



GRAB THE HEADLINES

BOOSTING BRAND EXPOSURE THROUGH DIGITAL PR



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INTRODUCTION

A solid digital PR strategy is imperative for any good marketing campaign if companies want to ensure their story is the piece that is picked out from the crowd, and selected by journalists to be featured in the wider media.

PR is all about influencing, engaging and building a relationship with members of the public across a range of platforms to enhance your brand's reputation through an honest and distinctive brand voice. If you manage to find the right news hook, your brand can reap the benefits by connecting with the masses and growing your business online.

Adopting a Digital PR strategy that fits into your brand isn't always easy, however. It's important that your approach doesn't focus on selling your brand, but instead focuses on being able to find a newsworthy story that stands out from the rest, evokes trust and harnesses engagement.

This guide will look at some of the ways in which your brand can develop a PR strategy that works and which grabs the headlines. So what are you waiting for?



WHAT IS DIGITAL PR?

Digital PR is the means of getting exposure online and is now part and parcel of traditional PR. There are few better ways to build your credibility and search visibility than through creating and distributing original, relevant and shareable content, which accrues quality links and creates dialogue around your brand.

With a digital PR strategy, you'll be looking to target not just relevant sites to spread your content, reaching a wider audience, driving traffic and hopefully gaining a link, but also appropriate influencers on blogs, online communities and social media networks, your target audience, prominent bloggers, the press, and more.

Much like magazines and newspapers, where many have switched from print to digital, communications are also going online. There are several reasons for this and the benefits of crafting a digital space in which to communicate are vast.

Digital PR is all about combining traditional PR with content marketing, social media and search: transforming static news into conversations and bypassing media to speak directly to your target audience online.

News can be spread further, faster, and more directly to a specific target audience than ever before in history. It allows us to maximise news like never before. Instead of being satisfied with a single placement, your news can be shared exponentially.

HOW DO YOU IMPLEMENT A GOOD STRATEGY AND HOW CAN YOU CREATE EFFECTIVE PR?

Well the first thing you need to do is to understand your audience. Ask yourself about the type of content they are likely to engage with, where they find it and if it is good enough for them to convert or share. We call our process outreach and this is what, we feel, is the best way to make your information reach the right people at the right time. Once you understand what it is you want to say the next step is where.

Outreach is the process of identifying the best possible outlets for your content and there are a number of tools that can be used for this. According to The Drum, one of the best places to start is by searching Google News for your topic.

This is a simple way of identifying publications and authors with an interest in your subject. Once you've identified a website that has recently published related content, do a site search to evaluate just how often they write on the topic and in what ways. This will also highlight other writers on the site to potentially contact and expand your network.

Once you have cracked the audience factor you are ready for the next stage. A successful digital PR campaign not only brings the SEO benefits to your site from a quality and authoritative site, but it also allows additional brand exposure.

With the digital sphere being more and more competitive, you want to make sure that your campaign performs every step of the way, from the research and ideation to the campaign planning all the way through till outreaching it. Here are our top tips for creating successful digital PR campaigns...

KEEP IN MIND WHAT MAKES A GREAT NEWS STORY

In our experience, successful digital PR campaigns share similar qualities. You want to ensure your campaign checks a few of these boxes before launching or outreaching in order to maximise its chances in generating interest from journalists.

It often helps to refer to current news stories, upcoming social events and even search data to consider creating a campaign that is relevant and topical.

One of the most effective tools in conveying a story is by being emotive. Whether your campaign is a visual or a data analysis piece, the campaign should trigger a reaction with the audience, this can be through humor, reminiscent, anger or sadness, thus allowing you to form a connection with the audience and even generate further conversation.

Nonetheless, simplicity is a much underrated element to good digital PR campaigns. In this case, bigger doesn't always mean better. You can do a quick check by summarising the whole campaign into one line and see if it still makes sense. This is because an overly complicated campaign can be hard to produce and even harder for the audience to understand.



