professional journalists: physical newspapers, television broadcast and cable news and, to a lesser extent, radio. Then came the transformative power of technology.

In rapid succession, the companies that would transform the way we consume information and connect with each other were founded: Google in 1998, Netflix began streaming in 2007, Facebook in 2004, 2005 for YouTube, Twitter launched in 2006 and Instagram in 2010. When Apple ushered in the hardware revolution with the iPhone in 2007, it poured gasoline on the bonfire of change and the flames burned everywhere through the established communications world order. We started to do everything differently; shopping became more than an occasional package from Amazon, changed how we interacted with friends and began to consume information in new ways

In 2022, the public is bombarded with information and a primary task of PR is to cut through the mountains of clutter to reach audiences. A key aim for any PR campaign is to establish credibility early on. Each person has their own process for judging what information is credible and for many that is – rightly or wrongly – social media. But the most important fundamental for establishing credibility for a story or pitch is still earned media. The planning process for all PR campaigns have several mandatory components, including audience identification, communications avenues such as earned media, social, digital advertising and others. But none of these tactics will work if audiences do not consume the story. And to consume a narrative, people first must find it credible. And the best way to establish credibility is still with a story done by a professional journalist published in a known outlet.

Today, working with professional journalists has become just one element of a PR campaign, but still a critical one, because just like 20, 30 or 40 years ago, the first question to ask when designing a campaign is: "So, what's the news?"

PR: It's All About **Relationships**

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I know that we live in a world ruled by technology, but there's one thing that technology will never replace. And it's one of the great keys to successful public relations.

That secret? Relationships.

I was just speaking today with a colleague and friend of mine, Victoria, who lives and works in Los Angeles. She told me the story of how a destination chef paid a PR firm thousands of dollars to open his hot new restaurant. But they couldn't deliver the results. Then, Victoria picked up the phone and called her friend at E! Entertainment. First off, that producer answered the phone because it was someone she knew. Second, she listened to Victoria's very creative story angle. Third, when the producer was ready to say no, Victoria told her why this story needed to be on that channel. The result? She got the story.

Why did that happen? It's all about relationships. Email, technology, SEO, databases and more are important tools for PR, but that's all they are: just tools. Where the rubber meets the road in PR is the relationships that have taken years to establish and nurture. True PR professionals know that the seeds they sow with these connections will reap big rewards years down the road.

So, my advice to anyone in our august business is to absorb every new technological tool you can. But even more importantly, meet with people IRL (in real life). Pick up the phone. Have a drink with them. Take them out for a hike or dinner. And keep in touch, even when you're not pitching a story. Relationship building will serve you and your clients handsomely – and besides, you'll also make a new friend.

> "Relationship building will serve you and your clients handsomely – and besides, you'll also make a new friend."

David Landis

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Marketing Committee Chair

Get Ready for Your Next Crisis

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PRGN Membership Committee

> "The world is transforming fast. Social media makes changes happen more swiftly."

The world is transforming fast. Social media makes changes happen more swiftly. You may be underprepared to face your next PR crisis.

Remake your response team. Adapt your crisis handbooks. Train your spokespersons. Learn from other cases. Check your social media accounts. Because in the next crisis, you'll have to move quickly.

Time frames for media response are narrowing. If you rely on a traditional approach, you will spend precious time as crises grow bigger and your reputation shrinks. You know very well what kind of crisis you may face. Have standard initial responses ready so you won't waste time discussing wording.

Make sure your key stakeholders contacts are available. You'll never know who may help in a dire situation.

- **List your don'ts:** Even if it is almost impossible not to make mistakes when navigating a crisis, you always have to be clear about what you are not supposed to do.
- **Don't lash out:** Keep emotions controlled. If there is false information circulating and someone is using it to harm your company, just calm down. There are always polite ways to reply.
- **Don't hide:** Always show up when your company's name is at stake. Provide answers. If you don't have the information, go look for it.
- **Don't dwell:** Take the situation as a period of bad press. Eventually, people will forgive and forget a mistake, but be sure they will always remember the way you behaved and how you conducted the process.
- **Control the information:** If the situation you are handling is critical, don't text it or e-mail it to a friend or relative. Don't even record personal comments to your colleagues' WhatsApp group.

