



***BREAKING THE CHAIN***

*A "How To" Guide for Examining PR Next Opportunities*

Don't know if your traditional PR is working? *Do know* but don't know where to begin to exit the old world and enter the next online opportunities? This whitepaper offers a blueprint for people who want to start evaluating and testing the new possibilities for real message traction.

Let's assume you work at a company you think is well-managed and has a great idea but is finding it more and more difficult to get third party validation and overall market traction. Your organization's visibility could be declining because your company is declining in ways outside your control. But your company could be declining because its visibility programs just aren't getting more than three inches off the ground. If you find yourself in the former situation, dust off the resume. If in the latter situation, read on.

### *Media Malnutrition*

This is a chief cause of your malaise. There's just not the same level of nutritional value in the old media food chain. Fewer targets, shrinking pages, more companies all seeking the same dwindling amount of real estate and you end up hungrier for attention. Your biggest competitors have much larger budgets. When food gets scarce, they don't go hungry. You do. This isn't your fault. But you need to alter your diet of favorite foods.

### *Addiction to News Releases*

Nobody puts really big news in a news release. If you had really big news, a news release would likely be your last option for letting people know. Stop thinking of them as a quick fix. In moderation and in combination with other things, news releases still have their role... but it is vastly diminished over what it once was.

### *Trade Event Fever*

Trade events just don't work like they used to. For small and medium sized companies it's debatable if trade events ever worked that well. If nothing else, few mid-size exhibitors have been very willing or able to master a very good ROI model. Big companies don't have to have an ROI model. They've got plenty of money. That's why the trade show system works for them so well. They can outspend you, out booth you, out keynote you.

### *Webbed Feet*

Website redesigns, recalibrations, reworkings of the sequence of words solves nothing because none of it speaks to the real problem. Web sites are static broadcast centers with the same basic song being played over and over. Yes, you have to have a web site. But thinking the web site constitutes your best and only online option for real presence is a huge mistake.

### **PRx: A Prescription for Improved PR Vitality, Visibility & Vision**

Number one, don't quit your job. Two, don't shut down everything you're doing. Three, unplug everything that's on auto-pilot and start questioning everything on the basis of measurable benefits. If your advertising program isn't generating leads at an appropriate ROI, kill it, stash the money and start examining the potentially enormous benefits of alternatives itemized below. Used appropriately, and done well, they can bring a tremendous level of new energy to your current effort.

### *Find Your Online Communities*

Fasten your seat belt and [go here](#). This is an advanced search function courtesy of Google. It will reveal things to you about your company's market presence you have never known before unless you're very familiar with the online world. Specifically, by plugging in your company's name in that top box, you will know immediately if anyone in the real world is writing about you via their online blog. Not familiar with blogs? [Here's the definition](#) from Wikipedia.

For more insight, plug in words or expressions in that top box that describe your market, your technology or your value proposition.

What you're actually doing is identifying online communities of people interested in the same things you and your company are interested in. These people in fact are so interested in it that they write about it routinely and generate an ongoing dialogue among themselves. Chances are you may not have known about them if your communications focus has been exclusively on the media. Sure, you'll find some media types here as well, but for the most part the blogosphere is dominated by non-media types. Of these, the best among them are career experts and as such offer very authentic comments about their subject matter of interest. Also, the best among them have tremendous readership. Influencing these influencers – participating in their dialogue as well as creating your own – can do more for your company's visibility, reputation, and credibility than a hundred non-news releases.

#### *Examine Your Relative Visibility*

While you're still in Google, [go here next](#). This is a word trends, traction and relevancy tool, also from Google. Using commas to separate word entries in the Search Trends box, type in your company's name and the name of your closest competitor. Fun, isn't it? Now try using your keywords and expressions. This is a great online tool for making sure you are using keywords with maximum appeal and power in all your communications. It's a great tool for proving once and for all to your CEO that the positioning you've been using is or is not working. See? Not everything in PR has to be so subjective. Now some analytics are available that simply can't be ignored or denied.

#### *Expand Your News Release Distribution List*

“What?” you're saying, “I thought you said news releases are a waste of time.” For the most part, that's true, especially if the mainstream media, trade contacts, and the elite industry analyst firms are your *exclusive target*. But if you are going to keep writing and distributing news releases, at least put someone on your distribution list you know will care about your news: your customers and prospects for starters – and then some bloggers if you can find ones appropriate to your subject and if you've determined the blogger is approachable as well as open to receiving your communication.

**Caution:** don't send a blogger a hyped news release full of indefensible gibberish and corporate-speak. Whereas a media type will ignore it, a blogger will delight in exposing your ignorance or irrelevance or both. It'll happen fast and it'll make you wince. Make sure you know who you're talking to and make sure you're talking straight.

