

Tips for a Truly Effective Vertical Public Relations Program

Kim Beasley, kbeasley@tripwire.com

Letter from the Editor

Dear Technology Section Members,

On my list of exciting news announcements is this year's Tech Section conference. We've officially announced that the T3 PR Conference 2007 will be held on June 19, 2007 in New York at Reuters, in the heart of Times Square. "T3" represents this year's focus on Theory, Tactics & Technology for high-tech public relations professionals.

Every year, the Tech Section hosts this conference featuring panel discussions, educational seminars and presentations devoted to issues facing those of us who specialize in public relations for organizations in technology industries. The Conference will also honor the recipients of the annual Awards for Excellence in Technology Journalism.

Past conference speakers have included technology reporters, industry analysts, technology bloggers and public relations professionals from both the corporate and agency realms. Don't miss out on this chance to hear from some of the most interesting speakers in the industry, as well as have the opportunity to network with others in your profession.

Sincerely,

Amy Fisher, Editor

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Every business-to-business (B2B) technology company wants to increase customer mind-share and sales — and they target a wide variety of horizontal technology outlets in order to do so. And, while IT executives certainly read magazines like CIO and InformationWeek, they also religiously read publications such as Integrated Solutions for Retailers, Hospitality Technology, Government Computer News and Bank Systems Technology to learn more about how technology applies to their specific industry.

In fact, in specifically working with vertical industry press and executives from these industries, it has been my experience that placements in vertical trade publications are read more closely and held more than placements in traditional IT books. So, how can you take your public relations program vertical, making the most of your efforts to get in the door with these editors and ensure coverage with these very targeted publications?

Effective vertical public relations is more than changing a few words in a press release or simply providing a customer within a specific vertical industry. For truly effective vertical public relations, you need to understand and incorporate the following:

- **Talk the Talk:** Editors at vertical industry press really are interested in covering B2B technology that addresses specific issues their readers have. However, where many campaigns fall short is in fully understanding the issues and concerns of the given industry. For example, if pitching the technology editor at a health care magazine, could you have a conversation about the three top issues that keep these CIOs up at night? Can you relate how your product or service addresses one or more of these? And, can you provide the editor with a customer that will corroborate this?

Repeatable success depends upon your ability to understand and integrate industry issues and lexicon into your efforts.

- **Power of Customers:** Know the power and limitations of customer references within the vertical you target. For example, while a grocery customer would make a terrific reference for Grocery Headquarters, they might not make a good reference for a more general retail magazine. In getting to know the market, you would learn that grocers are not generally cross-referenceable by other retailers.

Moreover, just because you know and are familiar with a brand as a consumer, make sure that you understand the reputation a brand carries within the industry. For example, is your reference company's IT department seen as a trend-setter or a laggard within the industry? With this in mind, make sure you also understand which customer references are valued across the industry and even by other industries for their best-of-breed approach. Nordstrom is a good example of a company that is revered across retail and by other industries.

- **Become a Trusted Source:** While customers are vital, it is just as important to have a source within your company that is an expert in both the vertical market and the particular area where your technology applies to build successful relationships with vertical press editors. For example, if you are selling workforce scheduling software, have an expert with an intimate understanding of the workforce issues within the industries you serve — you may even need more than one depending on the number of verticals you target. It is important to make sure that editors can call on your expert to discuss, for exam-

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Breaking out of the Inbox: How alternative technologies can improve productivity and communication internally, with clients and with the media

Public Relations Tools

Sandra Fathi, sandra@effectstrategies.com

There are so many modes of communication available today that it would be a shame to be limited to e-mail alone. Although e-mail is an invaluable business tool, all of our inboxes are inundated with marketing messages and advertisements that are often deleted, or sent to the junk mail folder, before they are viewed. Even when you are communicating with internal employees, e-mail can be buried under a pile of 100 other “urgent” messages. There are dozens of other ways to engage colleagues and communicate effectively. Here are just a few examples:

Instant Gratification: Instant Messaging (IM)

When used properly, IM can be a great tool to promote instant conversations, collaborative work and increased productivity. Just be aware of the pitfalls and have some IM etiquette while in the office. IM can be very disruptive if you are working on an important document and a pop-up message keeps breaking your concentration. Employees need to be able to “turn-off” IM or put themselves on a “busy” setting in the same way that they might put the “do not disturb” mode on their phone if they shouldn’t be interrupted.

