



**CUSTOMER
MANUFACTURING
GROUP**

USING THE PRESS AS PART OF YOUR MARKET RELATIONS PLAN

A DEMAND CREATION TACTIC THAT WORKS!

Determining how to use the press in your market relations program is much like designing a house. The first thing you need is a plan.

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To communicate effectively you must establish a properly focused market relations program. Well established market relations activities bring your message to potential customers and industry trendsetters more effectively. The press can be an important method for achieving your goals of increased awareness for your firm. Using the press as part of an overall market relations program is the focus of this paper.

Determining how to use the press in your market relations program is much like designing a house. The first thing you need is a plan. Certain elements of your plan will be much like any other firm's market relations plan . . . just as most houses contain bedrooms and bathrooms. How your press relations¹ plan is focused, however, will make the plan fit your needs.

A press relations program is really part of an overall market relations program. Often times it is the majority of the program . . . or a key piece of your overall relationship plan. To be effective you must think through not only the press relation portion, but the entire market relations issue.

The purpose of your press relations activities is to help you reach your sales goals, short and long term. To be effective, your market relations strategy must be as unique as your individual strategy.

Properly focused press relations activities can bring your message to potential customers and industry trendsetters more effectively . . . and affordably . . . than any other market relations tool. You can reach out to your potential customers with a credibility-building barrage of coverage in the media that most influence them.

To begin executing your market relations plan, read the following basic, affordable press relations activities. Which ones will help you meet your bottom-line marketing goals?

¹ We have chosen to use the term press relations rather than the more common term of public relations for two reasons. First, the communications methodology and relationship being described here is with the press, and second the public isn't who you want to communicate to or relate to . . . its your market. Public relations is unfocused, and unnecessarily expensive. Effective relationships with the press, and using the press to enhance your market relations is the objective.

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Identify Your Target Audience

Whom are you trying to influence with your market relations program? Potential customers? Industry leaders? Others? The first step is to build as specific a profile as you can of each of your target audiences.

Determine Your Mix Of Advertising Versus Press

An effective market relations program includes a mix of paid media . . . advertising . . . and unpaid media . . . news. There are advantages to both, and they can work synergistically if planned.²

Budget constraints and a realistic understanding of the "new value" of your activities play key roles in balancing the mix for your company.

Build Your Lists

Once you identify your target audience(s), you must identify the media that most influence them. Then you can pinpoint the key editors at these publications — i.e., the editors of the magazine section that covers products or services similar to yours, or the magazine's local or regional editor, or the reporter who specializes in your industry.

You may want to create several lists, such as one of "key" editors at your most important publications whom you can call personally whenever you have news to announce.

You may also create a longer, more general list of editors to whom you want to send only news releases. This longer list can also include national and international wire services where appropriate.

This media list is also your target list for planning paid advertising and "advertorial." An advertorial is an article that you pay to have placed in the target publication. Not all media will accept advertorials . . . but many will.

Don't Forget Bloggers

In today's new media world, bloggers can be an important part of your media relations. Identify the top bloggers that your market reads. Look for up and coming bloggers who may be influential thought leaders. Make a list of these bloggers and keep them informed. Alternatively, or in addition, one or more

² We use the term market relations instead of marketing communications because we believe your real purpose should be to build an on-going relationship with your market, not just communication.

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people in your company may choose to create a blog. In today's world this can also be an effective marketing relations tactic.

Announce Your News

Whenever your company has a newsworthy announcement such as:

- new products/services
- new product features
- important personnel changes

You may want to send a news release with a photo to everyone on your lists. You can write and mail or e-mail these releases yourself, or out-source it.

There is no reason to commit yourself to sending a certain number of news releases per month. No-news news releases do nothing to enhance your credibility and may, in fact, do the opposite. "More than 82% of news releases received by the print media go directly into the round file."

Develop Background Materials

You need to write one or more press "backgrounders." These documents look like long news releases. Instead of announcing something new, they discuss one topic in depth, such as an important product or service, or your company's history and key management. You can develop these backgrounders on one or more important topics.

Create An Editorial Calendar

You must identify the upcoming special reports and special issues your key publications are planning, then create your personalized editorial calendar that will alert you to prime opportunities to have your company included in these influential articles.

You contact and begin working with the editors on special issue coverage at least two to three months ahead of the publication date. These issues are also often the right places to advertise. Riding a wave of existing activity is a good way to leverage limited resources.

Place Articles In Key Publications And On The Web

You can develop outlines for potential articles that you, or freelancers, can write for your key magazines or websites to publish. These articles can be bylined by different people from your company, depending on the topic.

Once you've interested a publication or website in the topic, either you or freelancers write the article. (This sequence of steps saves the expense of com-

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pleting the article without having a magazine commitment to publish it.) Article topics can range from explanations of your technology and product or service to your company's unique spin on marketing and industry trends.

Take Advantage Of Your Tradeshow Participation

If your company attends trade shows, you should make the most of these golden opportunities to come face-to-face with the press. You can develop a customer press kit to take to the show containing one or more announcements, news releases, photos, back-grounders, and other pertinent materials. You can also contact editors and bloggers in advance of the show to set appointments for them to meet with officials of your company.

Just The Beginning

The ideas above are just the beginning of a press relations program. Depending upon your industry, products, and needs, radio or television may be an appropriate outlet for your market relations program. "White papers," industry panels, and other opportunities to influence your market can all be part of your program.

Some Examples

You can expect your market relations program to generate small articles on new product announcements (picked up from news releases), articles on general industry topics showcasing your company and its products or services, staff-written magazine pieces on your company and/or products, and articles written by your company or freelancers you hire. You can position one or more of your people as an "expert" who the press may call upon for input or comment in various articles.

Getting Outside Help

Many companies can assist you in compiling a list of editors and bloggers, and writing and sending press releases, or creating advertising. However, you must be able to integrate your comprehensive strategy into a market relations campaign designed to support your sales tactics. This integration increases your likelihood of reaching your goals.

Generating this kind of press coverage is not difficult. It takes focus, effort, and expertise.

More Information About Customer Manufacturing Group

If you would like more information about how to apply a process to improve your marketing/sales function, simply contact us and we'd be happy to help you get started. From sweeping marketing/sales management process strategies to specific branding or product launch services, Customer Manufacturing Group can help.

If you'd like to learn more about Customer Manufacturing Group, or for a complimentary subscription to Customer Manufacturing Updates, give us a call at (800) 947-0140, fax us at (408) 727-3949, visit our website at www.customermanufacturing.com, or e-mail us at info@customermanufacturing.com.

We have offices in major cities in the United States, and our experts travel extensively throughout the world. If you'd like to schedule a meeting when we're in your area, just let us know.