

Publish... Promote... Pitch... Publicity!

A Three-Step Guide to Creating Online Publicity for Your Business



There is no better marketing tool than publicity.

As a means of attracting attention, getting people talking and bringing customers through the door, publicity is second to none. Companies have spent millions on specialists and PR agencies to generate it for them.

Now, any business can generate publicity and become an overnight success.

With a good story and a few inexpensive tools, it's possible to generate your own publicity online, where your future customers look for news about businesses, and journalists look for stories. Your business has the power to reach hundreds of thousands of people.

There are a lot of publicity tools out there. You can generate publicity with any single one, but they're most effective when you combine several. This guide will help you integrate three routes to online publicity: news releases, social media, and media pitching.

Publish! Turning your story into an online news release



What's your story?

Like most businesses, you make news regularly. As well as obvious milestones – opening your business, or launching a new product or service – many of the everyday things you do can be turned into stories that generate publicity. Here are some ideas:

- **An accomplishment or award.** Had a major breakthrough? That's a story: let the world know.
- **Share an inspirational story.** Readers love to hear about people going the extra mile, overcoming adversity, and becoming successful.
- **Teach people something.** No one likes to be lectured, but you can tell an educational story about your industry that builds your credibility and gets shared.
- **Talk up your recent event.** Had a good event at your business? Who attended? Which speakers stood out? What was the highlight? Recap the big day and you've got news.
- **Announce a charitable contribution.** Generate awareness for a cause you believe in and create some publicity for your business too.
- **Weigh in on an industry trend.** You're an expert at what you do. Shaping your insight and expertise into a news story turns your knowledge into a marketing asset.
- **Share a survey or poll.** Everyone loves stats and surveys, particularly journalists who find ready-made stories in this type of news release.
- **Provide helpful tips.** Helpful tips can turn a reader into a potential customer. If you sell fitness products, provide tips on how to use them. Publish helpful information and people will find and share it.

Need more ideas? We have hundreds for you in the PRWeb

Learning Center at <http://service.prweb.com>

Chosen your story? It's time to share it with an online news release. Online news releases get your story seen, grab readers' attention and tell your story like a news website with images and video. These pages will help you get the best publicity results out of yours.

How a News Release Works

An online news release is a DIY publicity asset that shares your news to the Web, social networks and the media.

It takes your story and turns it into an online news article, with a headline, body copy, and images. It then distributes your story to news sites, search engines, journalists, bloggers and potential customers.

Online news releases show up on the search engines that your prospects and customers use when they're shopping or looking for news. By optimizing your release with keywords, you can make sure that your story gets to the people you want to reach.

News releases also generate publicity with journalists and bloggers, who use search engines and social media to research sources, trends and stories. Almost all journalists now use Google to do their job, and news releases are an ideal way to reach them.

Finally, news releases are easy to share. By sending, tweeting, blogging or emailing the link, you can direct readers, bloggers and journalists to your story.



Writing a Great Headline

As the first thing readers see, your headline needs to work hard to grab attention. Make sure you get it right!

- **Get specific in your headline.** A headline that accurately summarizes the content of the news release does more than tell readers what to expect. Search engines will rank a piece more highly if it sees the headline matches the content. Use specific descriptors—"oak wood manufacturing" rather than just "wood manufacturing" and skip flowery adjectives or hyperbole such as "best ornate artisan manufacturer."
- **Use the active voice.** Passive voice uses three or four words where only one is required, and slows down the impact of a great headline. Replace a passive voice phrase like "K-12 school Lincoln Academy has been selected for recognition of achievement by ABC" with an active voice phrase like "ABC selects leading K-12 school Lincoln Academy for recognition."
- **Chop three words.** Brief is best for headlines, both for readers and search engines. So when you're done writing your next headline, cut it by these words. It may seem hard hat first, but it's easier than you think. 'A' and 'of' can be eliminated easily (this is doubly good because search engines stumble on these words). Be ruthless without being unreadable.



Better Writing Tips for More Publicity

Maximize your story's publicity potential by telling it right with these news release writing tips!

- **Use the "Five W's".** Tell your story like a journalist by answering the five key W's within your first paragraph: who, what, where, when and why. Your two or three following paragraphs should contain additional details about your story, plus a quote from someone involved in the story explaining what this piece of news means to your business or customers.
- **Get Emotional.** Which of these resonates more? "Credit card users lose billions each year to fraud" or "Credit card fraudsters steal billions each year from our pockets." Emotional language grabs readers' and journalists' attention and makes your story more likely to be picked up.

