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VOL. 126 | NO. 174 | Wednesday, September 07, 2011

Guerrilla Sales & Marketing

Top 12 PR Pitfalls

By **Lori Turner-Wilson**

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Editor's Note: This is the second in a two-part series. Public relations is part art and part science.

Because you're dealing with fellow human beings – reporters and editors – there's no one-size-fits-all checklist that will ensure you never make a misstep. There are, however, common pitfalls to avoid ensuring your best opportunity for strong coverage and continued long-term relationships with key reporters.

For starters, don't bury the lead. The more content a reporter must sift through to get to the point of your pitch, the higher the likelihood that pitch goes into the trash. Get to the point – fast.

Don't pitch from a mobile phone where dropped calls and background noise could distract the reporter from your conversation.

If you're not enthusiastic about what you're pitching, you can't expect others to be. Smile when you pitch. Turn up the energy. By all means, talk to the reporter versus reading from a script.

Avoid sending your press release to multiple reporters in the same office. It just calls attention to the fact that you haven't done your homework, and aren't sure who to pitch. Plus, it can cause confusion in the newsroom. Even worse, CC every reporter in town. Either BCC those on your distribution list, or, better yet, select targeted reporters and write personal notes.

Don't pitch the wrong reporter. Reporters' "beats," or topic areas covered, change frequently. So double check, just before pitching, that the reporter you're contacting still covers your topic.

If pitching via Twitter, make sure you "follow" the reporter so they can "direct message" you back. Direct messaging is a Twitter feature that allows the reporter to send you a private message that the general public can't see.

Avoid leaving voice mail messages to pitch reporters, but if you must, be sure to give enough of the pertinent facts to whet their appetite. Unless your relationship with a reporter is rock solid, teaser voice mails often go unreturned.

Don't lose credibility by acting like there's life-changing news when there's not. Resist the temptation to overhype.

Buzzwords don't necessarily impress busy reporters and editors. Get to the point in simple language.

Ignore your competitors' PR efforts at your own peril. If the reporter you're pitching has already written a story on a competitor, ensure that your story pitch has a different angle.

Don't assume that the mere distribution of a press release will garner media attention. Persistent follow up is needed.

Don't limit yourself to local PR. Consider distributing your release to a



Lori Turner-Wilson

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broader distribution of reporters – regionally or nationally. Utilize services such as PRNewswire or PRWeb for this broader scale dispersal.

A properly managed public relations strategy can be a powerful marketing weapon. With the rise in digital media and the volume of advertising noise competing for the attention of your prospective customers, third-party endorsements hold increasingly more value.

Lori Turner-Wilson is managing partner of RedRover Sales & Marketing, www.redrovercompany.com. You can follow RedRover on Facebook and Twitter.

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