

PR Best Practices for Startups

September 23, 2020

Learning Objectives

Within this presentation, you will be able to:

- › **Demonstrate** the fundamentals of public relations
- › **Explain** the difference between ‘news’ and ‘not news’
- › **Assess** tools, resources, materials to conduct public relations
- › **Apply** best practices to leverage press materials, i.e. press release, to ‘pitch’ a story to media



PR Discussion

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What is PR?

By definition, public relations is using “third party sources, i.e. the news media,” to tell **POSITIVE** stories about you, your company, your products cultivating **GOOD** relationships with press representatives.

PR can provide the following benefits to businesses:

- **Increase the visibility** of the brand in order to encourage more signups, sales
- **Attract attention** to the brand’s technology platform
- **Build out a thought leadership program** for the brand’s executives
- **Insert the brand into the overall conversation** around trends within the overall industry and ecosystem

What is PR?

- **Media Relations.** Establishing and managing relationships with media organizations and individuals. Generating publicity by acting as a source for media content.
- **Marketing Communications.** Leveraging communications channels and media relationships to generate demand for products and brand awareness.
- **Investor Relations.** Publishing quarterly reports, announcements, and regulatory disclosures. Responding to analyst, media, and investor inquiries.
- **Government Relations.** Communication with the government in areas that are compliance sensitive or that represent a regulatory risk.
- **Community Relations.** Supporting programs of sustainability and community engagement. Managing communications with communities and non-profits.
- **Industry Events.** Orchestrating participating in industry events to generate publicity and establish industry and media relationships.
- **Crisis Communications.** Leveraging an organization's communications channels and media relationships to support crisis management.

What is PR?

- At the end of day, news media transact in currency of 'news' and they need to find stories, preferably that no other news media is doing
- Therefore, you'll probably hear reporters say this to potential sources...





PR Elements

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What's Considered Newsworthy?



“News is about my title, my traffic, and my readers - not your company.”

Anyone in the Media Industry

What's Considered Newsworthy?

- **New:** “News” contains the word “new” is not a coincidence.
- **Timely and relevant:** Timely stories, often about an upcoming material event are often considered newsworthy.
- **Surprising:** Stories with an unexpected hook are candy to reporters.
- **Extremes or superlatives:** First, last, best, worst, biggest, smallest.

Messaging

- Before pitching your story, stop to think about what is truly newsworthy, especially to the news media and reporters you're targeting
- What are the key message points you want to convey in your story?
- Why should the news media care?
- For any news story or interview, you want to create and convey through repetition **three main message points about your company**
- Successful communication is based in large part on the frequency and consistency of the message. Rather than segment a company's message by the audience, the goal is to achieve the highest common denominator across all of the audiences
- A Messaging Matrix template showcases an overall point and messages that are validated by facts and figures and personalized through the institutionalized illustration, i.e. "make me care."

Messaging

▸ Sample Messaging Matrix template.

Phone.com is a portal for Internet-based phone services for home and small business

