

## Create, Package and Pitch Trend Stories

When looking to secure press for your client or your organization, the aim is typically the big feature, but sometimes when the news might not be as strong as you'd like, the more effective angle to pursue could be that of a trend story. Tying into recent news and grouping your client into a larger story can still serve to secure significant ink and position your client or your organization as an industry leader.

Another benefit of a trend story is that it is more likely to receive prominent placement in your target publication and perhaps generate an even more compelling story than originally planned, thus appealing to a larger audience. This may also enable unique opportunities to obtain coverage outside the primary beat—hits that work by putting the story outside of regular coverage and in front of people that may not already be familiar or aware.

This kind of approach can put you in good graces with journalists. Rather than insistently following up with them for a specific feature, which will just eventually turn them off to you and anybody you work with, pitching a trend signifies that you understand the media landscape and positions you as a reliable and knowledgeable source for future stories.

The following are some key steps in creating and delivering a trend story designed to work for you as well as journalists with which you regularly work.

▶ **Follow the news.** As a PR professional you must always be thoroughly in-the-know. Read everything. Be keenly aware of what media outlets and specific journalists are covering and anticipate news cycles. This might seem simple and apparent; certainly this is something that people who deal with media day in and day out

should be acutely aware and on top of, but unfortunately this is rarely the case. Any random sampling of 10 journalists would back this up.

Being on top of what's happening will enable you to understand the full story and how you or your client's story fits into a trend—see the forest from trees, so to speak—and work in a smart way that allows you to concoct features that spotlight your client in a way that will be of interest to all parties involved.

▶ **Create it.** In following the news, you'll notice story lines and trends that your organization or client may fit into. You need to be vigilant and consistently on the hunt to exploit opportunities and create a regular flow of news on their behalf.

In addition, know your client or organization inside and out. Deep digging into every aspect of the business and having an understanding beyond the core business model will open up additional story lines.

▶ **Do your homework.** Go in with a comprehensive understanding of what it is you're pitching combined with a full background and familiarity of the journalist and outlet being approached. Complete knowledge of what their editors are looking for and what might appeal to their readers will help demonstrate that this story is built especially for them and not part of some random shotgun blast. Not to mention, reporters are especially likely to accept a pitch when the work is done for them—make sure your "homework" is thorough.

▶ **Package it.** This is the tricky part—bringing the other elements into the equation that will actually make a trend. You'll have to approach the

reporter with not only your story in mind, but also some outside examples that help support the trend that you're pushing. The simple fear here is that you're potentially raising awareness for competitors—a clear snafu. Here you can combine similarities, but not exact replicas of the same model.

As stated above, part of what helps here is to look for trends outside of the core business so that others brought into the story won't be perceived as conflicts. It's not incredibly difficult to find demonstrations of a trend that don't fall under the same business model umbrella. For instance, if you're pitching a luxury product—say a high-end watch—the "trend" doesn't need to be about watches. In this case, you can wrap in other upscale items, collectors or retailers—something within the spectrum that highlights your part of the story in a positive light.

▶ **Build relationships.** As you approach journalists with these types of stories you'll begin to see requests come to you as well. The press will see you as a reliable resource, and when they are working on a story and need someone or something to fill it out, you can be the person they call first.

Bottom line: You don't always need to go for the home run feature to be successful. The feature piece is a rarity and usually an uphill battle to place. Trend stories allow you to work with clients and journalists to come up with other ways to get serious exposure.

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