Make a PR Plan and Work It

A William Mills Agency Whitepaper

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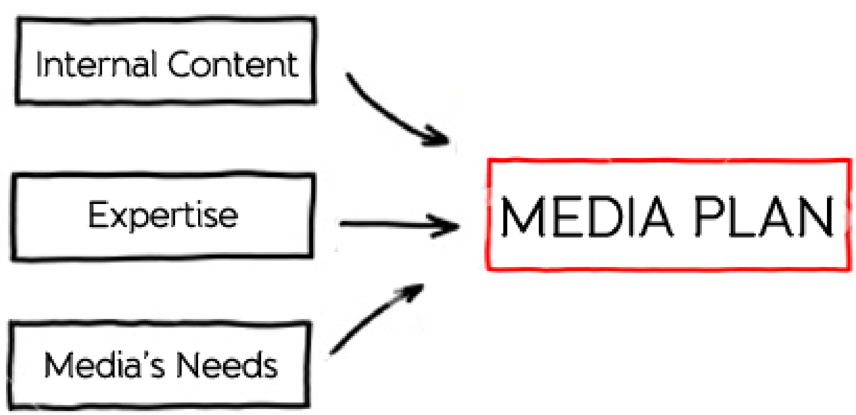
Make a PR Plan and Work It

It seems that some companies continually get consistent news coverage. Do these companies have an inside connection with all the editors and reporters? Is it possible they have a more interesting product, technology, service or story than other companies? Chances are they don't. There is nothing secret about establishing media relationships and sustaining news coverage. However, companies that get consistent media coverage follow one fundamental public relations principle: make a PR plan and work it.

Successful financial public relations is a process that is forged in strategic planning and disciplined execution. Public relations activities help create a strong public image for a company, product or service and can reach a large audience without the expense of traditional advertising and marketing.

Two decades ago, William Mills Agency developed a planning process for its clients called Intelligent Information Integration (I^3). I^3 is a simple concept based on the idea of providing the right content to the media at the right time. The plan merges your internal content and expertise with the editorial needs and agendas of your targeted media. Since the media care only about their audience and not your company, it is imperative to develop a media plan that resonates with their readers.



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The I[3] Process Where do you fit?

To identify compelling news content, we conduct a half-day planning session every six months with each of our clients. During this planning session, we look for things that make your company ***stand out*** from your competition from a news value perspective. Our clients are encouraged to think beyond their product and service offerings. We identify industry trends, issues and concerns that can be discussed as well as the true value proposition to your customers and prospects.

It's not the solution you offer the world that is important, it's the interesting story you offer the news outlet.

We determine all key messaging and the news content that your organization has available to share with the media – be it new products and services or new locations. Hot topics in the industry where your executives could provide commentary are also explored. Editors like controversial articles, and they like articles where one of your customers had a challenge and your organization was able to provide assistance. Other powerful tools include letters to the editor and comments added to online articles or industry blog posts.

This discovery process is important because the public relations plan must first address how your story fits into the needs of your customers and prospects through the lens of the media. It's not the solution you offer the world that is important, it's the interesting story you offer the news outlet. That interesting story then becomes of interest to your prospects and customers.

The I[3] Process Review the media's needs and landscape

Each media outlet is different. Regardless of whether it is a magazine, news outlet, television show or blog, they all have different audience demographics, writing requirements and news styles. This requires that the public relations plan contain media content that specifically fits each media outlet's editorial needs. Focus only on those outlets that can make a difference to your company and remember: one size does not fit all!

For each target media outlet we ask, "If you were the editor, one of their readers, or an audience member, what would interest you?"

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To ensure there is something for each editor's needs, the I3 plan will outline various public relations tools, including:

Opinion Pieces
Providing media with opinion pieces, which can be on controversial issues or topics, demonstrate that you understand and care about the problems that your industry is trying to solve and helps companies and executives gain credibility. Readers are interested in fresh perspectives and new topics.

Case Studies
People want to learn how you've helped your customers succeed. Case studies validate you, your organization and products and services. Validation must come from your customer, analyst or consultant – not you – making case studies one of your most powerful means of communication.

Press Releases
Press releases are the foundation of all media relations programs since they are utilized to show news, positive growth and momentum for organizations. The news can include new products, product enhancements, strategic alliances, new hires, new clients, company growth, and company achievements, just to name a few.

Subject Matter Expert Sources
Establishing your executives as industry thought leaders increases credibility for your organization, establishes a personal face to an organization and helps your organization stand out from its competitors.

Integrate your content with media plans

The timing and packaging of news information is critical. After the initial planning meeting, WMA merges all news opportunities and company activities to coincide with the editorial calendars, trade show schedules and agendas of each of the targeted media. Editors trust our agency to bring them honest and balanced information. We make your story stand out and get the press coverage you need, because we know what the media needs and how they like content delivered.

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In addition to the public relations tools, the plan includes key company messages and positioning and, if needed, adjusts them to fit each media outlet. The plan also includes a calendar of activities that takes into account lead times for editorial deadlines.

The Written Plan

A successful action plan must be thorough and comprehensive. The agency's time-proven approach provides a solid roadmap to winning the attention and press coverage companies need to be successful in today's financial technology environment. The plan includes detailed summaries of the client, the industry value proposition, editorial value propositions, key messaging, news content, press releases, opinion pieces, expert articles and case studies. The target media and their editorial preferences are also outlined. The plan also includes a detailed monthly action plan making it easy for busy executives to follow public relations activities and opportunities.

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Summary

Without a public relations plan there is no process, no measurement of success or improvement. There is only chance and occasional luck. While no public relations plan is perfect, we've found that they significantly increase the likelihood of consistent coverage. The I^3 planning process also compels our clients to take a closer proactive look at their upcoming sales and marketing activities and key messaging over the six-month period because those activities are the driving force behind many of the public relations activities.

About William Mills Agency

William Mills Agency is the nation's largest independent public relations and marketing firm to the financial services industry. Founded in 1977, the Atlanta-based company has established its reputation in the industry through the successful execution of media relations, marketing services and crisis communications campaigns for hundreds of companies ranging in size from entrepreneurial start-ups to large, publicly traded corporations throughout North America, Europe and India.

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