

Opinion pieces make your client shine

 By [Vanessa Clark](#)

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In my opinion (sorry!), opinion pieces should always be an essential part of any public relations campaign. But today, more than ever, with newsrooms under so much strain and more and more companies clamouring for your audience's finite attention span, they are an essential part of the mix.

In a series of three articles I take a look at some sure-fire ways to get your client or company's opinion piece placed. (For brevity I'll refer to clients, but this applies equally well to internal comms practitioners).

But first, let's remind ourselves what opinion pieces are, and why they are such a vital PR tool.

What is an opinion piece?

As the name suggests, it is a piece of content written in the first person that offers an opinion on a subject and is ideally backed up by research and examples. It steers well away from a blatant product or company promotion - the value of the piece is in the byline and subsequent benefits.

Opinion pieces play an important role in introducing new or alternative views into a discussion, and educating an audience about new topics or issues.

Opinion pieces are also referred to as op-eds, short for opposite the editorial page, referring to their position in a newspaper opposite the page containing an unattributed editorial written by the newspaper editor or another senior member of the editorial staff and also often the letters to the editor. The op-ed, however, would be written by someone not affiliated with the newspaper and would be attributed.

Some other naming conventions you might come across are [contributor pieces](#), analysis and more practical how-tos.

Content strategy

Why should you include opinion pieces as part of your content strategy for clients?

With publications under pressure to generate revenue, any announcement with the slightest hint of product about it will get you sent straight over to the ad department. You may find you get a bit more leeway from online publications, depending on the sector and your market but, on the whole, media companies of all shapes and sizes are seeking to drive advertising.

Add to this short-staffed newsrooms that are under pressure to deliver new, unique and cutting-edge content, and you have a perfect environment for placing opinion pieces.

Hugely valuable in their own right

But as I mentioned, opinion pieces are hugely valuable parts of any PR campaign in their own right. They allow you to position your spokesperson as an expert and a thought leader, ideally paving the way for a regular column in strategic publications, for reporters to proactively call you for comments or for invitations for your spokesperson to speak at events.

Opinion pieces in the form of rapid responses are also very useful in correcting errors or omissions. Longer lead time publications also love opinion pieces, as they allow them to take a story forward with an alternative view or detailed analysis, even though it would have been extensively covered in the dailies.

(Frankly, even daily media are usually scooped on hot events by social media platforms, especially Twitter, and need to do something more than merely report on the facts.)

More effective than press releases

More so than a press release, opinion pieces are very effective at explanation, education and raising awareness of an issue that is important to your client. This could either be to raise awareness and mitigate concerns about a totally new way of doing things - we see this a lot in the tech space, for instance, promoting the use of cloud computing as a business strategy - or as part of an extended awareness campaign, either cause-based or commercial.

They are also a great way to get non-listed companies into the financial or business media.

In the part II, I will run through how to develop an opinion piece and then get it placed.

A version of this article first appeared in volume four of the [PR News Media Training Guidebook](#), published by Access Intelligence LLC. The publication offers tips, best practices, key strategies and practical checklist from media training experts intended to increase PRs' chances of success as they send their messages out into the 24/7 media cycle.

For more:

- Bizcommunity: [\[The ready-made feature II\] How to successfully pitch opinion pieces](#) by Vanessa Clark
- Bizcommunity: [\[The ready-made feature III\] Reincarnating your opinion piece](#) by Vanessa Clark

See also:

- Bizcommunity Press Office: [If you're content, we're content](#)
- Bizcommunity: [How to contribute to Bizcommunity, from op-ed pieces to news](#)
- Bizcommunity: [B2B magazines need to up their game](#) by Angelo Coppola

ABOUT VANESSA CLARK

Hi! I'm a freelance journalist, copywriter and editor based in Cape Town, South Africa. I write as a journalist and for corporates and agencies. My specialties are business-to-business and technology writing. I like unpacking complex ideas so they are more easily understood - especially when it involves innovation taking place in South Africa, and the rest of Africa.

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