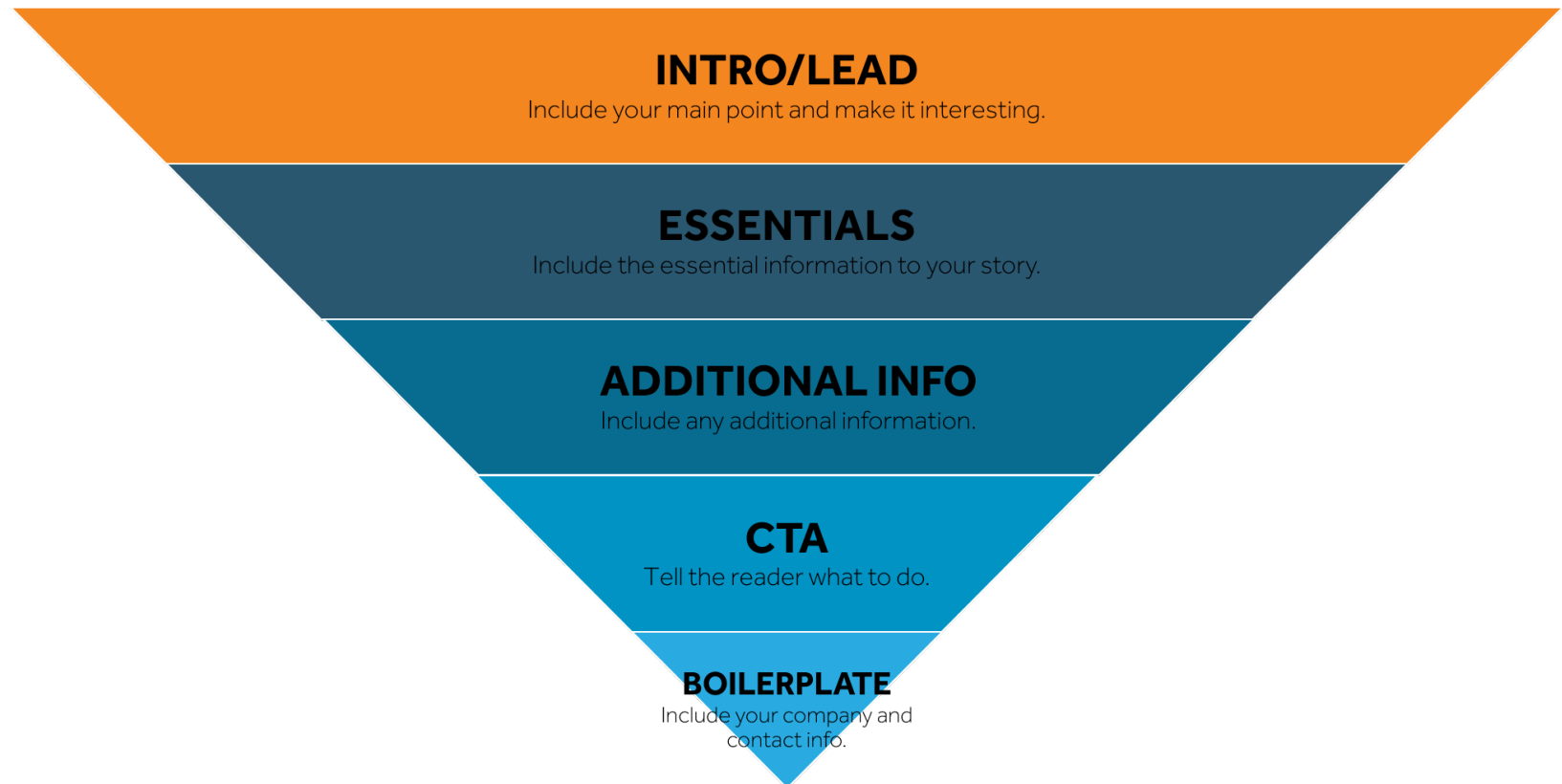
OBJECTIVE	MESSAGE	METRIC	MAKE ME CARE
WHY	As individuals and small businesses rely more and more on the Internet for their communications, they require value-oriented phone services that operate seamlessly out of homes, multiple locations and mobile phones	<i>Stat on customer dissastisfaction TBD</i>	40m VoIP customers in U.S.
HOW	Initially, Phone.com offers two complimentary services, one for small businesses through its "Virtual Office", and the other for individuals through its VoIP "Home Phone", with others on the way	20m Americans work from home and 500K new start ups per month	Ari's Home in NJ -
WHO	Phone.com was founded by Washington VC founder Michael Mann and VoIP veteran Ari Rabban, VoIP veteran AT&T, Lucent and VocalTec	<i>LocalTec sale price</i>	AT&T, Lucent and VocalTec

Press Release

- A press release is an official announcement (written or recorded) that an organization issues to the news media and beyond.
- The objectives of a press release:
 - improve the visibility and image
 - offer accurate information
 - provide primer for news story
- Press releases should not be a novel:
 - ideally one page, but no more than two pages

Press Release

- This is what we in PR call the ‘inverted pyramid,’ the blueprint for creating a press release.
 - Notice that the intro/lead is your main point, so make it interesting.
 - CTA = call to action



Media Outlets

- One of the first things you need to do to gain great media coverage is to create an excellent media list, documents the key media contacts who would be interested in stories about your business or area of expertise.
- These media contacts may include journalists, reporters, bloggers, producers, freelance writers and editors across print, online, blogs, radio and television.
- To create your own media list:
 - Create keywords that pertain to your brand
 - Go to Google and see who is writing about these keywords
 - Note these links, writers, websites
- Platforms to visit to find contact information:
 - Twitter, LinkedIn, Google, RocketReach, ContactOut, hunter.io