Finally, don't expect to sleep well for a couple of days. Get used to the idea that you'll have some bad times. But by following the appropriate steps one day at a time, you'll soon be back to normal.

PR Can **Change** the **World**

Some of the most famous case studies prove how PR changes behavior. Companies with poor reputations are loved again. Warring factions make peace and live in harmony. Recalled products return to the shelf. PR can and does have the power to change the world.

There are other case studies where PR has made the difference. It saves lives. Generates funds for causes that help humanity. Educates children of all ages all over the world.

Certainly, public relations is just one part of the story. In my mind, it is an important part. Sometimes, the turnaround story takes years. Often, serendipity is at work. In all cases, leadership and a vision are the catalysts. But communications, dialogue, timing, media and messaging are important.

As an individual, you can apply the basics of PR to your everyday life. You can make things better for your company, your community and your family. You start with improved communications and objectives you can measure in your gut.

What can you do?

- Schedule a lunch with a college student to support his/her career goals.
- Help a young professional by doing that informational interview.
- Donate time and treasure to a cause you care about.
- Teach a class and share your knowledge.
- Obtain presentation skills training to polish and humanize your delivery.

> "When you bring happiness, it comes back to you tenfold."

By giving, you receive. By helping others succeed, you succeed. When you bring happiness, it comes back to you tenfold. You can be an agent for change in your own world.

Starting today you can make a real difference in your world. That makes our world a better place.

What will you do today?

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Write It for **Your Audience**

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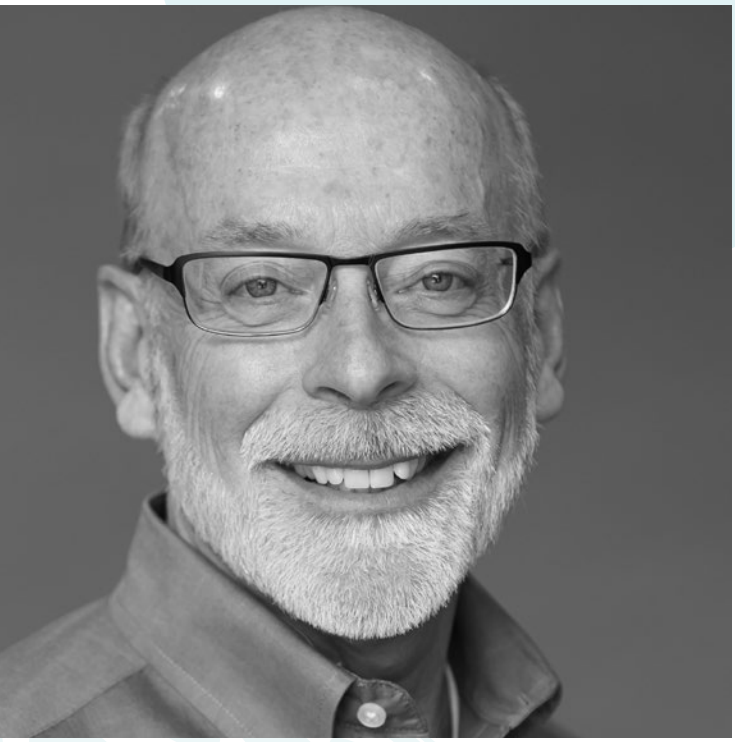

It's not about YOU.

Your target audience does not care about YOUR story except for where it might intersect with THEIR story.

So go there first. When developing the story you want to tell, make it revolve around your audience.

What problems do they face?

What needs do they have?

What motivates them?

What concerns do they have?

What about your story is most relevant to them?

What benefits will your product or service bring them?

What emotions are they feeling that you can tap into?

It doesn't matter if your business is B2C or B2B, purchases are made by people, and people make purchasing decisions based on emotions, then they justify them with facts.

So, what emotion do you want them to feel when they read, watch or hear your story? Peace of mind? Excitement? Relief? Confidence? Joy? Pride?

