



Breaking News - Use it to Boost Your Public Relations

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It's easy to think that public relations is just about making the most of the news you have or 'creating' news stories that will appeal to the press and media. If you can respond quickly and provide helpful comment then breaking news is a great opportunity to boost your profile. Here are some handy tips to get you thinking about making the most of breaking news.

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Monitor the news - it's essential to keep track of the press and media for the stories that are being covered. It's unlikely that a week will go by without some sort of story appearing that you could contribute to. That means being on top of the news and stories as they appear and develop during the day. It's not difficult to see the stories that are likely to get coverage over a couple of days.

Act quickly - the important thing is to spot a story and then act on it. The quicker you are in contacting the relevant journalist with useful comment or material then the more likely it will be that your efforts will pay off. The world of press and media moves quickly so you need to do the same. You'll also need to consider the deadlines that journalists are working to. The 24 hour news channels mean that there is now much more scope for providing expert comment on the back of a news story. They have air time to fill and will be grateful if you can help them do that. Also, don't forget that many of the stories that appear in the Sunday newspapers are the week's stories in more detail with additional comment - that gives you a great opportunity.

Help to push on the story - ensure that what you contribute provides useful information, can look at the story from a different perspective, help to move the story on etc. The audience wants to be informed and your job is to help achieve that. It's no good approaching a journalist about a business story saying that you are a business coach - you need to be very specific, in relation to the story, about what you can contribute.

Make yourself available - if you want to raise your profile on the back of someone else's news then you need to put time aside to do that. It can be disruptive because it's not planned. Before approaching any journalist be clear that you can contribute time to follow through. If you are successful in your efforts then that may include travelling to a studio, doing interviews etc and that all takes time and effort. In advance of an interview you may also want to seek the services of a media trainer to help you prepare. This is a good idea particularly if you haven't

done much press and media work.

Build relationships - approaching journalists on the back of breaking news also provides you with a great opportunity to build relationships with journalists covering your interest area. Find out the type of stories they are interested in and whether you can help them on other stories. Also, if you do a good job then it gives you scope for getting them to put you in their 'little black book' of contacts for future stories - that's what you really need to achieve.

Become an expert - there are two ways to generate opportunities for comment and interview on the back of news stories. One way is to contact journalists. The other is for them to contact you. In an ideal world you should probably do both. There are databases such as Expert Sources where you can list your details for a paid-for subscription. Journalists use it to find experts to provide comment for the stories they are working on.

Commenting on the back of other people's news is a great way to build your profile and get exposure to key audiences. It is also an important way to build your profile while keeping your costs down. If you can build a reputation for providing useful and insightful comment then you will quickly find that journalists will come back to you time and again.