

The press release is dead; long live the press release

 By [Gerhard Hope](#)

17 Apr 2019

As an industrial marketing specialist, one of the core functions is to compile press releases for our clients and to distribute these to the relevant media. Of course, the keyword in industrial marketing specialist is 'industrial': a lot of our clients have extremely technical businesses and products.



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We are not preaching to the converted here. Of course, our industrial clients do not necessarily want to talk directly to their competitors, for example. They want to access new markets and potential clients. Here a skilful press release that conveys the essence of what they do, or how important their products are in terms of general business drivers such as cutting costs and boosting productivity, is still a critical tool in industrial marketing.

However, Prowly content marketing specialist Magdalena Wosinska asks a very pertinent question: "In the days of having a constant 'appetite' for information (which can be contained in 140 characters), it would seem that journalists are no longer able to go through the press releases they get from PR teams."

She attaches a picture that surely many editors and journalists can identify with:



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However – and this is critical for an industrial marketing specialist – Wosinska adds: “Before you think the press release is dead, the truth is that because of the ever-growing information bubble and news jumping at you like ‘pop-up’ ads, there is a need for brands to create their own narrative like never before.”

Narrative and engagement

That is the key to the modern press release: Narrative and engagement. As an industrial marketing specialist, it is our responsibility to not only forge a close working relationship with our clients but the media as well. The process begins with discussing content ideas that not only tie in with our clients’ marketing strategies but which are relevant and topical to the media as well.

In this approach, the press release becomes both a touchstone and a resource. It also generates brand awareness and ensures our clients are top-of-mind when experts are required to comment on topical issues (such as load-shedding, water conservation and fire preservation, or ‘smart’ cities and building automation.)

It is the responsibility of any industrial marketing specialist worth their salt to forge close working relationships with all media, from print to online, radio and television.

Spamming the media

Yes, gone are the 'shotgun-approach' days of writing a press release on any old thing, and banging it off to any old media in the hope of seeing it appear in print. Any editor worth their salt, in turn, will rightly blacklist such a so-called industrial marketing specialist, as they are being reactive rather than proactive.

'Spamming' the media is a sensitive issue. However, one must bear in mind that this is different from disseminating credible and relevant content on a regular basis. Wosinska reiterates this point:

"I can honestly tell you that I have a much better recollection of working with PR agencies which released press information compared to those from which I did not receive any messages. I very often thought to myself, 'If they are sending out so many messages, their business must be thriving.' In short: you show the world that you keep growing."

Building block

John Hall, co-founder and president of Calendar, highlights the magic ingredient of any modern press release: "Journalists are pitched hundreds of stories each day. If you want them to write about you and your company, you need to be able to grab their attention through your press release – quickly and successfully."

While the format of the press release has not changed much over time, he adds that "there are definitely new factors, tools and strategies that can influence how – or whether – they're picked up by journalists." Some of these are listed above, and this should go a long way in reassuring clients that press releases remain a fundamental building block of any successful industrial marketing strategy.

The key phrase here is 'building block'. Hall lists the following attributes of a successful press release:

- A press release is a highly effective medium to convey your client's message. This refers not only to their products and services, but their culture and values, and their interpretation of topical local issues that can position them as thought leaders in their respective sectors.
- Press releases help widen their reach, often into different markets and business opportunities.
- Press releases improve SEO and form part of a critical feedback loop with social-media platforms.
- Press releases build relationships with customers, gain social traction, and promote ideas.

Conclusion

As Hall concludes succinctly: "In reality, they're capable of expanding your business." But they need to be done "write" (excuse the pun.)

There is a saying that, as quickly as things change, so they stay the same. Here the lesson is that evolution and innovation are unavoidable constants. Press releases may appear an anachronism in this modern digital age. But remember that they often end online in company news archives, where their longevity and reach is almost limitless.

Long live the press release!

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