How to Build a Powerful, Results-Driven Media Relations Campaign By Utilizing Data

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In today's world, data is everything. A data analyst for Centogene once said, "Data is information, and information is power." When it comes to media relations, acquiring and disseminating data is a potent and influential tool. Data has been used to delineate fact from fiction, it changes consumer behavior and transforms public opinion and sentiment. Data is black and white, transparent and trusted across industries and job functions. Thus, it's an asset and integral part of a successful media relations strategy.

Data is a resource the most credible media outlets hold in high regard. In a sea of fluffy listicles and clickbait, the top business-focused media outlets and trade publications that B2B companies want coverage in articles and news based on data. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, 97% of the companies surveyed in an Accenture study acknowledged that proprietary data was "very valuable" or "quite valuable" for differentiating one's company from competitors. Experts also consider content-based data analysis to be some of the best-performing content pieces on the web.

Releasing valuable data via a press release provides the opportunity for multiple media outlets to run a story or conduct an interview, but it's also likely that for months — or even years — journalists and businesses will cite the data

in articles, blogs, podcasts, social media or on their websites. Thus, media relations based on original data is one of the few marketing tactics that truly has longevity and an ongoing ROI. Another valuable tactic is offering the research to your most coveted media outlet first and allowing them to be the first to publish it.

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Examples of companies utilizing data for media relations

Deloitte, a prominent UK-based company with nearly 200,000 professionals in independent firms throughout the world collaborating to provide audit, consulting, risk and financial advisory experience to clients, produces valuable surveys that inform business practices for entire industries. Their ongoing Global Risk Management Survey is picked up by tens of thousands of media outlets. However, data is often acquired and distributed by smaller businesses, too, as an effective media relations content strategy.

One of our clients at Fletcher Marketing PR, Tellico Village, a senior living community in East Tennessee, conducted a resident survey on retirement trends that were then utilized to produce a series of news releases and bylined articles utilizing the data. Senior living publications found this original data informative for their audience, which led to media pickup and the ability to then repurpose the published articles as social media, blog and email marketing content.

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How to determine what data to

acquire for your campaign

The best approach is to start at the end – not at the beginning. Think about what your audience and stakeholders will value the most. Is there a problem within your industry or among your customers that needs to be solved? Here's an example: Inbound marketing and CRM software company, HubSpot, performed an inbound marketing trend report with data collected from over 1,600 businesses with the purpose of providing their audience with valuable information to build better marketing strategies. Since their customers rely on their products and services for marketing and sales, selecting a survey to secure data related to marketing insights was clearly effective, since according to Muck Rack, there are over 10,000 media mentions for their report.

Methodology for securing original data

The type of market research utilized to acquire the data depends on the goal and information you're aiming to inform. A survey is best when acquiring quantitative data and consists of a set of questions to gain insight. Proprietary data, also known as owned data analytics, is another form of quantitative data that is captured through owned sources such as CRMs or other analytics tools within the organization. Whereas a focus group or interviews are more conducive to qualitative data that is non-numerical and based on insights, behaviors, interactions or observations.

While it's straightforward to access proprietary data for media relations, it's often helpful to hire a third-party market research firm to conduct surveys, focus groups or interviews. Ensuring the data is accurate and acquired in an unbiased way is critical. Since the data will be used to demonstrate thought leadership and credibility, leaving the

acquisition to experts who can properly structure the survey, focus groups or interviews and analyze the results scientifically is beneficial.

Related: Proprietary Research Can Give You Credibility – Here's How to Do It

Distribution and reaping the value of credibility and thought leadership

Once a news release with the data and significant findings is drafted and distributed to the media, either via earned media pitching or a release on the wire – or for the best results, a combination of both – the next step is to fully leverage the results and publicity. While awareness from the findings is beneficial, keep in mind that the primary goal is to be positioned as a credible thought leader. Sixty-five percent of buyers say thought leadership significantly influenced their perception of a company for the better. And when it comes to sales conversions, thought leadership plays an important role.

A content preferences study found that B2B buyers increasingly look for credible "show-and-tell" experiences to drive buying decisions. The study found that 77% of buyers will consume at least three pieces or more of content before ever speaking with a salesperson, and the top content formats are based on thought leadership with half including survey reports. So, repurposing the results as a variety of different content pieces is a way to effectively increase the ROI of the campaign. Content pieces to boost credibility and thought leadership can include the following:

- Blog posts
- Podcasts

- Webinars
- Email blasts
- Social media posts
- White papers
- Infographics

In addition to content, an additional benefit is that data results can serve as a pitching opportunity to gain access to speaking engagements, industry panels, interviews, serving as a guest on podcasts or as a guest blogger or even appearing as an expert on broadcast news. It can be emphatically stated that data is a pathway to credibility. After all, author and professor of statistics, W. Edwards Demming, once said, “Without data, you’re just another person with an opinion.”

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