

***PR – reaching the parts that other  
Marketing cannot reach***

**An ITPR White Paper**

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## Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Introduction.....	5
Valuing PR.....	6
Consistent Messaging.....	6
Generating Copy.....	7
Reaching the Audience.....	9
Don't forget the Google audience.....	10
Conclusion.....	12

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## Executive Summary

The basis of good quality PR is as relevant today in the twenty tens as it ever was. The fact is, we live in an era where the quality of your business communication is defined by your website and your LinkedIn profile and blogging is a standard component of the marketer's armoury. With so many online publications and social media sites, instant delivery of a message is now a possibility, rather than waiting for a weekly or even a monthly publication to publish it.

The media needs good quality, well-considered copy now more than ever. Content remains King! And with increasing numbers of outlets to feed, the demand for relevant quality content is rising fast.

As a result, a well written piece of PR is increasingly valuable!

### *But consider these key questions:*

Who is generating the copy for your blog or your LinkedIn page? Is it interesting? Who is it reaching?

Will the copy resonate with your key audience? Is the messaging consistent? Are you tracking what customers – and competitors – are saying about your business? And how are you responding?

Do you have time to create all this content and make sure it appears consistently, week in and week out, keeping your profile looking fresh and current?

Maybe that is where you need some help?

### *Let's be frank:*

Marketing activity of any kind – and that includes all forms of corporate communications – has one overriding objective – generating sales!

There is no doubt that the Media landscape has changed radically over the past decade. Customers and potential customers receive information in an ever-expanding number of ways, from regular emailed or online alerts to a traditional hard copy of the daily newspaper. Communicating with all of these individuals in a way that suits them and still delivers consistent

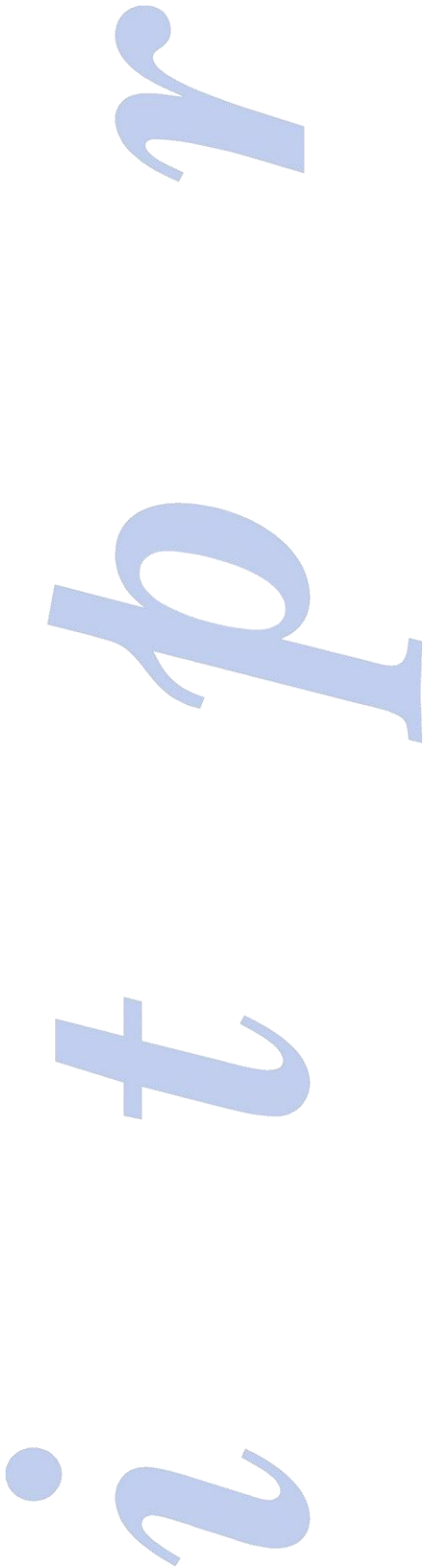
corporate messaging is a challenge. And just adding a weekly blog from your top techie is not going to cut it, however insightful he may be.

Yet a well managed PR campaign can, and should, deliver quantifiable value. Putting in place clear processes for generating good quality copy, not only fuels the needs of diverse media but also supports the rest of the marketing function, from web copy to direct marketing campaigns.

And for the vast majority of organisations lacking regular news updates – due often to publicity shy customers – a campaign based on thought leadership can generate both good quality coverage and debate by hooking onto the latest industry issue or regulatory change.