RESEARCH WHAT IS BEING DISCUSSED ABOUT YOUR INDUSTRY

If you're keen for your story to be shared in the news cycle, you need to understand exactly what is being written about your industry. Keep tabs on industry news and stay abreast of current trends in your sector and refer to these within your campaign where possible. You can set up Google Alerts for industry specific keywords so you get notified when relevant announcements are made or even subscribe to newsletters from magazines within the industry.

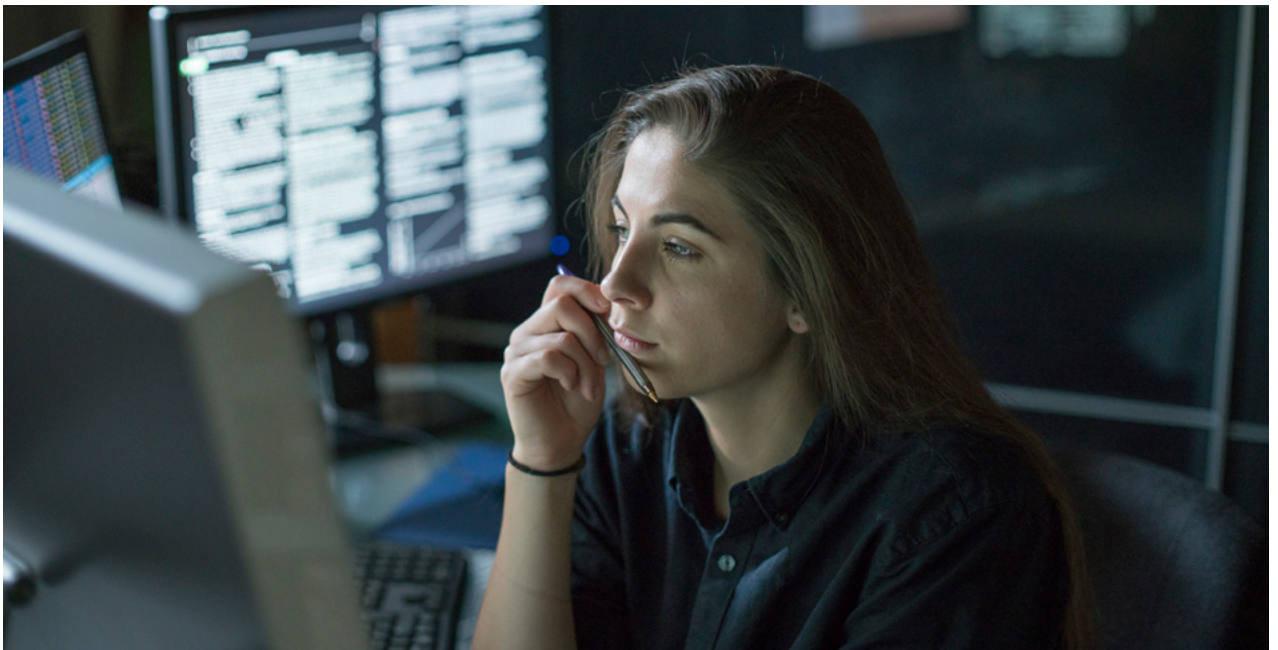
One of the benefits of digital PR is the quick turnaround time. When you identify an opportunity in the news for your business or brand, you can be reactive and use your business' authority to comment on industry relevant matters and create a simple yet effective digital PR campaign that journalists will find useful to include in their articles.

SEARCH FOR NEW DATA OR REPURPOSE EXISTING DATA

One of the most important factors to create a news story is, of course, offering something new. This could be by finding new data, or it could be by examining old data and giving it a new spin. Some good sources of free data can be Google Trends, Statista, YouGov and the Office Of National Statistics.

Alternatively, you can create a survey and collect exclusive data that allows you to create a narrative regarding a specific matter.

It can be daunting when approaching a large set of data and statistics, but you can try segmenting these into various groups, like regional and temporal, and compare them to see if there are interesting patterns or trends. Your analysis can form an interesting narrative for your next digital PR campaign.



