Want to Do a Public Relations Push? Focus on Social Media First.

Here’s why Twitter and LinkedIn are popular outlets for executives.

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As businesses increase their focus on digital marketing, many are turning to public relations (PR) to help boost their visibility and credibility. Of course, PR is one of the best ways to get your name out there and build thought leadership, but if you are one of the many companies considering media outreach as part of your digital marketing strategy, you can do some work ahead of time to increase your odds of success.

One element to consider as you lay the foundation for effective media outreach is social media. When a journalist gets intrigued about a business, one of the first things they may do is check it out on social media. Know what happens in many cases? It becomes apparent the company hasn’t been active on social media for some time.

Does it *really* matter if your brand is active on social media?

I turned to my journalist friends on Twitter and asked just this. “When you get ready to cover a company,” I sent out, “do you look to see if its website is up-to-date and if they’re

active on social media? Or are those things meaningless?" Here are some of the responses I received:

- "Definitely do … doesn't mean I'll totally nix the story right away, but if neither is updated, it makes me leery of doing the story (like are they really doing what I'm being pitched) and makes my job much harder if I do decide to pursue it still."
- "I always check. For features I've been assigned, I try to focus only on the interview. But for roundups and mentions, I consider keeping a fresh online presence to be critical if I'm implying you are a thought leader or best-of in my article."
- "I want as much background information as possible. Plus, I want to be able to tag them in my social media posts."
- "It's nice when you see a company knows online presence and SEO are important."

As you can see, it absolutely does matter to journalists if a brand is active on social media.

Research backs up these comments. In Muck Rack's State of Journalism report, more than half (61%) of the journalists surveyed say they "usually" or "always" consult branded social media profiles when reporting on an organization.

If journalists feel it matters – and your goal is getting their attention – shouldn't you invest some time in social media? (And while you're at it, be sure your site is up-to-date. Add a press page if you haven't yet.)

Is Twitter important?

Sometimes clients ask if Twitter needs to be part of their social media strategy. My answer is always yes, because that's where journalists hang out. On that note, be sure to follow the reporters and media on whose radar you want to appear. It

sounds so simple, but it’s an often-overlooked way to get them to take notice of you.

Start building the relationship before you need it. Like, share and comment on their posts. Don’t do it with an agenda, just start showing up in their feeds. Twitter works best, but you can also try this on Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn – wherever that particular journalist seems to be the most active.

Should your CEO be present on social media?

What about your CEO and other C-suite executives? Should they be on social media? Again, the answer is yes.

Being present on social media increases trust with shareholders and employees. According to a *Business Insider* article, 65% of U.S. employees say it’s important for CEOs to actively communicate about their companies online, particularly during times of crisis. Further, 60% of employees say they would check an executive’s social media before joining a company.

On which platforms should executives choose to be active? LinkedIn and Twitter are the most popular with executives, while Facebook and Instagram are less so.

In a digital-first world, social media matters

Social media matters more than ever in our digital-first world. Yes, it’s vital for companies who want to start an earned media push. But beyond getting in front of journalists, social media also helps you reach:

- Customers

- Employees (and potential employees)
- Shareholders
- Fans and followers (who may become customers)

There is a method to the madness of being present on social media, particularly if you’re preparing to launch a PR push. Focus on that first for a greater chance that your earned media efforts will be a success.

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