Critically, messaging will not only be consistent and accurate, but it will also be tailored to meet the specific needs of each type of media, from the full-scale press release to the quick 'tweet'. It puts the organisation back in control over corporate communications, provides a rapid platform for tracking and responding to online discussions about the business and offers a measurable way of generating sales leads.

Of course, social media is critical in the twenty tens. But the traditional Press is far from dead. This white paper outlines the need to address traditional media, digital media, social media and search to fulfil today's corporate communications challenges and provides clear guidance as to how best to make that investment generate tangible bottom line business value.



## Introduction

### *Taming the media beast*

Business to business (B2B) media, and indeed the Media generally, has been a constantly changing landscape over the past few years. It has adapted rapidly in response to the introduction of new technologies and the changing ways in which individuals receive their daily or hourly dosage of information.

The Media has developed dramatically from organisations viewing hard copy trade Press as the sole media route to the prospect's desk, relying on a certain amount of advertising space and editorial pages within which to reach their target audience. With the rise of online publications and the inherent lack of pagination constraints for both editorial and advertising, a far more effective way to reach target audiences arose, providing organisations with the ability to reach a broader, even global, market for less cost.

Following this was the much talked of arrival of Web 2.0 – blogs and social networking offering a way for any individual to be an editor and a publisher. Social media is, by definition, highly accessible, allowing anyone to start a blog at zero cost. But the boundaries of social media are also very different. Hard copy newspapers and journals have always abided by strict guidelines and clearly defined laws – verifying information where possible to ensure accuracy; applying editorial integrity. The online world can be very different. Not only is there largely little or no control, but despite changes to legislation in 2010, the law is complex and information – and misinformation – can be rapidly propagated across a global marketplace. Of course there are very notable exceptions, but it's the sheer number of online publications that causes the headaches.

The online audience – including customers, prospects, partners and competitors – can swiftly exploit blogs and social media facilities, such as Twitter, to take an active interest in what your organisation does, what your brand stands for and even who you are as individuals. These companies will promote, share, comment, criticise and review all that is said by and about your brand, through the most immediate of mechanisms.

Quite suddenly, while the route to customers and potential customers may appear quicker, and cheaper, the risk of damage to brand and corporate reputation is greatly increased. As some organisations have discovered to

their detriment, the emergence of these Media is not just an opportunity to engage in active, two-way conversations with individual opinion holders. It has become essential to control what is being said about your brand.

## Valuing PR

So just how is your organisation going to reach the wider audience whilst still retaining control over the messaging?

It is now very clear that organisations need good content, timely distribution and co-ordinated messaging. While many Media analysts thought and openly stated that the ability for anyone to be a journalist made the traditional media industry redundant, it has become apparent that the constant growth of online publishers and the inherent necessity to generate an increasing level of content has made an effective and concerted PR effort all the more important.

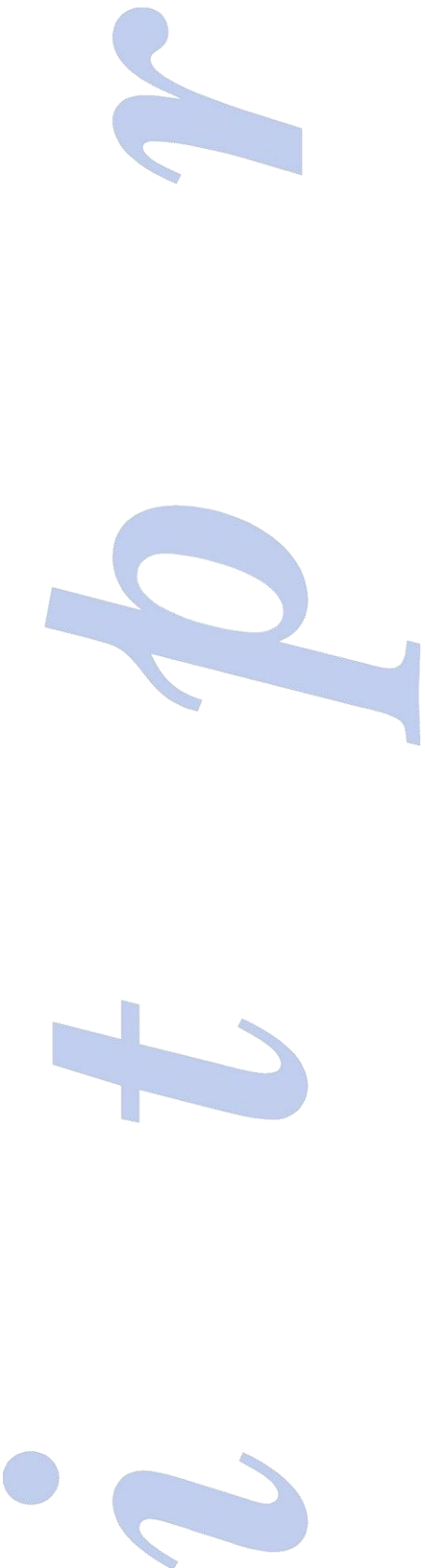
By feeding the media 'beast' regular content, targeted to the needs of the specific journalist, publication or medium, good news and industry comment can be pushed to all of a brand's targets – be they prospects, LinkedIn and Twitter followers or employees – promoting an image of corporate success, expertise in the field and removing the opportunity for negative publicity.