Do a five-step proofread. Spelling and grammar errors in your news can turn readers off, fast. Follow these five proffing tips for a flawless publicity asset:

- Read your release out loud. Any patches that are difficult to get through probably need breaking up.
- Solicit a second (or third) set of eyes.
- Read your story backwards. Because your brain knows what you meant to say, it's easy to miss errors when you read it conventionally.
- Focus on the numbers: all percentages should add up to 100 and all phone numbers could use a quick Google search.
- Print it out. You may focus better if you're not staring at the same screen you wrote your release on.

ADVANCED TIP:

Publish early in the morning to catch journalists. Most journalists start their day with an editorial meeting and then work feverishly against deadlines in the afternoon. Your news needs to be in their inboxes first thing, when they have time to digest your story and determine if it's worth pitching to their editor.



Improve Your Story with a Fresh Perspective

Does your story about a new product or promotion feel boring? Try approaching it from a different angle to spice it up and attract more attention.

- **Provide a human angle.** If your story about a new product or your latest results isn't resonating, try re-framing it with the people of your business front and center. People are often more likely to share stories that involve people over product - especially when the story features people they know or people in their local area. If you've got an employee worth including in your story, do it. Got a happy customer? Quote them.
- **Link your story to an industry trend.** Stories that comment on and contribute to industry trends often get loads of buzz on social networks because that's what the people in your industry - as well as the journalists and bloggers who cover your industry - are really interested in. Linking your news to an industry trend can also help bolster a weak story, giving it more online reach and potential to create buzz.
- **Boost your publicity with an offer.** Announcing a new product? Combine it with a free giveaway in an online news release to get your business in the news. Suddenly, your simple 'new product' story is a piece of news worth sharing with a much wider audience. It's also a shortcut to media coverage; as publicity guru and former newspaper editor Joan Stewart says: "Announcing a freebie is an almost guaranteed way to get the media to write about you."



Take Readers Further With Multimedia

From images and videos to hyperlinks and more, online press releases are multimedia publicity vehicles that enter a reader's mind through sight and sound, rather than simply through text.

- **Grab attention with an image.** Break up copy in a press release by using strategically placed images that support your concept. These images could range from basic - think your company logo, or a jpeg of your product or service - to the more complex - think graphs, pie charts or scrolling photo galleries.
- **Go deeper with a video.** An embedded video, one to three minutes long, transforms your story from two-dimensional words on a screen to a three-dimensional story complete with a storyline, characters and imagery. This is what audiences remember, and this is how your message becomes combustible in the mind of the audience. It's easy to create and upload a video of a new product in action or of a company spokesperson explaining what your news means for customers - all you need is an inexpensive video camera or even a smartphone.
- **Help readers with links.** Readers, particularly journalists, are often short of time. Make their job easier by linking to outside sources (e.g. Wikipedia) that help explain industry terms or trends that may not be common knowledge for the public. Making life easier for readers makes them more likely to share your news. Making life easier for journalists makes you a more likely candidate for coverage.
- **Direct readers to your website.** Don't leave readers hanging at the end of your story. Direct them to your website to find out more, using a string call to action. It doesn't need to be creative: your call to action can be as simple as "Find out more at mywebsite.com". No matter how you phrase it, the key is to instruct readers to take action, and to make it easy for them. Make sure the line stands alone in the copy and links to a page that's relevant to your news.
- **Use social media in your release.** You're going to promote your story on social media as soon as

you hit send, but why wait until then? Your release could include Twitter handles for key employees or the URL to your Facebook or Twitter page in your About Us section. Making your release social helps readers share your story and engage with it.



Optimize Your Story for Optimal Publicity

Online news releases let you focus on particular groups of readers by optimizing your story with keywords that target what people are searching for. You'll typically want to optimize for customers in your area, but you can also optimize to take advantage of industry trends, breaking news stories and other publicity opportunities. If you're new to optimizing, Google's Keywords Tool will help you identify the right keywords and is the perfect place to start. Here's what to do next.

- **Choose keywords by thinking like your readers.** As well as using a keyword tool to choose keywords, try stepping into the shoes of the customers, journalists and bloggers you're targeting with your story. What words do they use to describe your business and industry? Answer this question before you start writing your story and the keywords you should use will become more apparent. You can also type the words you choose into a tool like the Keywords Tool for an idea of how hard or easy it is to be found using them.
- **Now use your keywords!** Search engines read headlines to determine what your story is about. Whatever the subject of your story – tips, product announcement, exciting deal, new hire, etc. – your headline needs to include a top industry keyword or keyword phrase. You should repeat your keyword again in your opening paragraph, and again once every hundred words. Be careful not to 'stuff' your story with keywords though; bad content is the enemy of publicity.
- **Include keyword-optimized bullet points.** Bullet points have two key benefits. First, they make your story easier to read, which means people are more likely to share it. They also help your release rank higher in search, as search engines pay similar attention to bullet points as they do to headlines and sub-heads.