As Maya Angelou said, "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

> "It doesn't matter if your business is B2C or B2B, purchases are made by people, and people make purchasing decisions based on emotions, then they justify them with facts."

Words to Live By:
Why Communications Is Critical

While the world will continue to evolve, there is one constant that will stay the same: the need to communicate – effectively. Remember, the way we communicate may change, but the need to do so will not. How did The Hoyt Organization, Inc., (THO) manage to stay at the top of its game for 30 years? Here are a few pointers that may help you do the same.

Embrace change. It will forever be your guiding star. Each generation has a different history, which leads to a different perspective and an evolving lifestyle. This in itself will help agencies with their diversity and inclusion initiatives. Realize now that your history and background belong uniquely to you. Applaud the similarities of your team, and respect the differences. It will lead to a positive synergy that will make your team stronger and more effective.

Become a "technologist." I personally find the evolution of technology a fascinating science. If anyone has watched the sitcom "Mad Men" with Don Draper that takes place in the '60s, it easy to understand how far we've come. They were using typewriters and rotary dial phones. One episode features the excitement of getting a copy machine. Today, cell phones are on everyone's hips, and we're embracing virtual reality technology that is being used to do everything from showing properties to navigating roadways and much more. Now, we're even discussing the impact of interactive holograms that will be the next in our evolution.

Master social and digital (and whatever comes next). Myspace was a leading communications tool of its time, until it was overtaken by Facebook. Then we added Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok, Pinterest, Reddit and more. Gone are the days of relying on print newspapers. While they still exist, it's only a matter of time before they go fully digital. It's critical to stay on top of those channels that champion your brands. Be active on the key channels, and make sure you understand the rest. No doubt there will be more added to the mix as the calendar moves forward.

"Embrace change. It will forever be your guiding star."

Leeza L. Hoyt, APR

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PRGN Marketing Committee Chair
and former Secretary

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Trust your gut. Ever had a new business meeting and walk out with an uneasy feeling? Pay attention to it, whether it be on a new hire, new client, or anything else. As my grandma said, there is another bus that comes along in ten minutes. Be selective about how you plan your business and your life.

Live with integrity.

Lead by example.

Learn every day.

...and laugh. After all, life is short. Enjoy it!

Hard Data

Mariusz Pleban

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Former Chair and current member of
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Everyone in the public relations industry has always realized that hard data is the foundation of good communications. We know that this has become even more important with the plague of fake news. Social media made everyone an essentially independent medium. The content quoted was and is not always filled with reliable data.

> "Hard data is the foundation of good communications.

Therefore, the number-one tip we give ourselves and others is have hard data. For this reason, we have built our own analytics team to collect such data for us as an agency and above all for our clients. This is how InsightOut Lab was created alongside our OneMulti agency.

What can you do in terms of acquiring hard data?

Use strong analytical tools in social media and online: These types of tools are plentiful. These social media platforms will allow you to gain information in the areas of confirming or denying your hypotheses. They will also open your eyes to areas you have not considered before.

Research what people think: The simplest tool that has been in the analysts' arsenal for years is CAWI research. There are many solutions all over the world that allow you to find out what people think about a given topic. Do research periodically, repeat some questions and observe changes in people's mentality.

Do desk research: The internet is really a treasury of knowledge. If you have a strong team of researchers, you will be able to produce a database of proven sources of knowledge. Reports, studies, interviews and specialized texts bring a lot of information needed to obtain hard data.

Have strong analysts: Only they will be able to get good data and overlook misleading ones. After all, you do not want to promote fake news.

One last piece of advice that basically sums up things. It's best if you hire a good analytics company with business and PR consulting experience. Then the data will be used to make business decisions and will help you build good content for communications.

Why **Sustainable Development** is Important to Business

Something any public relations person or business can do today that will make a difference is to embrace sustainable development.

The move will set them up as individuals or companies for success.

Embracing sustainable development means understanding and reporting the social and environment (non-financial) impacts and risks associated with a company's operations.