Also, ensure that the IM used in the office is not the same one that employees use for personal reasons. Fifty friends on IM can be very distracting and open up companies to security risks if they are not using an enterprise IM solution. When communicating with clients, don’t let the informality of the medium degrade the professional level of your message. Allowing a client to have your IM address can also instill a feeling of being ‘always available’ and ready when the need arises. This can build confidence in the relationship but also open you up to being called on at all hours. Using the built-in settings (i.e. away, busy, block) can prevent IM from becoming overwhelming with an overzealous client. If you are lucky enough to get the IM address of a key media contact, use it sparingly and only when appropriate.

Seeing Is Believing: Web Conferencing and Video Conferencing

Web conferencing and video conferencing have become so affordable these days that some companies are giving it away (i.e. Skype). There is no reason why these technologies need to be limited to the board room or quarterly investor meetings. A simple \$20 webcam with a microphone and an inexpensive software solution can enable your team to communicate instantly as if they are in the same room.

Web conferencing can have a positive impact on client relations and building a personal rapport. There are so many nuances that are communicated in face-to-face communication that, even through the computer, these meetings can be just as effective and personal as a same-room interaction. For interactions with the media, product demonstrations, sharing documents or providing a guided Web tour are just a few clicks away, even if the reporter is thousands of miles away.

Primetime TV: Webcasts & Podcasts

Sometimes the method is the message. If your Monday morning company meetings are a dreaded ritual or the subject matter of a meeting is less than titillating, a webcast or a podcast can always put a little more sizzle into a mundane speech. Better yet, if your colleagues can’t all participate or attend a meeting at the same time, let them download the CEO’s message onto their iPod and listen to it on the commute home or at the gym. They can also watch the webcast from an archived version on your company server. The power of editing can also ensure that only the most salient points make it into the final presentation.

Online Happy Hour: Social Networking Sites

Employees may still go to happy hour at a local bar but many of them may be spending hours online on community or social networking sites for both business and pleasure. These networking sites can be a great forum to engage with colleagues “outside” of the office if the subject matter isn’t confidential. (If it is confidential, and your organization is large enough, you can infuse your intranet

site with aspects of social networking.) In a few minutes, your company can have a page on MySpace, a profile on Facebook, or a forum on Yahoo! Groups. These sites can also be effective recruiting tools, especially from college campuses. If you are looking for more senior business executives, LinkedIn or Ryze are great resources as well.

Tell Me About It: Blogs and Message Boards

Blogs are the modern day version of the soap box. They offer an opportunity for your executive team to unveil their human side, professional passions or rant and rave about the company’s latest achievement. Allowing employees to post comments may open up some very interesting lines of communication and recommendations that middle management may not have thought important enough to take up to the CEO’s office. The informality of the blog enables employees to connect on a more personal level and view ad hoc opinions and discussions that they might not have access to if they don’t work in the same office or regularly mingle with executives.

Message boards, which enable anyone to post and anyone to respond, are more free form and democratic. These can be particularly useful for employee-to-employee communications but a helpful moderator can also chime in with the “company policy” or professional recommendations from time to time. It is important that you have a team member monitoring comments for timely responses. Sometimes media or clients will pose questions that require an action or online response. If they go unanswered, it can open your company to some unwanted exposure.

Second Life (at Work): Virtual Meetings

If you really want to get out of the office, you can create a virtual office on Second Life. Although this may require a little more of an investment in time and development, Second Life is a bustling online world with all of the comforts of a modern office space, including teleporting. You can have one-on-one conversations, hold meetings, conferences and training programs with the most engaging avatars and bring your presentations, documents and videos to the meeting

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The State of the News Media 2007

Professional Development

Project for Excellence in Journalism, mail@journalism.org. Reprinted with permission from <http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.com/2007/index.asp>

The pace of change has accelerated.

In the last year, the trends reshaping journalism didn't just quicken, they seemed to be nearing a pivot point.