The “Pitch”

- Simply contacting the media will not guarantee coverage for your client. You have to persuade the journalist that your story idea is newsworthy, which is the ‘pitch.’
- PR professionals typically pitch to reporters, editors, bloggers, and social media influencers and can take place via email, phone calls, and increasingly through Twitter or LinkedIn.
 - The channel you choose for your pitch depends upon the intended individual’s preference.
- Pitching is a skill that requires creative thinking, persuasive communication skills, and knowing how your story idea benefits the reporter and the audience. Your pitching skills can improve with time and practice. You will feel more confident reaching out to reporters if you write pitches regularly.
- There’s no formula for a perfect pitch — a great story idea doesn’t guarantee a published article — its goal should elicit interest from a reporter who wants to learn more.

The “Pitch”

- **Target 5-10 influential reporters – the days of sending a press release to 500 contacts and expecting media coverage are over.**
 - Spend some time researching outlets and contacts that will be the best fit to be interested in your news.
- **Have a clear, concise message. Be interesting and lead with clear, catchy opening.**
 - Spend a good amount of time brainstorming an angle that might be of interest to the reporter and their readers. If your pitch lacks clarity or isn't a topic related to the reporter's beat, the first stop for your pitch will be the cutting room floor (or the delete button.)
- **Sell each reporter individually. A personalized pitch is your opportunity to give the journalist a reason to develop your story idea into an article or news item.**
 - Do you have a new service or product that they could review first? Reporters love—emphasis on love—a great exclusive.
- **Make their job easy. An interesting and well-written pitch makes the journalist's job a little easier.**
 - In some cases, if your interview subject is a great resource, it can often drive the story. You can make their job even easier by offering to provide a complete press kit or other information after the pitch. If you don't have an executive biography, blog content, company fact sheet or other relevant background info, it's back to the drawing board.
- **Think long-term relationships. You can increase your odds of success by contacting journalists before you deliver your first pitch.**
 - All that's needed is a quick email to introduce yourself and inquire about the kinds of story ideas they're looking for. Or, if you know they need help sourcing a story or finding background info on another topic, you will be remembered as an asset and resource.

Media Monitoring

- Media monitoring (the process of reading, watching, and listening to news, then identifying and analyzing content that contains specific keywords or topics relevant to you) is a key component of any comprehensive PR strategy.
- Media monitoring allows you to:
 - **Stay up-to-date on the latest news.** By spanning national, local, and trade media, your tracking efforts will capture media trends and monitor online conversations. With media monitoring, you are able to identify top news outlets and reporters, and determine how to best engage with them.
 - **Improve customer support.** A contact form on your website will no longer suffice when addressing customer issues. If someone rants about your brand on Twitter, their followers also see the complaint, and how you respond. These online interactions impact how those followers — and your own — view your brand.
 - **Collect feedback.** Using media and social media monitoring, you can learn the good, bad, and ugly of your brand and its perceptions. The feedback is invaluable — it can be leveraged to improve your offerings and serve as testimonials for use in your marketing efforts.
 - **Engage industry influencers.** Do you know who's talking about products or services similar to yours? With media monitoring tools, you can determine digital influencers. Monitoring the conversations they're having about your industry will help you to tailor marketing messages to them, whether it's sending an email introduction, offering samples, or serving targeted ads.
- Media Monitoring Platforms:
 - Google / [Google Alerts](#)
 - [Talkwalker](#)
 - [Cision](#)
 - [Lexis Nexis](#)
 - [Agility](#)
 - [Dow Jones Factiva](#)

Pitching the Media





PR Playbook

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Earned Media Relations

- Company announcements - launch, milestones, new hires, capabilities, customers, partners
- Original thought leadership content from company executives
- Draw and leverage company executives experiences network, customer success stories
- Comment on broader industry trends & topics
- Develop original content and other creative assets when/where appropriate



Narratives

- According to Copyblogger, 80% of a website's visitors will read the headline – but only 20% will go on to finish the article.
- Traffic is a major goal with publishers so coming up with some suggested headlines that a journalist can potentially use will pay dividends.
- Some tips to create interesting headlines:
 - Look at headlines being written about the industry, your competitors
 - Start headlines with words like “How,” “Why,” “Meet,” i.e.
 - *How [company CEO] started from X to create Y*
 - *Why [company] is poised to be the next big player in the space*
 - *Move over [competitor,] Meet [company] the [descriptor]*
 - Use specific numbers & data in your headline
 - Include a “hot take” from an exec to tell a unique and different POV