Soon, sustainability reporting will no longer be a choice for almost 50,000 companies in Europe. For those businesses that work with these companies, there will be pressure to do the same.

Non-financial reporting is important for listed and non-listed companies worldwide.

Here are three reasons why sustainable development matters to a business:

1. The growth of sustainable investing has risen 107.4% since 2012, and accounts for 18% of all assets in the wealth industry. In the U.S., it is even higher at 33%.
2. One fifth of the world's 2,000 largest companies aim to be carbon net zero by 2050. The number of net-zero commitments has doubled in less than a year.
3. Online searches for sustainable goods have risen 71% over the past five years. 90% of consumers care about sustainability when buying goods and services.

Due to the sustainability trend, it is almost certain that the dominant system of corporate governance for the past 50 years, shareholder capitalism, will give way to stakeholder capitalism – a model which espouses that companies should look after all their stakeholders: customers, employees, suppliers, communities, and shareholders.

This is great for people who specialize in managing relationships between clients and the public because stakeholder consultation is part of sustainable development. Consequently, demand for consultants who specialize in sustainability communications is growing.

Sustainability is the new digital. Any person or business that ignores it will be left behind.

My business made the move in 2014 when we were proudly certified as a B Corporation (a BCorp uses the power of business to do good for people and planet) and we've never looked back.

Mark Paterson

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Past PRGN President,
Membership Committee member

"Sustainability is the new digital. Any person or business that ignores it will be left behind."

Don’t Underestimate the Power of **ESG**

> “Companies that deliver a good sustainability performance are more successful in the long run.”

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former Content Committee member

Everyone is talking about sustainability – and that’ s no wonder. Addressing ESG issues and taking them seriously is worthwhile for every single company. We show you why you should start with your ESG reporting today.

We live in a world with many problems: social inequality, climate change, discrimination, environmental pollution. In the meantime, many people, organizations and countries have recognized that things cannot go on like this and are calling for more sustainability in different areas.

Companies are also affected, and there is a good reason for this. They are in a position to take action against many of these problems, to find solutions, and to take responsibility for their own operations and their impacts. Companies should not see ESG as a burden. ESG is a way to enhance a company’s reputation, ensure long-term success, and win over investors.

ESG matters for every company

Companies that deliver a good sustainability performance are more successful in the long run. Asset managers are therefore no longer just interested in your financials; they want to know what ESG risks the company faces. Nobody suddenly wants to read in the media that the company you have invested in is polluting the environment, exploiting employees or disregarding human rights in its supply chain. Many even see good ESG performance as a prerequisite for investment.

So, addressing your own problems early on can save you a lot of trouble later on. Legally, too, more and more companies are required by law to report on sustainability issues and in even greater detail, too. Since an ESG report doesn’t write itself, you should start as early as possible. You need to come up with a structure, log metrics, calculate information, and formulate specific goals. Just to name a few of the many challenges.

A good ESG report takes time and requires experience. Your first ESG report probably won’t be a big hit right away. Practice makes perfect. It’s best to get started right now – not only will you be doing something good for the earth – your company and all your stakeholders will thank you for it too!

Love Starts with You

For their private lives, people agree that love is the guiding principle for happiness, peace and integrity. There is no reason to believe that in business life, another principle would apply and could bear the same fruit as love does in our private lives. We understand love as a wholehearted commitment to a cause, a person or a group of persons that willingly puts their benefit at the focus of all effort.

Looking at the state of societies around the world and how things are, I get this overwhelming impression. Across all countries, at all layers of society and within every single enterprise, we do not need more knowledge, more money or more refined IT systems. What we really need is more selfless love for the people around us, for their needs and concerns.

> "True love is not a feeling, but a conscious decision. So, I recommend PR people to consciously jump into a loving perspective."

True love is not a feeling, but a conscious decision. So, I recommend PR people to consciously jump into a loving perspective. With love for the cause and the recipients of all our storytelling and campaigning, honestly putting them and their benefit first, loving our job and our invaluable life outside of the office, our work will be more efficient, more fruitful and more satisfying for clients and ourselves.