Simply put, a co-ordinated and dedicated PR strategy puts you in control of what is said about your organisation, irrespective of the type of media.

## Consistent Messaging

*It's the content, not just the pipeline*

Whether responding fast to online comment, or proactively delivering a new considered message to the market, content is king. Every aspect of marketing relies upon fresh content – corporate news announcements, contract signings, case studies, news commentary, and thought leadership. PR copy is constructed to meet the needs of a demanding Media; it is informative, fact-reliant and subtle in its messaging; making it a suitable tool for even prospect-targeting activities.



Therefore PR generated copy can and should be issued to the media to support new product delivery, enhance brand or exploit new customer wins. But this information can also be re-used in website copy, corporate blogs, email marketing, direct marketing (DM) and brochure text. Taking this approach leverages the investment in strong copy and it ensures corporate messaging is consistent across all marketing activities.

The material that a PR campaign uses is inherently versatile; it can be adapted to any of the various media being targeted and the content used across the marketing function as above. Indeed, this content can be recycled within the PR campaign: a single pre-approved article can be recycled several times in various forms to address different vertical markets, for example, or can emphasise key issues to different customer audiences.

But while PR copy is suitable for many uses, marketing copy is particularly tailored to marketing. Sending a brochure or an e-shot to a journalist, for example, will not generate any coverage as the messages are often too self serving for the Editor to consider.

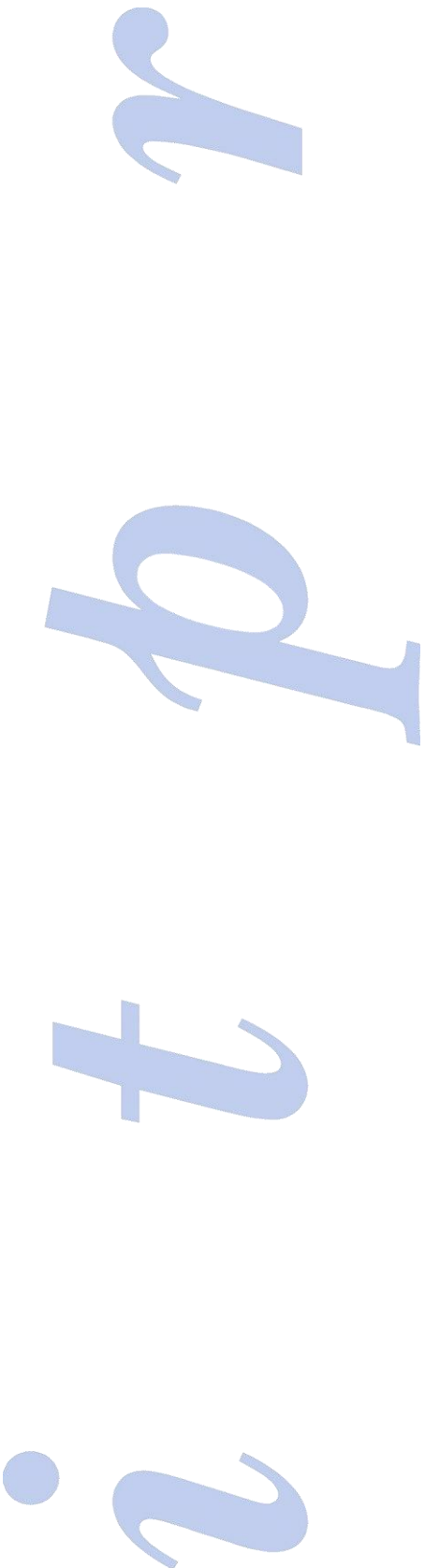
### Generating Copy

The challenge for many organisations, however, is to generate enough high quality, relevant copy to attract a demanding media, as well as feed into other aspects of marketing. And, critically, PR is not all about news. There is a widespread misconception that media coverage is just about news stories. And many organisations rely solely on news for their outbound press material. But there are a number of disadvantages associated with this approach:

- ***Lack of control and consistency***

Very, very few organisations can guarantee a steady stream of fortnightly or even monthly news. While things are always happening within a company, the activity is not always newsworthy or of interest to the Press, and the announcements that are of value are often dependent on a customer or partner signing them off or even agreeing to the publicity.

As a result, the well-intentioned plan for a steady stream of coverage is quickly scuppered when a partner takes too long to sign off a release or a customer does not wish to publicise the contract or



order. The importance of creating and issuing releases is not in doubt, but the reliance on them as a sole method of approaching the Press is in many cases inherently doomed from the start. The inability to guarantee consistency will inevitably mean that no momentum can be built and journalists and readers have forgotten the last announcement by the time the new one is issued, undermining the value of the activity in the first place. And the greater the momentum, the more attention that is paid to each announcement.

- ***Losing Momentum***

A news-reliant PR campaign can also result in intermittent coverage. Being regularly seen in the media builds momentum; if the coverage slows down customers, suppliers and prospects will quickly forget about your business. It is essential to stay in the eye of the reader to ensure the organisation is considered in the buying cycle.

Issuing four strong press releases on customer wins and soaring sales figures in the space of two months will generate strong recognition amongst customers and prospects. But what if the announcements dry up, even if through no fault of your own? You may be continuing to sign deals, but for reasons beyond your control, you cannot secure approval of the release, or any announcement of the deal is prohibited. Those readers who were singing your praises two months ago will quickly forget and turn their attention to competitors that are still in the Press. All the value of the momentum built over previous months is quickly lost.

It is therefore important to attain a base level of coverage in diverse areas to prevent the appearance of a sporadic low level profile in the Press. This requires a set of materials that can target the other opportunities within publications, from features to letters pages. Talking about your USPs and proposition and offering advice or warnings to the market allows you to position your brand as authoritative without relying on customer stories.

This thought leadership content is also typically not as time-sensitive as news content, or if it is, its shelf life is measured in months not weeks. With the right copy-generating processes in place, a PR campaign can leverage regular updates on corporate views, based on recent movements in the industry or the questions and issues being encountered in the sales

environment by incorporating the spokespeople's views as an additional or alternative view.

Basing the content on industry trends or new legislation – items that will be talked about over a longer period of time – makes the material timely without being time-sensitive. And content can also be used in many ways – from comment in larger features, letters to the editor and full by-lined opinion article pieces, not to mention corporate blogs or as comments in response to online articles or blogs. This is a level of flexibility that simply cannot be achieved through just news-based content.

Thought leadership gives companies the ability to remain newsworthy and relevant over time – something that cannot be achieved through news alone.

## Reaching the Audience

### *Not everyone receives their content in the same way*

With the advent of so many methods of media distribution, there is now a risk of missing prospects simply by not approaching them through their preferred manner. The nature of their business or the way they prefer to work may well determine how they like to receive their content. Some decision-makers, and their influencers and advisors, will read news articles online, others will rely on their peers to recommend material through social bookmarking or 're-Tweeting' articles of interest, while others will prefer the traditional, tactile hard copy. It is therefore vitally important that any effort that is put into PR or marketing activity is spread across as many different media as possible.

But this is not a matter of simply thoughtlessly throwing material to everybody – each and every medium should be considered in turn. The single message should be subtly and suitably tailored so that the content can permeate across all the various media – whether that is a press release, a comment in response to an online article, a tweet, a blog, or even a full page placement in a hard copy. The same message, and even the same core content, can be tailored both in length and style to make sure that each community is catered for.

Another critical factor to consider is using each medium in the correct manner. For example, don't try and cram a sales message into 140

characters. Instead, those members of your audience who rely on Twitter want an informal introduction and a link to your full article online in the relevant publication, or perhaps a link to your corporate blog.

Each organisation needs to keep to just a few key messages, and those messages need to be consistent across the entire business. Engaging with a PR agency allows you to distil the messages, cut, restyle and tailor them, then distribute each version to the various media to 'hit' as many people as possible and therefore generate as many new leads as possible.

