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Get Maximum Impact from News Coverage

By Rusty Cawley

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The whole point of PR Rainmaking is to use the news media to attract new clients and customers. So doesn't it make sense to get the most out of the publicity that you generate?

Here are seven ways to do just that:

1. Focus on the print media: Yes, it's great to get your face on TV or your voice on radio. But the medium that provides you with the most opportunity is print. Why? Because it's much easier to pass along a newspaper article or a magazine feature than it is to get a prospect to listen to a cassette or to watch a video. Cheaper, too.
2. Supply prospects and influentials with a steady supply of clips: Make plenty of high-quality copies, then mail them to the folks who can help you the most.
3. Package your articles into a media kit: Organize your clips, have them professionally copied and package them. Reporters love the security of knowing that others have previously written about your company.
4. Buy reprints for your best hits: Most publications offer quality reprints of their articles. For the very best of your clips, pay the extra bucks and get the official reprints.
5. Extract quotes for marketing materials: Always look for sentences in your clips that you can include as third-party endorsements in your brochures, ads and sales literature.
6. Link your Web site to your best clips: Make it easy for a browser to find your clips. Create a "press room" that will connect directly to the online versions of articles about your company.
7. Go for both quality and quantity: Both count when it comes to clips. One story in the Wall Street Journal is impressive. But so are a hundred clips from well-regarded trade publications. So when you organize your clips, be sure to highlight your most impressive hits, but go for heft as well.

Remember: The odds of any one prospect reading any particular story about you or your company are very low. Hedge your bets by putting copies of your best clips right in front of your prospects.

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EVALUATE PR INFLUENCE BY CRUNCHING A FEW NUMBERS

By Clive Camm

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Everybody wants to see tangible results when they invest their hard-earned cash. But when it comes to public relations, we are dealing with ideas and persuasion rather than nuts and bolts. There is an ongoing challenge in the communications business to prove that a \$50,000 PR campaign, for example, generated at least \$50,000 worth of business-building media. Here's one way to get a quantifiable evaluation of your media relations programs.

Content analysis is the rather dry term used to describe the quantitative and qualitative value of news stories generated by an organization's PR department. Content analysis goes beyond determining "equivalent advertising value" – what the coverage would cost if it were purchased as advertising - to determine the impact of specific messages on reporters in a media campaign.

And while learning that the equivalent ad value of your campaign is multiples greater than your original budget is indeed gratifying, diving deeper into the details will tell you whether your messages are hitting their mark and how a campaign may be refined to increase its effectiveness.

IS YOUR NEWS GENERALLY POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE? In comprehensive content analysis, we tabulate every news story and track how positively or negatively news items about your organization are being covered.

WHICH OF YOUR MESSAGES ARE BEING CONVEYED? Most organizations seeking media coverage understand the power of key messages - the, perhaps, three succinct media lines that are woven into interviews, releases and other interactions with the media. Content analysis, we can tell you whether those messages are getting out. It will also tell you the specific issues the media is focusing on.

HOW SUPPORTIVE ARE YOUR STAKEHOLDERS REACTING TO YOUR NEWS? You'll have supporters and critics of your news and content analysis can

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tabulate what third-party commentators are saying about you and your organization.

WHAT PRIORITY DID THE MEDIA GIVE YOUR NEWS? In newspapers, for instance, most readers look at pictures, captions, headlines and other "display" copy. They tend to read the first few paragraphs of a story rather than the whole story. They tend to spend more time with

the front page than other sections. Consequently, your story has more impact if it has more prominence or if it comes with a picture. It has much less impact if it is buried. Similarly, if your organization's name is in the lead of a story, the coverage is more valuable than if you are mentioned at the end of a story. Comprehensive content analysis will assess the impact you carry with the story.

WHERE ARE YOUR MESSAGES BEING SEEN? Although content analysis can't tell you who read your article, it can tell you media outlet-by-media outlet which audiences were exposed to your message.

Not only does content analysis assist you in objectively assessing your campaigns, it can also highlight other communications issues that need to be addressed. Organizations that are sensitive to developing issues - nascent stories that are gathering steam and will need to be dealt with in the future - find that continual analysis of their news coverage helps them manage, defuse or deflect problems before they become problems. Alternatively, content analysis helps organizations identify new opportunities that they would not otherwise see.

Of course, there is a cost to doing comprehensive content analysis. Depending on the volume of news items, it may cost \$2,000 to \$5,000 per month. But organizations that make content analysis an integral part of their communications strategy report that they can, based on the hard evidence, make decisions about and refinements to campaigns that yield a high return on that investment.

Clive Camm is VP at Verus Public Relations (<http://www.verus.com>) and provides the only comprehensive content analysis service in western Canada. A specialist in campaign evaluations, he has a special summer PR package to introduce organizations to the promotional power of the media and the Internet.

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