You might think this applies to every job. Yes, it does! What would my team at the office, my family, city, country, planet look like if we all changed from our so often selfishness to a relaxed "love you first" philosophy. I realize I have nothing to lose, but a world to gain. Nobody can force me not to love what I do as well as the people for whom I'm doing it for. That change starts with me.

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The Case for **Integrated Communications**

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It's not easy for your company to stand out from the competition these days. Sometimes, having a good message is not enough if there is no strategic coordination to reach the stakeholders. The variety of channels, audiences and spaces in which a company can communicate multiplies the possible gains—but it also requires responsibility and experience to deliver a good job.

In general, making a conscious decision not to have any communication limits a company to its own universe. Even when some organizations choose this path for a momentary or market issue, this is more of an exception than a rule in the corporate world. What we see in the most successful cases is proactive communications work, which can be very important to broaden horizons.

> "To start, think about having a unified communication, in which texts and images follow an alignment, both editorially and graphically."

To start, think about having a unified communication, in which texts and images follow an alignment, both editorially and graphically. Thus, channels on social media, newsletters, internal communications and advertising will become comfortable with the same style and can be easily recognized. Be sure that this language also speaks to your company's branding.

Once you've established these points, have the flexibility to adapt the messaging as needed. For each audience you want to reach, you may need to simplify or go deep into the subject and show your message in different ways.

And what about crisis moments? What should your company's communication look like? For some executives, communication is always among the possible cost cuts. However, this may be non-strategic thinking. After all, when there is a turbulent situation, transparent communication is even more necessary to both reassure the internal publics and to obtain more business opportunities from external publics.

Mindfulness PR

Today, right this minute…stop. Stop and think about what is happening outside of your office, your agenda, your PR plan.

One of the most valuable things we as PR pros can do is consider the context of the outside world as we think about what we want to promote, convey, teach, or support.

> "Today, right this minute… stop. Stop and think about what is happening outside of your office, your agenda, your PR plan."

How does your company/message/story fit into the bigger picture and what people/readers/scrollers/viewers/listeners care about? You have only a few seconds to grab someone's attention, whether it's via a headline, TikTok video, TV story or white paper. And that's assuming you've made it past the gatekeeper who decides whether your message—your pitch—will meet his or her needs.

This is a delicate balancing act that requires many things: insight, sensitivity, speed, a nose for news and a talent for storytelling. All of these are critical to your PR success.

We've all seen major opportunities for pitches and posts fall flat (best case) and create crises or backlash (worst case). That's not what I'm talking about.

Just because you can be clever doesn't mean you should be. But you can always be smart…and, in my humble opinion, the smartest people are attuned to what's going on around them.

There's plenty of opportunity to promote what needs promoting even when you don't have an announcement or piece of hard news. Take a moment to really absorb what people are talking about and care about and spend some time thinking about whether you can authentically and appropriately insert your organization into the news cycle.

Pay attention, your full attention, to what is going on around you. Call it a twist on the mindfulness trend.

Mindfulness PR. Hey…maybe I should create a pitch about that for the PR trades???

Sandy Lish

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Plan But Embrace Change

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Regional Vice President Europe, Middle East and Africa, Membership Committee member

Spider pre-dates PRGN by two years. On January 1, 1990, I set out on a journey to build a PR agency. I knew very little – if anything – about business plans, balance sheets or exits. All I knew was I had three small children and I needed to make a living.

Did I expect to be doing $9 million per year 32 years later? Not a chance. I saw only the month ahead, year ends had little meaning, I focused on getting and keeping clients. By being so un-business as I see it now, I gave myself sleepless nights when they weren't necessary, and sailed perilously close to the edge by not recognizing dangers.

Therefore, my first piece of advice to anyone starting out is have a plan. Do annual projections, keep a close eye on progress every single day. Planning is king. Know your numbers, know your gross profit from your net profit, understand cashflow and learn to read and write a balance sheet.

When PRGN began, it was 15 years before Apple made mobile, six years before Google launched and two years before Facebook and the real start of social media. Correspondence was provided by postal service and desk phones rang pretty consistently, but only between 9 to 6 while we were in the office.