### Don't forget the Google audience

Google has changed the world and search is now a part of daily lives. Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is therefore now an essential element of any business that requires leads from the internet. With so many companies now optimising their web pages, those not making a concerted effort will be left behind.

With a multitude of audiences out there all choosing to receive news in different ways, it is vital that each approach be tailored to suit the different recipients. In addition to issuing sector specific or media specific content, many organisations are now sending out SEO'd material to the online world, safe in the knowledge that Google is guaranteed to read it.

And this is the crucial point – Google must be treated as an audience all of its own, as it frankly does not read material in the same way as human beings.

In Google's calculations of assigning greater importance, and therefore higher page rank, to various pertinent websites, a range of parameters are added and removed and increased and decreased in importance as the closely-guarded secret of the Google algorithm adapts with the range of content and media used. This means that Google's current preferences have to be accommodated within the issued material just as much as a journalist's or an analyst's.

What is often missed in SEO however is just how much of a part PR has in this. We have seen above that PR is the machine that delivers the content and it is this content that can and should be distributed to feed the Google beast. While a piece of coverage in a top tier publication is incredibly

valuable, in order to ensure the company website appears high up in the Google rankings, organisations are going the extra mile in creating additional material composed from existing copy that includes direct links to the corporate site and distributing it widely throughout the internet.

PR material can be used for various SEO purposes – Twitter feeds, blogs, website copy – but the primary purpose is for web releases. Material already used in the traditional fashion can be optimised by inserting key terms and anchor text links. On distribution and web-wide publication, an organisation can receive links directly back into the company website, thereby creating first page website listings in just days.

Google is an audience all of its own – cater for it.

### ***Getting your head around SEO – the basics***

Think of Google in its original domain – a way of searching academic articles. The more an academic document is cited by others, then the more reputable it is and therefore the greater priority and placement it should be given in search result listings.

Therefore, if a document (read: website) mentions the searched-for phrase just once, then it is clearly worthy of inclusion in the results pages, albeit in a low position.

But a document that mentions the phrase or word repeatedly in the body of the document is clearly more relevant than one that mentions it only once. Indeed, if both the body of the text and the title of the document (read: H1 header) include the phrase, then its importance in relation to this phrase is all the more increased.

Further still, if other documents throughout the library (read: worldwide web) cite and link to this document, then it is clearly an authority on the topic and is one to be ranked all the higher. The more citations or links, the more relied upon and reputable it is and should therefore be given the highest possible billing.

(Clearly there is far more to SEO – but starting to understand a little of how Google thinks is half the battle!)

## Conclusion

### *PR shortens the sales process*

Apart from the importance of retaining control over corporate messaging, PR can and should directly affect the bottom line. And this is key: PR is not just about your image and reputation – it directly affects your sales pipeline, in both quality and quantity.

The greatest battle for any sales situation is overcoming the question of “Who are you, and why should I be interested?”, and PR is perfectly placed to help.

Unlike advertising or direct marketing that is often viewed with cynicism and ignored, PR carries the silent endorsement of the publications within which it is published. If you read a customer success story or a feature article in your favoured trade publication, and a similar announcement in an e-newsletter from a vendor, which are you more likely to place the most credibility in?

On reading articles detailing your successes or your thoughts on the relevant market, prospects understand your proposition far better than they would through advertising. By identifying with the situation described in such detail in their relevant trade media, they remember which organisation solved the problem, discussed their current pain point or helped boost efficiencies/revenues/leads. As a result, when the next sales call or piece of marketing reaches them, they are already aware of the USPs and the benefits of the proposition, and are instead moving straight past “Who are you?” onto how to engage with you.

It is, therefore, essential to ensure messaging is consistent across all Media, yet tailored to each specific medium; and that all potential prospects are reached, irrespective of Media preference. And that most definitely includes traditional journalism. Without doubt, social Media is an important component of any PR activity, and so is search, but aligning it with your traditional PR campaign will make for a stronger, consistent argument, which reaches the entire audience, across all platforms and using the same content.

It is organisations that embrace traditional, digital and search that can create the consistent, relevant messaging required to drive sales and reinforce the brand in today’s complex multi-layered Media environment.

Traditional, digital and search-based PR is set to remain at the heart of all clear business communications strategy during the twenty tens!

*For more information, please contact us on +44(0)1932 578 800 or visit [www.itpr.co.uk](http://www.itpr.co.uk)*