



Overview: PR (public relations) is the process of finding news in and around your business, packaging it so that it is of interest to the outside world, in particular, to specific journalists at specific media at specific times, in order to gain awareness, third-party validation, and positioning.

## Objective of Using PR

**Primary:** To build your brand, create awareness, improve your positioning, promote your team as thought leaders in your industry, and add credibility through placements in the media.

**Secondary:** This process results in new incoming leads, shorter sales cycles, increased chances of winning deals, larger deal sizes through premium positioning, and new opportunities for partnerships and investment. If you are interviewed by a reporter for a story, hundreds of thousands of people can read about your company at no cost to you.

## Best Practice Guidelines

- PR is not about putting press releases on wire services or on your website. It is not about blasting the same story to everyone. It is about sending specific “story ideas” to specific journalists in the hopes that they will write about you.
- **Remember:** PR is not advertising and you have no control over what stories get written or where they will appear; you can only cross your fingers and hope that you have given journalists an interesting idea that they will want to run with.
- PR is also not about touting news that is only interesting within your organization—you must ask yourself why anyone would want to read about it.
- The key to PR is in finding ways to couch your central message in a number of ways that will be interesting to the outside world. You do this by connecting your story to industry trends, news, statistics, and events that are more generally appealing.

- Customize your high-level story idea for the audiences of specific journalists at different publications. For example, you should send technology-focused stories to tech journalists and not to celebrity buzz columnists.

## How to Execute

### Preparation:

- Prepare a basic media kit for your company. This doesn't have to be anything fancy—just a simple document with the main facts, history, executive biographies, and contact details on a page or two. You will need this to send to interested media contacts as background.
- Build a media list. This is a list of all applicable writers, bloggers, producers, and other journalists that may be interested in covering a story about some aspect of your business or industry. PR firms have access to a large database of such contacts (through programs such as Cision or Vocus), but you can begin to make your own through scouring the media.
- Add a media center to your website where you can upload press releases, company news, and have a place for the media to download your logo and high-resolution photography that they can publish along with stories about you. This is also a great place to upload links or PDF's of past media placements.
- Create a PR plan for your business outlining the range of different story angles you wish to pitch to the media and when you would like to go out with each (and to which subsections of the media).
- Consider engaging a PR agency to help with execution if you think that you can afford it or if you don't have time to follow up with the media on your own.

**During Execution:**

- Develop story ideas that connect to outside trends. Write up short emails about them, as well as a basic press release to provide the **who, what, why, and where** background on the story or on the specific news about your organization.
- Send these emails to your media contacts. The tone is helpful, i.e., “I have a great story idea for you that I think is right in line with what your readers are looking for... let me know if you need any more information or if you would like to set up an interview,” etc.
- Make sure to send a follow-up email one week later.
- You can also make calls to these media contacts and tell them your story directly. If you are talking about products or services that are hard to describe, you may also think about setting up events or luncheons to demonstrate your innovations and of course invite the media.
- Try different types of story angles over time to keep your story fresh and to create media interest in new ways.
- For business-to-business technology firms, try thought leadership approaches (i.e., promoting your team as experts to the media) so that journalists will contact you for commentary whenever they are writing a story about your area of expertise. This also includes presenting on panels, publishing interesting statistics on your industry, working with analysts, and perhaps even writing your own articles to submit to the media as contributed content.

**Post Execution:**

- Set up Google News Alerts on your company and product names so that you will see when the media do

write about you (you may also wish to pay for a clipping service to do this, though it is often not necessary).

- Don't forget to feature any media placements on your website as well.
- Connect your PR efforts with your social media efforts, as well, for maximum impact (e.g., tweet about your story ideas and include links to media placements).

**Marketing Asset Finder**

- [Cisco Partner Central](#) provides templates for several basic press releases.
- You can also order pre-packaged PR services through the Cisco Partner Marketing Central [Public Relations Service](#).
- The mConcierge program in Cisco Partner Marketing is now running a PR pilot to help teach our partners to do better PR on their own. Contact your Cisco representative to learn more.

**Metrics Collection**

- Track all of your media placements. One common measure of PR success is the total circulation of the media in which you appear (or viewership for TV or unique users for online publications).
- “Impressions” are also tracked; this measures how many people actually read or see a specific publication (usually the circulation is multiplied by a factor of 1–3 times).
- Track your incoming leads and sales close rates and deal sizes to see any noticeable lift when you are doing PR.

**Planning Timeline**