What marvelous advances we have benefited from in the intervening years. Imagine what the equivalent would have been in going to the office in 1990 carrying a full-size computer, a telephone, a radio, a camera plus a china mug of coffee for the journey to the office. While wearing stilettos by the way– no trainers then!

My second piece of advice would be to embrace change, constantly reviewing your business offering against the prevailing winds of change. Don't get stuck selling a service or a way of doing things that is inherently obsolete. Be early on the right bandwagons and keep pace with progress.

A final thought – has the world become a desert in the last 30 years? Is that why we can't leave home without clutching a bottle of water?

> "Don't get stuck selling a service or a way of doing things that is inherently obsolete. Be early on the right bandwagons and keep pace with progress."

What is **Good** Corporate Citizenship?

Being a good corporate citizen should be a part of every organization's overall strategy. It starts at the top and isn't something that should be approached in a haphazard way.

Oftentimes, companies get involved in particular charities or causes because they have a direct connection to the CEO or other company leadership. Those initiatives are important but sometimes can be more difficult to get companywide buy-in for support.

When businesses align themselves with community issues that have a tie-in to the company itself, the results both internally and externally can be magnified exponentially. A couple examples could include the homebuilder who promotes fences around backyard pools to help prevent drownings, or the pet supply company deeply committed to animal welfare efforts.

There are also a number of considerations for finding the right place for the community involvement of top company leaders.

Community Organizations — Business

These include chambers of commerce, economic development organizations and other organized business advocacy groups. Participating in the overall business and economic health of a community show a commitment to others who also have a vested interest in a market.

Community Organizations — Nonprofit

Every community has dozens of worthwhile organizations needing corporate support and guidance. Often these nonprofits have direct or indirect connections to the business or have goals that align with the corporation's overall mission. These should always be researched very well to determine the appropriate fit.

Industry Organizations

A clear demonstration of leadership is how involved the company is in its own industry. In addition to business and community organizations, there are typically industry organizations at both the local and national levels that should be evaluated for participation and support. Involvement can also often provide a competitive edge.

Events

In most communities, there are a number of business and charitable events that should be considered for attending on behalf of the organization. These could include galas and other events such as golf tournaments, taste events, specialty dinners, etc., which directly connect to the organization's outreach strategy or which have other connections to the company.

Need help connecting? Our team can help guide you to success.

Scott Hanson, APR, PRSA Fellow

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Founding Member of PRGN, Two-Time Former President, former Executive Committee member, Bylaws Chair

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B2B Tech Communications:
Cook Once, Eat Twice

Sean Dowdall

Landis Communications, Inc.
President
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Website: landispr.com

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Past PRGN Treasurer

Media relations activities for B2B communications rely on content that rarely should have a single-purpose use. **Everything you create should be leveraged across communications channels.**

Content creation is a cornerstone of any B2B communications plan. Writing a white paper? Use snippets for organic social media posts and copy for digital ads. Producing an instructional video? Create a spokes-comic character you can use as a chatbot on your website and give them their own Twitter handle. Hosting a webinar? Edit it down for a quick one-minute "best-of" reel for your YouTube channel and pull quotes for a series of social posts.

Trade shows aren't going away, but we can be smarter about participating. COVID fundamentally upended the trade show industry. Moving forward, **we have to think about bringing the show floor experience to important contacts who don't attend** (for whatever reason, hopefully not a global pandemic). Did something inspiring/funny/unexpected happen in the booth? Share those moments in a post-show e-blast. A panel or presentation goes exceptionally well? Send the recording to important sales leads with an offer for a personalized zoom Q&A. Lots of swag? How about gifting that with a card that says, "Sorry we missed you."

Trade media relations is a building block – not the end game. Media relations is like cooking in a way. Great meals can take a lot of effort and please a lot of people. Why not make more and have it again? Cook once, eat twice.