On Madison Avenue, talk has turned to whether the business model that has financed the news for more than a century—product advertising—still fits the way people consume media.

With audiences splintering across ever more platforms, nearly every metric for measuring audience is now under challenge as either flawed or obsolete—from circulation in print, to ratings in TV, to page views and unique visitors online.

Every media sector except for two is now losing popularity. Even the number of people who go online for news—or anything else—has stopped growing. Only the ethnic press is up.

The definitions of enemy and ally in the news business are changing. Newspapers have begun to partner, for instance, with classified-job-listing Web sites they once denounced, brought together by mutual fear of free sites such as Craigslist.

With fundamentals shifting, we sense the news business entering a new phase heading into 2007—a phase of more limited ambition. Rather than try to manage decline, many news organizations have taken the next step of starting to redefine their appeal and their purpose based on diminished capacity. Increasingly outlets are looking for “brand” or “franchise” areas of coverage to build audience around.

For some, the new brand is what Wall Street calls “hyper localism” (consider the end of foreign bureaus at the Boston Globe or the narrowing of the coverage area at the Atlanta Journal Constitution). For others, it is personality and opinion (note the rising ratings of Lou Dobbs or Keith Olbermann). For still others it is personal involvement (the brand of Anderson Cooper, and, more tentatively and occasionally, even broadcast network anchors). For an emerging cohort of Web sites it is the involvement of everyday people (some alternative news sites now come closer than ever to the promise of

authentic citizen media).

In a sense all news organizations are becoming more niche players, basing their appeal less on how they cover the news and more on what they cover.

The consequences of this narrowing of focus involve more risk than we sense the business has considered. Concepts like hyper localism, pursued in the most literal sense, can be marketing-speak for simply doing less. Branding can also be a mask for bias. Handled badly, the new strategy might also render a big city metro paper irrelevant. The recent history of the news industry is marked by caution and continuity more than innovation. The character of the next era, far from inevitable, will likely depend heavily on the quality of leadership in the newsroom and boardroom. If history is a guide, (be it Adolph Ochs, Ted Turner, or Google) it will require renegades and risk-takers to break from the conventional path and create new directions.

“I really don't know whether we'll be printing The Times in five years, and you know what? I don't care,” the paper's publisher and chairman of the New York Times Company, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Jr., told an interviewer earlier this year. The head of country's most esteemed news company meant to sound an optimistic tone about journalism's future, but the statement, like the industry, seemed to teeter between boldness and uncertainty.

This is the fourth edition of our annual report on the state of the news media—the status and health of journalism in America. The broad context outlined in earlier editions remains the same: the transformation facing journalism is epochal, as momentous as the invention of television or the telegraph, perhaps on the order of the printing press itself. (See Previous Reports).

The effect is more than just audiences migrating to new delivery systems. Technology is redefining the role of the citizen—endowing the individual with more responsibility and command over how he or she consumes information—and that new role is only beginning to be understood.

Our sense remains, too, that traditional journalism is not, as some suggest, becoming irrelevant. There is more evidence now that new technology companies have had either limited success in news gathering (Yahoo, AOL), or have avoided it altogether (Google).

Whoever owns them, old newsrooms now seem more likely than a few years ago to be the foundations for the newsrooms of the future.

But practicing journalism has become far more difficult and demands new vision. Journalism is becoming a smaller part of people's information mix. The press is no longer gatekeeper over what the public knows.

Journalists have reacted relatively slowly. They are only now beginning to re-imagine their role. Their companies failed to see “search” as a kind of journalism. Their industry has spent comparatively little on R&D. They have been tentative about pressing for new economic models, and that has left them fearful and defensive. Some of the most interesting experiments in new journalism continue to come from outside the profession—sites such as Global Voices, which mixes approved volunteer “reporters” from around the world with professional editors.

There are signs, meanwhile, that those the press is charged with monitoring, including the government, corporations and activists, have reacted more quickly. Politicians, interest groups and corporate public relations people tell PEJ they have bloggers now on secret retainer—and they are delighted with the results.