DON'T FORGET ABOUT YOUR READERS

We mentioned this earlier but digital PR campaigns can help connect your brand to a wider audience by initiating conversations that don't need to be closely related to your product or service offering.

While making sure the content is on-brand is important some campaigns tend to be overly concerned with brand messaging and forget what an average reader will want to engage with. It may be helpful to question whether the campaign you are creating adds value, or you could even apply the Pub Test and see what the response to your campaign might be like.

APPLY THE PUB TEST

Is your story interesting or is it just interesting to you? One way to answer this is by applying the Pub Test. Under normal circumstances, this could actually be done in a pub. However, amidst the coronavirus pandemic, it might be better trying the Pub Test over Zoom. Get a few friends together and speak to them about your idea. Does it start a conversation? Spark a debate? If so, you know you are onto a great idea.

FIND JOURNALISTS THAT HAVE WRITTEN ABOUT SIMILAR TOPICS

The best way to start creating your media list is by gathering up a bunch of stories on a similar topic. This way you are finding journalists who may be interested in your content.

A good place to start to find out where your story could be suited is Google. The fountain of knowledge, Google search can be the perfect place to find all the publications you'd need. You can take your story topic along with a few other keywords and use the Google News section to filter through recent stories, which will also help to bring up journalists' names too.

If you're after only UK publications, you could try adding in '.co.uk' into your search so that Google will only pull domains with that end, but be aware this will also eliminate UK domains with a '.com' end, so don't limit yourself to this search.

Another great way of using Google to find similar publications is to copy your title style to see what

DON'T CONTACT SOMEONE FOR THE SAKE OF IT

One mistake we see all too often is brands emailing hundreds of journalists in the hope that a small ratio will pick up the story. At best, this approach is a waste of time. At worst, it can burn bridges with good journalists who you have pitched irrelevant content to and who you might want to work with again in the future.



CONDENSE YOUR STORY INTO A SUCCINCT SENTENCE TO CATCH A JOURNALIST'S ATTENTION

Journalists at top publications like the Mail Online, Daily Mirror and Daily Express can receive as many as 200-300 press releases every single day. However, they will only have enough time to write six or seven stories. That demonstrates just how essential it is that your story grabs a journalist's attention. One of the key ways to do this is to make sure it has a pithy, catchy subject line for when it lands in their email inbox—something that will stand out from all the other press releases they receive. Try to condense the most newsworthy element of your story into a single sentence, write it in a way that will grab a time-poor journalist's attention and don't be afraid to play around with the syntax until you get it perfect. It is worth spending a lot of time on this.

DO YOUR RESEARCH ON THE WEBSITE AND THE JOURNALIST YOU ARE PITCHING TO

You may have a great story that you are pitching to the wrong journalist or the wrong website. Remember that there's no such thing as "the media"; each publication differs in its tone of voice, its target demographic and the subject matters that it covers. Therefore, you should thoroughly research each publication before you pitch them to make sure your story is going to the correct people. Otherwise, you may be wasting your time. Do you have something edgy for a young audience? Try the lifestyle desk at the Metro. A white paper about business finance? That's probably better suited to the Financial Times.

It's important to remember that just because you love your story, it's not going to be every publication's cup of tea. And whilst a topic such as travel may be covered on The Telegraph, The Daily Mail and Glamour, they're stories are all very different in set up and nature. It's best to envisage where you could see your story being published and start from there for your outreach efforts before perhaps considering changing your format slightly for different publications later on.



UNDERSTAND THE NEWSROOM

Journalists are under pressure to provide up to seven stories per day, and with the sheer volume of press release emails they will be receiving, it's important that yours gets to the right person in that newsroom to receive the highest chance of being opened, read, and published.

It's been said that the best days to send a press release are Tuesdays and Thursdays mornings, but this is becoming less important as time goes on and as news is being churned out at such speeds to keep up with the paces of the internet.