You can have the greatest media hit of all time, but if you don't have supporting programs to move the overall strategy along with it – you've missed an opportunity and wasted time. **Treat media relations as an important part of your overall plan, not as the plan itself.**

> "You can have the greatest media hit of all time, but if you don't have supporting programs to move the overall strategy along with it – you've missed an opportunity and wasted time."

Dare to Take **the First Step!**

Pitching is one of the keys to success in PR. It is by proactively approaching journalists, influencers and decision-makers of all kinds that PR professionals create opportunities that move the needle.

One of the most important things to do if you have the desire to make your story run in the media is to have the courage to get on the radar screen of those who influence and/or make the decisions at your target media. You must build relationships with them, and create new connections moving forward.

Building relationships is certainly one of the best investments you can make! Unfortunately, for some, getting in touch with unknown people can seem insurmountable. It probably has something to do with the fear of rejection. But it's a shame because taking the first step can be incredibly opportunity-creating.

> "It's amazing how even busy people are most often open to an exchange that can mark the beginning of a fruitful and sometimes long-lasting relationship."

I remember when I started my career how difficult it was for me to pick up the phone and pitch journalists. It took me some time to recognize that I was saying no instead of the other way around. I then realized how true the old saying is that "who tries nothing has nothing." It's amazing how even busy people are most often open to an exchange that can mark the beginning of a fruitful and sometimes long-lasting relationship.

So, don't be shy, always dare to take the first step. If it proves to be too difficult, join a PR agency and do some media relations work for a while. Or get in touch with Jia Jiang, author and speaker on overcoming rejection, and try his rejection resilience coaching (www.rejectiontherapy.com).

Stéphane Billiet

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we change
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Advice for **PR Firms**

Uwe Schmidt

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Past PRGN president and
Regional Vice President Europe,
Middle East and Africa

Here is our recipe for long-standing success. Industrie-Contact AG has managed to be successful in a fast-moving business for over 40 years.

Here is how we did it.

Focus on industries you know something about, because the chances of doing good PR in industries you know little about are not high. The business will then be short-lived, as the customer will be dissatisfied.

Retain your staff and be certain they can work independently. Refresh the staff in a targeted way, trying not to put too much pressure on the existing team. Continue to meet customer requirements in the best possible way.

Make an effort to **retain your clients for the long term**, as this will give the agency a healthy order book on which to base further growth.

Be financially strong to minimize dependence on banks in times of crisis or to be completely independent of them.

> "Continue your education forever. Never stop learning no matter how old you are."

Build a leadership team that allows a good mix of senior level experience, fresh energy and new directions.

Make sure that your **website is always up-to-date** and that the SEO work never slackens. This is how it becomes a lead machine.

Be part of an **international network** like PRGN that allows you to be independent of the domestic market (red ocean).

Continue your education forever. Never stop learning no matter how old you are.

Don't be fixated only on profit maximization or growth. **Enjoy your work** with your own team and customers.

30 years PRGN

THE WORLD'S LOCAL AGENCY

Celebrating 30 Years of PRGN

30 Years of PRGN Presidents

Year					
1992	Robert Dean	2002-03	Perry Goldsmith	2013-14	David Landis
1993	Mary Ann Miller	2003-04	John Echeveste	2014-15	Uwe Schmidt
1994	Dale Zabriskie	2004-05	Colburn Aker	2015-16	Ed Stevens
1995-96	Jack Fearey	2005-06	Peter Sewell	2016-17	Evelyn Holtzhausen
1997	Melissa Sturges	2006-07	Anne Buchanan	2017-18	Christina Rytter
1998	Scott Hanson	2007-08	Scott Hanson	2018-19	C. L. Conroy
1998	Ron O'Connor	2008-09	Frank Cullen	2019-20	Aaron Blank
1999	Sally Jackson	2009-10	Ze Schiavoni	2020-21	Robert Bauer
2000	Anne Buchanan	2010-11	Patricia Perez	2021-22	Alexandra Dinita
2000	Dave Neuger	2011-12	Francine Robbens	2022-23	David Fuscus
2001-02	Jay VanVechten	2012-13	Mark Paterson		

Insights From PRGN Members

30 PR TIPS

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