These are a few of the conclusions we arrive at about The State of the News Media 2007. Each year, we try to identify new key trends facing the media. In the past, among others, we have noted that journalism's challenge is not from technology or lack of interest in news but from diminished economic potential; that power is moving to those who make news away from those who cover it; that there are now several competing models of journalism, with cheaper, less accurate ones gaining momentum; that while there are more outlets delivering news, that has generally not meant covering a broader range of stories.

The Project for Excellence in Journalism is a research organization that specializes in using empirical methods to evaluate and study the performance of the press. It is non partisan, non ideological and non political. Its goal is to help both the journalists who produce the news and the citizens who consume it develop a better understanding of what the press is delivering. The Project has put special emphasis on content analysis in the belief that quantifying what is occurring in the press, rather than merely offering criticism and analysis, is a better approach to understanding.

For a full report of the State of the News Media 2007, go to <http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.com/2007/index.asp>.

Creating a Brand – the Scentric Story

Professional Development

Leo Tignini, ltignini@horngroup.com

In less than three months, Scentric has transformed its image from a stealth-mode startup into a legitimate contender in the growing data classification space.

Working with Horn Group on strategy and execution of all materials, the fledgling company held an intensive positioning workshop to assemble the building blocks of the Scentric story, including a perceptual audit and a competitive analysis. A series of message-testing briefings with leading industry analysts and journalists provided feedback and observations on the data classification market. From these findings, Scentric created a full positioning guide and supplemental “at-a-glance” document, establishing the foundation of its verbal brand.

Shifting gears to the visual brand, Scentric began work on its corporate identity system, including the development of corporate and product logos, product packaging, business stationary and marketing collateral materials based around the messaging.

With the brand fundamentals in place, Scentric then turned to its Web site. The company wanted a site that would support marketing and communications, and provide the necessary infrastructure and CRM integration to sustain Web-based lead capture and demand generation initiatives, including direct and e-marketing campaigns.

With the Web site complete but commercial availability of Scentric’s first product and a customer reference still months away, Scentric faced a tough decision: Bundle the company launch and commercial availability

into one full blown launch, or break the communications plan into two phases. Horn Group recommended the latter. Scentric couldn’t afford to wait any longer since it was already losing ground on a quickly maturing market space with larger, more entrenched players. Their sales team needed “air cover” to close deals and get the attention they deserved.

“Horn Group’s integrated communications model was exactly what we were looking for — a PR, branding and interactive media agency under one umbrella. The synergy greatly streamlined, accelerated and enhanced our go-to-market planning and execution.”

*—Larry Cormier
SVP Marketing, Scentric*

Scentric knew that launching without customer validation and commercial availability of a product was risky since both items are typically considered prerequisites for media coverage. However, the company planned to overcome those challenges by focusing on its unique “universal data classification” approach and ability to fill a critical void in the popular Information Lifecycle Management (ILM) space, which was based on theory verses reality. Customers would play a critical role in the second stage

for validation of concept.

Scentric chose Storage Networking World 2006 as the perfect forum to pre-brief industry analysts since the event is widely considered one of the industry’s best. With the launch only two weeks away, Scentric quickly gained a following within the analyst community with all of the 10 analysts pre-briefed at the event serving as references. Additionally, these analysts also provided quotes, which are featured on Scentric’s Web site today.

Scentric’s transformation culminated in a perfectly timed (down-to-the-wire) launch of the Web site, company news and media coverage, all hitting concurrently. Horn Group landed media coverage across all targeted press, with articles appearing in over 50 publications — almost unheard of for a storage upstart without product news and production customers.

Coverage highlights included Computerworld, InfoStor, eWeek, Network World, Daily Deal, VentureWire, Storage Magazine, SearchStorage.com, InfoWorld, Enterprise Storage Forum, Enterprise Systems Journal and Internet News.com.

Analysts at IDC, Aberdeen, Gartner, Taneja Group, ESG, Mesabi Group, StorageIO, and Dragon Slayer Consulting all lended support by providing quotes and/or serving as media references. Since the launch of the company just a year ago, Scentric has received highly coveted industry honors, including making Byte and Switch’s “Top Ten Storage Startup” list and an editor’s choice award from Network Computing.

as well. If the event is exciting enough, the AP reporter that is embedded in Second Life may even cover it as news or interview you for an article! After the meeting, you can visit a five-star hotel on a remote island without having to pay for travel and expenses for your team (except maybe for a few Linden dollars).