Our best advice: **LURK**. Read the blog, follow it, and comment on a post if you have something valid to add. Look, Understand, Read and Know what and who you're dealing with before barging in the old-fashioned way. Most great bloggers got that way after having firmly established a healthy skepticism of the media and the companies that feed the media a lot of

nonsense. As a part of that apparatus, it's assumed more often than not that you are part of the problem until proven otherwise.

### *Add Online Coverage to your News & Events Website Pulldown*

Without getting too long-winded here, in today's world everyone seeking a solution like yours is looking for it online. Let's assume they find your website. [Note: this touches upon additional online tools and techniques such as Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and keyword analysis, organic search etc. which is of such special interest that it will be covered in a separate whitepaper... or you can call 508.647.0044 or write to [info@agencynextpr.com](mailto:info@agencynextpr.com) if you just can't wait another minute.]

Guess what? You could have the best B2B website in the whole wide world, but very, very few people are going to make a buying decision purely on the basis of what they see and read from you. Why? Because it's just you talking. People everywhere know web sites are places where smart companies apply a high gloss to everything. Buyers want to know what real people think... what users have to say, for example. Most web site visitors are on and off the corporate site in seconds. Where do they go? Directly to online communities where users and experts share knowledge and experiences. Therefore, if you manage to gain positive traction for your company among one or more of these online communities, their writings should appear on your site alongside that list of news releases you issue and the positive media coverage you post.

Incidentally, a beneficial by-product of this approach is that you further strengthen your positive relationship with bloggers that may advocate for your company... and you may get more traditional media attention since the press these days is becoming aware of the fact they are not the only source of news in town.

### *Blog?*

Whoa! Slow down. Of the 50 million-plus blogs out there somewhere from people in the United States alone, about 49 million of them or more were started on a whim and ignominiously abandoned when the reality of blogging set in. Blogging is hard work. Blogs have a voracious appetite for fresh content. And, the content has to be really, really good. Before you jump in, consider whether or not you alone or you with the help of others in your organization can sustain a blog. Obviously, an agency that can't reliably write a news release for you isn't going to be of any help. Your executive management team may be all for it, but in our experience, well-intentioned CEOs, CTOs and VPs quickly find they have more important things to do – or they learn they really can't write to save themselves. Next, try spending one whole month of finding three hot topics a week that you would write about if you had a blog.

There's no rule that says you must get help to do this. On the other hand, the risk of making a blog debut followed by a hasty exit is pretty high. Here's one approach, however, that minimizes the risk: get a consultant that not only has blog development experience, and can prove it, but who knows your industry inside and out and can write about it in context at least twice a week. That frequency will sustain your presence indefinitely and will build traffic over time. The expert will know how to cross-link your blog to your website, how to executive track backs, how to build your blogroll, and how to use a dozen or more other techniques and utilities to maximize exposure. Then, to this baseline, select members of your internal team can add their submissions, either unedited (not recommended) or vetted by the expert for style and grammar as well as other minor things such as libel and slander.

No matter how you decide to proceed, before anything go find and lurk among the existing communities you hope your blog will help you join. Do not abuse yourself of the notion that you're going to build your own community from scratch unless your company's product is the world's first elixir for eternal life.

### *Podcast Sponsorships*

What's a podcast? [Here's Wikipedia](#) to the rescue again.

There are two camps of people when it comes to this option. There's a group that has sort of heard about podcasts and are not at all sure about their value and relevance. I think there are six people left in that camp. Then there's a group numbering in the millions that have become avid, hardcore, loyal podcast listeners. If you're in the first group, here's [just one of many places](#) you can go first to see what this phenomenon is all about and why it has people so crazed.

Like most bloggers, podcasters do what they do because they couldn't find what they wanted over the traditional airwaves. They do what they do because they love the subject matter around which their podcasts are based. Most don't make any money doing what they do – yet – and many have huge listenerships. This means there are emerging opportunities for sponsorships if you can find a podcast property that fits your corporate message. And guess what? Podcasters are grateful for the sponsorships; they typically do not have the “take it or leave it” attitude of traditional media outlets. And, you won't believe the bargains available still. But again, don't think that a sponsorship here is going to give you any sway over content. It's not, and to even suggest it would be very ill-advised.

### **Conclusion:**

The whole idea here is that in parallel with traditional public relations tactics that are losing altitude and momentum fast in this era, there are “go direct” options in the online world that can deliver traction and torque like you haven't felt in a long, long time. Two, if you're competing against larger, more established companies, they can continue to outspend and out shout you in the establishment channels. In the online world, you actually have an advantage over them because they have everything to lose and you have everything to gain. Big companies don't want the rules to change. They aren't in favor of edgy communications and real-world community dialogue as long as they can out-broadcast you with polished messages that countenance no debate.