Nowadays, it's more likely a better use of your time to think about your journalists' schedule and what it might look like. For example, many journalists may not necessarily work the usual 9-5 if they are freelance, are a weekend journalist or they are for example a parenting journalist who probably fits their work in around their parenting duties.

Due to COVID making our dining room tables the more common workplace for people these days, it's also likely that people may sign onto their laptops earlier than 9 or pick up work later on. So why not schedule your emails to be sent before 9, so it lands in their inbox ready just before they sign on? Similarly, if they're a Weekend journalist, they may be preparing their stories as early as Monday ready for the week, so why not get it in then?

This rule isn't exhaustive, however. I've heard of people successfully outreaching a story on a Friday morning for later that day, and if it comes down to you sending the story now or later, it might be a better idea to send it earlier rather than sitting on it, especially if it is relevant to current news affairs.



OFFER YOUR STORY TO KEY JOURNALISTS EXCLUSIVELY

Journalists love an exclusive. If they know they can be the first to share a great story, it means they may be able to generate a ton of traffic before their competitors have a chance to write it up themselves. In doing your research, if you come across a journalist who is perfect for your story—perhaps they specialise in the area in which your content is focussed, or they have written about this subject numerous times before—offer it to them before anyone else. It can vastly improve your chances of getting your story published.

GIVE THE JOURNALIST EVERYTHING THEY MIGHT NEED—AND WE MEAN EVERYTHING

Once a journalist has been hooked in by the story, it is essential that you give them everything they need to write it—and we do mean everything. Time-poor journalists don't want to chase you for extra information, find spokespeople for comment or scour stock image websites for a picture to use. It is a waste of their precious time. You should include all of this in your pitch. If the story references data, put it in a Google Sheet. If there's a spokesperson, include their quote in a press release. Hi-res images could also be included in a Google Drive or Dropbox for them to download.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO FOLLOW UP

If there's one thing we hope to have made clear it's that journalists are busy people. Because of that, if your story doesn't get picked up, it might not actually have anything to do with the quality of your campaign or the accuracy of your pitch, it could simply be that a journalist was busy working on something else and didn't spot it in their inbox because. Most journalists will be receptive to a polite follow-up later in the day or the next working day just to check if they had seen the story. If you still have no response, however, don't take it to heart and move on.



FINAL THOUGHTS

The overwhelming benefits of having a multi-faceted approach to both your digital marketing and your PR are vast. If you are able to engage as wide an audience as possible, build loyalty, protect your reputation and increase your search visibility then growth is inevitable. You can deal with problems and communicate successes to your readership in a way that shows the business off in the best possible light.

Self-publication and promotion are becoming increasingly important for businesses. If you're not shouting about your brand, products and services then who is? By implementing a good digital PR strategy you give yourself not only the best possible coverage but can attract new and retain existing customers.

There is a common misconception that it can be difficult to talk about yourself but if you are going to grow your business then this communication is vital.



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ABOUT US

Click Consult is a multi award-winning digital and search marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC). Part of global consumer brand business Ceuta Group, we have a team of 70-plus specialists and a portfolio of more than 60 clients worldwide.

Our complementary services include content marketing, outreach, social media, conversion rate optimisation (CRO) and international/multilingual search marketing. We can also offer training and consultation to support your teams or existing strategy.

Click was named Organic Search (SEO) Team of the Year 2020, adding to our long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'. We're also a Google Premier Partner, a Bing Select Partner and feature in The Drum Recommends.

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

CONTACT US



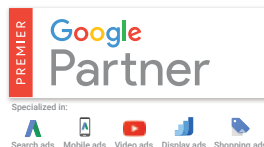
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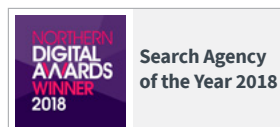
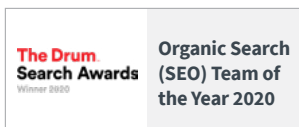
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