Thought Leadership

Establish yourselves as thought leaders by stepping back from your business agenda, and instead clarifying your areas of expertise, listening to others and building your network, via these ways:

- **Bylines:** Consistently develop externally & high level focused thought pieces on an industry topic that can then be pitched for publication from an earned media standpoint, which can then be used in ongoing media pitches and for speaking abstracts.
- **Speaking Opportunities:** While offline events are not being scheduled at this time, online and virtual events and panel discussions are still being planned. Speaking spots gives you the opportunity to build on your visibility and brand to relevant audiences.
- **Awards:** Look for various awards to consider that can then be pursued. Secured accolades are a great tool to leverage for PR, Marketing, and Sales.



Reporting & Measurement

Identify the specific metrics and KPIs to measure PR success and then set a benchmark accordingly. Monthly criteria for measurement could include:

- X number of earned media mentions
- X number of feature stories
- X number of impressions
- Share of Voice
- Referral Traffic
- X number of keywords/themes
- X number of byline articles published
- Favorable mentions in media compared to competitors
- X number of new user signups
- X number of sales





Thank you

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Biography

John McCartney - Founder & Principal

John has more than 20+ years of experience in leading traditional PR and social media campaigns for technology, advertising, marketing, media, entertainment, health, financial, and cannabis startups and brands.

Prior to founding **Jmac PR**, John worked almost a decade at Wise PR and increased awareness and built thought leadership for startups like myLAB Box, Zinc, VideoAmp, Tatari, Grapeshot, LiveRail, Boulevard, Blockthrough, 3Q Digital, Ready Set Rocket, Control Group, Spindle, Stitch, GiftCards.com, Shryne Group, and MedMen.

While he was in San Francisco, John immersed himself in the PR community by teaching a PR 101 class at General Assembly, serving as a PR mentor to several Silicon Valley tech accelerators, and also served on the PRSA San Francisco Chapter Board of Directors, most recently as President for the 300-member trade association of public relations professionals. John also serves as an advisor with Women Who Code, the global nonprofit dedicated to inspiring women to succeed in tech careers. John is also a founding partner of FactorGTM, a new consulting firm that positions high growth businesses into market leaders.

John has garnered accolades from places like *Business Insider* for their annual PR 50 list of the Best PR Professionals in Tech to Hot Topics Top 100 list of the Best Tech PR Agency Executives in the World. John has also published his guest columns in outlets like the *Bulldog Reporter*, *PR Daily* and *PR Newser*.

After six years in San Francisco, John now resides in Los Angeles.



Testimonials

John is a great asset to any team and is a media pro. Reporters/bloggers look to him as a valuable source, and employees seek his guidance on the best way to leverage their clients in the media.

[Keith O'Brien](#), Director of Content and Digital Marketing, TMRW Life Sciences

John is a high-quality, versatile public relations/marketing communications/social media expert/executive who delivers placements, effectively engages clients and handles pressure in a big way. He maximizes PR assets and has strong leadership and supervisory skills.

[Steve Griffith](#), General Manager, Vizion Group PR

A versatile team player, John never put himself first. His concern was always the client, company and staff and that's why I enjoyed working with him.

[Tom Cosentino](#), Executive Director, Garden State Wine Growers Association

If there is anyone, I trust who understands earned media and media relations, it's John. He knows the right people to pitch and he produces results. John also has a great mindset for networking and connecting companies to the right media folks, and vice versa.

[Curtis Hougland](#), CEO, Main Street One

Within minutes after working together, John brought a fresh energy to the businesses he worked on and started making an immediate impact. His knowledge and professionalism instantly gained clients' trust and allowed our team to push our thinking, knowing all the while that John could deliver the goods.