ADVANCED TIP:

Newsjack. A different type of optimizing, newsjacking is the practice of linking your story to a larger, current news story in the media. Marketing expert David Meerman Scott defines it as the "process by which you inject your ideas or angles into breaking news, in real time, in order to generate media coverage." To newsjack, look for a larger story that relates to your own news, and include your own perspective on the story in your news release. Then, optimize your own headline so that it shows up in a Google search for the larger story. Done right, and done at the right time, newsjacking can earn you media coverage as a quoted source.

Promote! Generating social media buzz for your story

You've created your news release. Now it's time to promote it on your social media networks for more publicity. Sharing your news release link on social media brings you exposure, buzz and website traffic – as well as the possibility of media coverage for your story. Here's what to do and where to do it.



Facebook Publicity Tips

The world's largest social network has the potential to take your story worldwide through readers' Likes and shares. Here's what to do.

- **Link to your story in your Facebook status.** This promotes your news to your whole network in a single click. If your network includes bloggers and reporters, your news will be in their hands without you ever having to send a pitch.
- **Share a compelling fact from your story.** Your news release headline might be great, but give readers another reason to click through to it. Pull an intriguing fact, statistic or quote out of your release and make that the focus of your post.
- **Ask for a Like!** Don't be afraid to ask for likes or reposts when you promote your story on Facebook. If you have built goodwill with your customers and fans, many will be happy to spread the word for you especially if your story is interesting.
- **Share your news on your personal page, too.** Your business page has fans. Your personal page has friends, who are more likely to help you publicize your story and create more buzz.



Twitter Publicity Tips

With its huge reach and easy sharing and retweeting, Twitter can spread the word about your story in seconds. Here's how you can drive the process.

- **Tweet your story link (more than once).** News release services like PRWeb have a feature that will send your tweet for you as soon as you hit send. Later, follow up with a couple more tweets over several days to create more traction and reach more people. Vary your headline and be careful not to overdo the frequency.
- **Promote those who promote you.** Got a retweet of your story? Acknowledge it with a simple thank-you. This is a roundabout way to create a second round of buzz on Twitter. If you've earned a follow from a reporter or blogger, this tactic means your story will appear twice in their timeline.
- **Play the #hashtag game when you tweet your story.** When tweeting your story to your followers, categorize it by adding a hashtag (aka the 'pound sign') to a word or phrase relating to your story or industry. As well as getting you seen by people outside your network of followers, it will put you on the radar of journalists and bloggers who follow that hashtag.

ADVANCED TIP:

Tweet your own horn: If the tweet you sent to promote your news release or blog post is getting loads of retweets and mentions, thank everyone en masse to it with a second tweet. It adds credibility to your story and might make journalists and bloggers take a second look.



Even More Social Media Publicity Tips!

Social media goes way further than Facebook and Twitter. Try these sites and tactics for a quick publicity boost.

- **Pin it:** According to Mashable, daily Pinterest users have increased by more than 145 percent since the beginning of 2012. To take advantage of this social network's growing audience, pin a photo of your latest press release or blog post to Pinterest. To boost your chances of this image getting found through search engines, add keywords to a) your image's file name, b) the board that you pin it to, and c) your pin description text.
- **Google + it:** Earning social shares on Google+ can help your story get a higher place on Google. Not only

will Google rank it higher, but Google will display how many shares it has on the results page. This will help your story stand out to readers, particularly industry bloggers researching the latest trends.

- **Blog it:** Make your story go further by reusing it for a blog post. Don't simply cut and paste it; instead, summarize the story on your blog and include a link to your actual news release. Your blog is also a good place to take readers further with explanations of key terms and links to respected sites like Wikipedia or news websites.
- **SlideShare it:** Does your story feature lots of stats, or lots of photos? Put this content on PowerPoint and turn it into a visual SlideShare presentation. It's another way to get your story found, and provides a great image resource for bloggers who might want to share your story.

Pitch! Earning media publicity for your story

There's no publicity like media publicity. As well as going to search engines and social networks to look for news and reviews, customers pay real attention to what the media says about businesses. As well as having the trust of their readers, the media also has a long reach. A publicity hit in a popular website, newspaper or blog could take your story to thousands of new customers. Here's how to pitch your story to the media via email to earn one.



