

How to Use Email to Boost PR and Sales

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“Email marketing is an often overlooked but vital part of PR, media relations and thought leadership strategy,” says Blair Nicole, who is the CEO and founder of Media Moguls PR.

She’s right. Most business owners I know rarely look at email as a public relations tool. For many, it’s a marketing channel on which they focus to increase sales. But as the lines between digital marketing and PR are blurring, you could be missing out by not adding a PR component to your email strategy.

Email marketing is a two-way street

How can you leverage the power of email to improve the public perception of your brand? Also, how can you turn your PR wins into lead generation opportunities? It’s a two-way street, Nicole told me, and you need a smooth traffic flow in both directions.

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“When a brand gets an earned media win,” she says, “odds are that PR piece is going to result in an influx of traffic to the brand’s website or social media pages. If the brand doesn’t have an email marketing and lead capture strategy in place, the influx in traffic will be a short-lived win,”

Nicole warns.

So, first things first: before you submit a guest post to a target publication or send a quote to a journalist, make sure you have a reliable way to capture subscribers and potential customers. Here's a checklist to you could use:

- Your website loads fast and the design and copy engage visitors right away
- You have several subscription forms, so visitors can easily get on your email list. Consider adding one above the fold, right at the top of your home page.
- Your call-to-action is irresistible. Give people a good reason to subscribe, such as a free content offer. Also, tell them how often they're going to receive emails from you.
- Every subscription and registration form has at least one method to validate the new addresses you gather. An email validation API will check them in real-time to ensure your new leads are real.

"If your brand is equipped with an email marketing and lead capture strategy," Blair Nicole explains, "you'll be able to continue engaging the new audience indefinitely, and increase the likelihood of converting them to long-term customers."

How often do you share your media wins?

"Too many brands make the mistake of securing a big media win, and then letting it fizzle out," Nicole advises. "Brands can increase the buzz around an earned media piece by sharing it with their newsletter subscribers and email lists."

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I'll be honest: it felt good to hear this as it came as a

validation of our email marketing and PR strategy at ZeroBounce. One of the best habits we have is to share with our subscribers all the significant media coverage we get. Our newsletters are a balanced mix of:

- Useful information we publish on our blog
- Articles we write for other publications, such as this one
- Articles, webinars, and podcasts where we're invited to participate
- Any piece of content we find interesting and that would help or entertain our subscribers

For instance, let's say we just published a great new blog and we want to share it with our list. Around the same time, one of us publishes a guest post or is featured in a prestigious publication. We gather all the content, ask ourselves what the most relevant piece is, and turn it into the main story of our newsletter. All the other ones get some space in the email and a link, but we start our email by getting right into the main story.

Be careful: there's a fine line between expressing your excitement with the coverage you get and being overly self-flattering. Our rule is to find an angle that allows us to share the story but makes it more about our audience than about ourselves.

How to adapt your email and PR strategy to times of crisis

Email has become a vital communication channel in the past three months. As the global health crisis started to push companies into remote work, email has kept millions of teams connected and productive. Furthermore, it's allowed businesses to share updates with their customers and subscribers – and stay afloat while the economy was declining.

It's no surprise that sending volumes have increased, and so have open rates. According to MediaPost, business-to-consumer (B2C) open rates were 22 percent higher between May 15 and May 31 compared to January. During the same period, newsletters opens saw a 17 percent boost, and 41 percent more people signed up for marketing emails.

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Have all brands managed to communicate care, empathy, and a genuine desire to help? You'd probably agree the answer is "no," but I'm not here to shame anyone. Instead, I asked Nicole to answer one final question: how do we adapt our email marketing during times of social crisis?

"I always follow two rules of thumb for email marketing," she said.

1. First, increase the frequency of communication with customers, clients, partners, and stakeholders. "People want leaders to step up and guide them through the crisis. The worst thing you can do is not acknowledge the crisis at hand or allow your audience to feel like you've forgotten about them. Email marketing is a fantastic channel to reach people quickly, and at scale," the PR strategist said. However, make sure your email lists are in good shape. With more than 43 million Americans out of work, many of your B2B email addresses are now invalid.
2. Also, communicate with empathy and be cautious about your messaging.
"Times of social crisis are not the time to make casual comments or attempt to piggyback attention off a trending social issue (not that there's ever a good time for that)," Blair Nicole added. "Instead, brands must empathize with the struggles their customers, stakeholders, and partners are facing, and communicate that empathy in an appropriate and professional way. I

strongly recommend brands to consider their email messaging very carefully during times of crisis.”

This means you should consider pausing any automated emails and ads, and adapt your communication to what’s going on in the world. While you may worry about losing sales, in the long-run, you’ll gain the respect and loyalty of your customers.

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