Trying new formats and mixing up communications technologies can keep the communications engaging and exciting. It also allows organizations to communicate in

more meaningful and participatory interactions — rather than just one-sided management directives. Employers do need to keep in mind that not all material is suitable for every format, but there certainly are many opportunities to take advantage of these technologies and infuse some excitement into your employee, client and media communications.

Sandra Fathi is president of Affect Strategies, a strategic marketing, communications and public relations firm specializing in technology. To contact her, e-mail sandra@effectstrategies.com or visit www.affectstrategies.com.

T3 PR CONFERENCE 2007 SPONSOR SEARCH

There are several remaining commercial sponsorship opportunities for the upcoming conference — both traditional and nontraditional. If you are interested in being a sponsor, please contact James Abel for more information at james.abel@prsa.org.

TECH SECTION SURVEY

You may remember that we recently issued a survey to members. Thank you to everyone who provided input! The survey results have been streaming in and Glen Turpin will share what we learned from you in the next issue.

Tips for a Truly Effective Vertical Public Relations Program

From page 3, "It's a Wireless World"

ple, how a new minimum-wage law will affect workforce issues within hospitality.

Leverage data that your company collects as a means for creating stories and becoming a source of unique information an editor might otherwise not access. If you don't naturally collect data, find a way to do so — whether through online polling or having your customer service team ask every inbound caller the same three questions.

Last, use your reputation as an expert source that can reliably provide a full story as a way to: 1) ensure that your pet topic is included in annual editorial calendars and 2) publish byline articles promoting your view on a given topic.

- **Bigger Than Press Alone:** Once you have an expert, do more than leverage them to comment on breaking news and write bylines. Use the momentum you have achieved within vertical press placements to pursue speaking engagements at industry specific conferences and invitations to join industry trade association technology committees.

Work to be inextricably linked with your pet topic within the industry through both action and word. And, most importantly, remain committed. Once you have earned

trust of those within the industry, do not take steps backward by dropping out of networking opportunities. By intimately linking the name of your company and product with an expert spokesperson, you will gain trust of IT executives throughout the industries you serve. Making inroads with the press is only a first step to leveraging a full vertical public relations campaign to increase sales.

For effective sales public relations, make sure that every opportunity you uncover is leveraged by the sales team. For example, secure reprints of published customer stories that sales can repackaging in an e-mail pitch to new business. Let sales know your expert will be speaking at an industry event, making sure they invite their customers and prospects to attend.

Industry executives want to know what their peers are doing. They want to know if they are gaining competitive advantage and if so, how. As a result, they are avid readers of vertical-specific trade press. While vertically oriented magazines may have smaller circulations than general IT publications such as InfoWorld, they guarantee a targeted, high-quality audience that is more apt to buy from you, resulting in continuous comments from your sales force that your latest article just generated a sales call for them!

Kim Beasley is PR manager at Tripwire, Inc. She has practiced high-tech B2B PR for the past 14 years, working with a variety of companies from Microsoft and IBM to smaller startups.

T3 PR CONFERENCE 2007: THEORY, TACTICS & TECHNOLOGY FOR HIGH-TECH PUBLIC RELATIONS

Reuters, Three Times Square, New York, NY
June 19, 2007

The T3 PR Conference is designed to provide practitioners with intelligence, education and tools for successful public relations for high-tech companies. The one-day conference will include sessions that address the theory, tactics and technology of public relations for professionals of all levels.

The conference will provide a mix of presentations, panel discussions, demonstrations, case studies and research. Presentations will focus on delivering actionable best practices in these areas. To support the information presented, real examples and measurable results will be incorporated into presentations.

Possible topics include:

- **Primal PR:** (Spun from Primal Branding) Creating PR zealots in the agency, corporation and media for technology products and services
- **PR Idol:** (Meet the Media) PR professionals compete for the title of PR Idol in front of leading technology journalists
- **Blogs, Vlogs & iPods:** (Tech PR 2.0) Best practices for implementing and leveraging social media in PR campaigns
- **PR in a Virtual World:** Communicating with customers and the media in virtual worlds
- **Tools of the Tech Trade:** Latest technology tools for research, measurement, communication and planning for PR professionals

More information and registration will be located at <http://www.prsa.org/networking/sections/technology/> as it becomes available.

Stephanie Myers Pachucki, corporate communications representative, bcgi

Member Profile

Christa Shalhoub, shalhoub@airfoilpr.com

As reporter in a former life, Stephanie Myers Pachucki enjoys the writing aspect of her job as a corporate communications representative for bcgi in Bedford, Mass. In this role, she is responsible for analyst and media relations, and she particularly enjoys building relationships with members of the press and analyst firms that cover the wireless industry. Getting an analyst's insight on industry issues and forming strong relationships usually ends in great coverage, another aspect of the job that she enjoys. Stephanie also organizes various internal communications roles, like overseeing Web site content

and writing content for sales and promotional collateral.

Prior to her career in public relations, Stephanie worked as a business reporter in Memphis, Tenn., where she unknowingly gained a great deal of invaluable experience. Her journalism background has allowed her to offer the media a reporter's perspective, something not all public relations professionals are able to do. Prior to her current job, Stephanie joined the communications industry as a marketing communications specialist for the Memphis Public School district, where, among other things, she was responsible for redesigning and producing several publications targeted at employees, parents and business partners.

Her impeccable writing skills did not go unnoticed; she turned one of the publications into an award-winning newsletter.

Stephanie graduated from the University of Memphis with a bachelor of arts in journalism and Spanish. When she wasn't busy earning magna cum laude status, she was busy as the editor-in-chief of the university's student-run daily newspaper, The Daily Helmsman.

Though she questions whether or not life after work exists, she truly loves her job and wouldn't want to work anywhere else. To fulfill her love for music and secret desire to front a band, Stephanie enjoys live music and the occasional karaoke outing.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

The following PRSA members joined the PRSA Technology Section between October 2006 and February 2007. We are glad to have you on board!

- Rose Mary Mercer, Airborne 1 Corporation
- Alice M. Irvan, APR, AIRvan Consulting LLC
- Aiessa Moyna, American Express
- Dawn M. Yankeelov, ASPECTx
- Chad W. Morris, BearingPoint, Inc.
- Jacob H. McKee, Big in Japan
- Dawne Elaine Young, Bond University, Gold Coast, Australia
- Deanne Hollis, Calcoast PR
- Wendy A. Klansky, Canon USA Inc
- Joanne Petitto, Classmates Online, Inc.
- Claudia R. Carasso, Cohn & Wolf-SF
- Dana Anwen Runnells, Comcast Cable
- Jason Douglas Oxman, Esq., Consumer Electronics Association
- Valorie Luther, Creative Concepts
- Sharon Tolpin, Critical Mention
- Alvin A. Hayes, ESS
- James K. Wittmeyer, APR, Greywolfpr
- Martha Nechvatal, Leapfrog Online
- Jonathan Robert Leer, Leer Technical Communications
- Nathan R. Johnson, M/C/C
- Karen Jayne Leinberger, Padilla Speer Beardsley, Inc.
- Mary Anne Gunn, PAR3 Communications
- Amy L. Tokarski, Porter Novelli
- Matthew Thomas Pugh, SafeNet, Inc.
- Hyosun Kwon, Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd.
- Kris Schindler, Start-Thinking
- Brian K. Muys, Strategic Communications Group, Inc.
- Pete Simpkinson, TARGUSinfo
- William J. Seil, APR, The Boeing Company
- Doronna Khristian Vickers, The Cincinnati Insurance Company
- Tanya L. Travers, The Map Network
- Sara M. Radkiewicz, Thomson
- James B. Senior, Unisys Corporation
- Nikki Kathleen Reed, Waggener Edstrom
- Jessica Whitt Ratliff, Waggener Edstrom
- Camille Reyes, Waggener Edstrom
- Renata Almeida, Waggerner Edstrom
- Kathleen D. Shuman
- Joseph Richard Martone
- David Reese Leonnig