There is no magic formula for a successful pitch, says Vocus' and PRWeb's Director of PR Frank Strong, but with good fundamentals and some perseverance, you will be successful. Here are his top five for emailing your story to reporters.

1. Read first; pitch second. Scan the publications you think reach your target market and identify the reporters you think cover your space, then read their articles. A good technique is to bookmark those sites and schedule reading time each week. Regular reading will give you a better sense for the reporter's style and focus and enable you to write a better pitch. Don't try to tackle the world at once. Instead, incorporate this exercise into your schedule and find a couple of new writers to allow each week.

2. Engage. Engagement can come in several forms. First, if you enjoy an article a reporter you follow has written and have something of value to contribute to the conversation, post a comment. Second, if you're on social media channels like Twitter, follow those reporters and add them to a list. Watch and read what they Tweet. Tweet links to articles you find interesting and be sure to include reporter's Tweeter handle in your post. Finally, if you find an article especially compelling, send them a not and let them know. No pitch, no pressure, just conversation.

3. Pitch a story, not a product. Reporters are after a story: something useful and compelling for their readers. Rather than pitching **how great your product is**, tell them how it solved a problem. An old textbook I have lying around defines "news" as something that defies expectations. What about your story defies expectations?

4. Keep it short and relevant. Most pitches reporters receive come by email. Since that makes for a cluttered inbox, relevancy and brevity go a long way. When I reach out to a new reporter – someone I haven't contacted before – I like to include a reference to something they've written. My first sentence might read, "Mike: I saw you wrote about the iPad's impact on publisher and thought you might be

interested in some analysis we conducted that demonstrates the variability of coverage between traditional news writers and bloggers.” It shows Mike that I know what he writes about and have a pitch related to his beat.

5. The phone also works. If you’ve done your research and know what the reporter covers, don’t be afraid to pick up the phone and call a reporter. Be sure to have the key point you’d like to get across in mind before dialing. Since deadlines tend to loom in the afternoon, I tend to make calls in the morning, and just like any other call, extend the reporter the same courtesy: “Hi, I’m Frank, I’m with PRWeb and I’ve got a story in which I think you might be interested. Do you have a minute to talk?” Don’t take it personally if you don’t hear back – reporters are busy. Don’t shy from being persistent. I’m not suggesting you call or email them three times a day; however, if you have something new going on in your business, it’s a good reason to reach out to them again. Hang in there!



Three Creative Online Media Pitching Tips

There’s more to media publicity than the standard email pitch. Here are three creative ways to get more publicity for your story through the Internet.

- **Pitch bloggers too.** Getting picked up by a prominent industry or local blog can be just as effective for your business as traditional news coverage. When pitching a blogger (their emails are usually available on their blogs), make sure your story is relevant to their audience. This means you have to research the blog you’re pitching. **Quick tip:** Don’t paste your release into an email pitch to a blogger. Instead, briefly summarize your news and why it would be valuable to his or her audience, then link to your release.
- **Search Twitter for reporters to pitch.** An easy tool for finding reporters who cover your industry or area is the search bar on Twitter. Using a hashtag, search your industry keywords (e.g. #restaurants, #homeandgarden), local publication names (#washpost), hot industry trends and stories and more. The reporters you care about are likely to be using those hashtags when tweeting links to their stories, making them easy to find with the right search terms.

ADVANCED TIP:

Pitch journalists with HARO. Help A Reporter Out is a Vocus service that turns the process of media pitching on its head. When journalists on a deadline need sources or subjects for their story, they submit a request to HARO. HARO then compiles those requests into emails and delivers them to you, three times a day. When you find a request that relates to your story or your expertise, you respond with a quick, targeted pitch introducing yourself as a source. HARO will deliver your pitch straight to that journalist, with no need to call them yourself. It’s free to join: sign up at www.helpareporter.com.

About PRWeb

PRWeb from Vocus is the world's #1 news release service and your first stop for creating online publicity.

PRWeb has the highest rated SEO, the most social shares, the most traffic, and the highest volume of any news release service in the industry.

You create an announcement about your organization. We send it across the Web and around the world. Even if you've never written a news or press release before, you can create one in minutes with our resources. All you need is something great to say about your business. We'll send it to all major search engines, thousands of news sites, and to more than 30,000 journalists and bloggers. We'll also host it permanently on the PRWeb News Center, visited by 1.5 million users per month.

Start creating online publicity today at www.prweb.com.

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