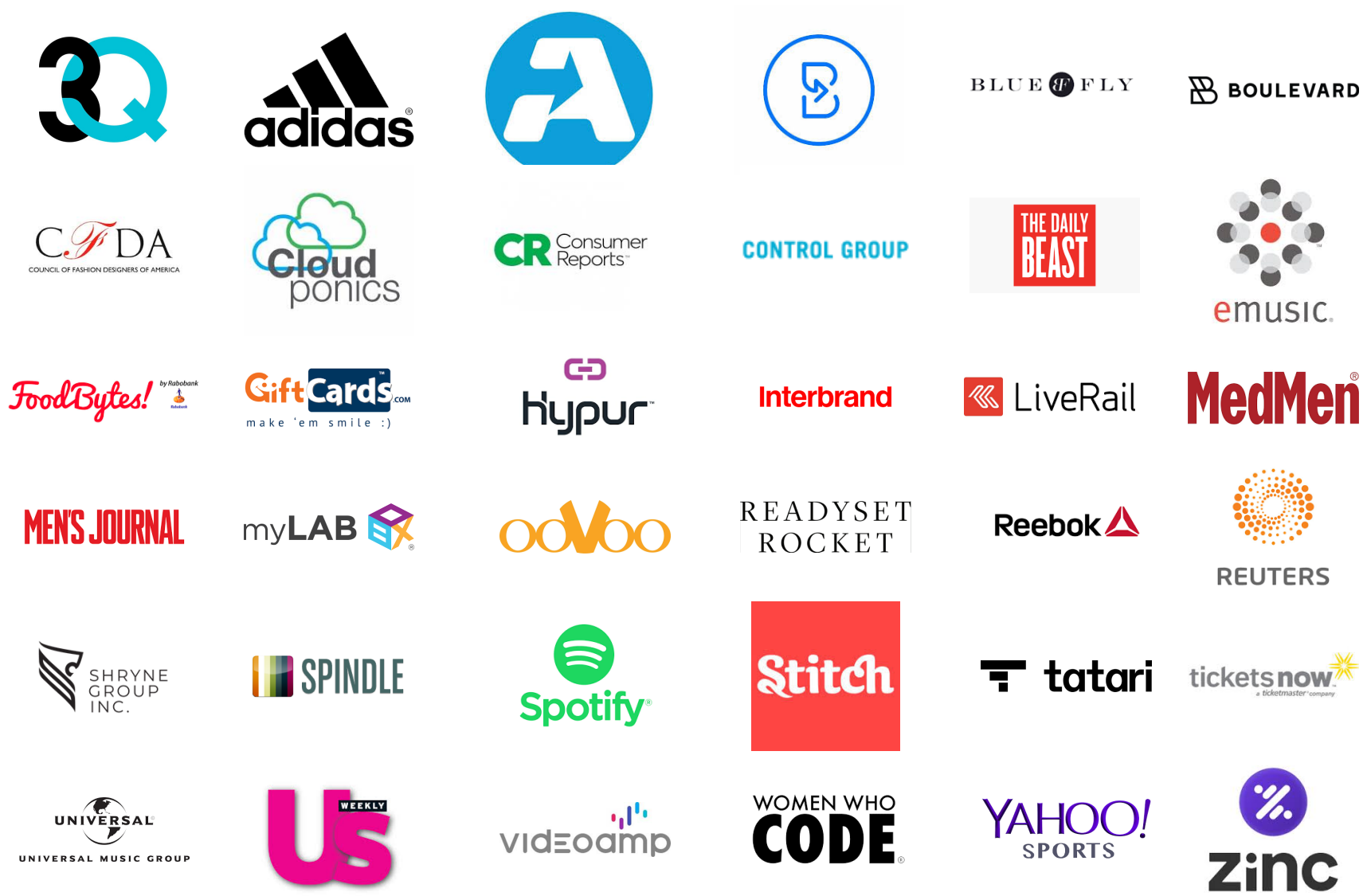
[Chris Gee](#), Managing Director, Digital Strategy, Finsbury

I've worked with a lot of PR professionals and I can say without hesitation that John drives results more effectively than any of them. I was deeply impressed both by the quality of work he delivered and the consistency of that delivery over multiple quarters.

[Jared Krause](#), Head of Growth, myLAB Box

Experience

For more than 20 years, **Jmac PR** Principal [John McCartney](#) has represented a breadth of world-class B2B and B2C startups and brands in public relations:



Thought Leadership

Committed to his craft, **Jmac PR** Principal John McCartney shares his knowledge and expertise in public relations to the benefit of the industry, accelerators, trade groups, vendors, and learning centers, while picking up accolades along the way:

