



MEDIA RELATIONS HANDBOOK



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INTRODUCTION

Good media relations can lead to good publicity for Durrant's projects and the company as a whole. Publicity enhances our credibility while providing an effective yet subtle way to get clients. There are three key points to consider when talking about good media exposure.

1. Publicity can have more of an impact than advertising.
2. Publicity is generally more credible than advertising.
3. Publicity is free.

There is so much advertising that people have a tendency to tune out most of it. When you're interviewed on a radio talk show or quoted in your local newspaper, you are not advertising. You become part of the news. This installment of Durrant's Communications Workbook offers some guidance on developing media relations and building positive media exposure for our firm. Use this handbook to direct your media relations efforts, and remember to always keep your Marketing Department involved in the process.



The average adult spends more than half of his or her waking life with the media.



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How to Write How-To Articles that Promote Your Expertise

Editors need articles that will inspire, educate, calm, enlighten, humor, and entertain their readers. Here are some suggestions to help you write articles to position yourself (and Durrant) as an expert.

Choose a Topic: Name the three biggest problems your target audience faces. You've just come up with ideas for three different articles. Choose the topic you most want to write about and select a title. Scan the covers of magazines for inspiration. Select a headline that's appropriate to your article, and substitute the appropriate key words.

Write the Lead: Think of how your clients feel when they can't figure out how to handle the problem you are writing about. Write the lead-in to your piece so readers understand that you feel their pain.

Tell Them Why They Should Care: Explain in one or two paragraphs why solving the problem is important. Maybe you offer some solutions that will save them money, time, or aggravation. Include a sentence that explains what you do and why you are an expert.

List Bullet Points or Subheads: Offer a list of tips in bulleted format or with subheads to draw the eye and the attention of the reader. Be consistent. If the first word of the first bullet is a verb, make sure the first word of every bullet is a verb. This portion will make up the main body of your article.

Summarize: Close with a summary paragraph that offers hope or encouragement to readers who follow your advice. Don't list your last bullet and end abruptly. Provide a nice closing. Your article should run about 500 words, but be prepared to modify the piece to a length the editor requires.

Include an Author Resource Box: At the end of the article, include a paragraph with your name, company, what you do, how readers can reach you, and a call to action. Also include www.durrant.com. Ask the editor to please include the resource box, and always offer to include your photo, too.

Make Reprints: Ask the publication for permission to reprint the article. You can use these reprints as leave-behinds on sales calls and interviews, at trade shows, or hand them out if you have public-speaking engagements.

Once you start getting publicity, at a certain level of exposure it becomes easier to get more.



You become a recognized expert in the industry, so when a reporter needs an authority in your area, you're the likely one to contact.



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Pitching Your Press Release

Even though reporters, and the media in general, represent the opportunity for free publicity, dealing with reporters is often a scary proposition for marketing professionals. In our Press Release Handbook, you learned the steps to writing good press releases. Now, how do you get published?

Where Should You Send It?

Determine the target audience you want to reach with your press release, and ask yourself, "What publications do they read?" Create a media list of the publications you plan to target. Review each publication so you are familiar with the audience and the focus, then review the publication's editorial calendar. If you have trouble locating one, contact the publication and ask them to send you a media kit. You can't be everywhere, but editorial calendars can help you evaluate where you should be sending your releases. Focus the majority of your efforts on the most likely candidates.

Working with Reporters

Send your press release directly to a reporter at the publication instead of to a general mailroom. This increases the likelihood of someone actually reviewing and considering your piece for publication. Read past stories the reporter has written to find out the types of stories he or she writes. When speaking with reporters, make yourself stand out by dropping references to stories they've written in the past. Be careful not to disturb them when they are on a deadline. Always ask if it's a good time to talk, and if it's not, ask when you should call back. Make sure anyone involved with the story is available if a reporter would like to interview them. If you pitch a story or press release and the reporter wants to talk, they want to talk now. Getting the interview is half the battle. You don't want to lose out because there's no one available to answer questions.

Here are a few tips to maintaining a positive relationship, developed from a list of pet peeves reporters often face when working with PR consultants:

- Do not call them to make sure they received your press release
- Get their name and their beat right
- Know what you're talking about
- Make sure your client wants to be interviewed before you offer
- Don't stretch the truth
- Embrace the competition and look for trends

Develop your media list by reviewing publications in your local market. Staff contact information is usually available within the first few pages of a newspaper or magazine. A national press list is also available to marketing personnel via M Central.

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Winning a National Reputation - in Print

A proven way to reach new clients is to gain exposure within the business and trade publications they read. Exporting a niche expertise to new places and prospects can be achieved more quickly, and individual experts can be showcased.

1. Organize a Press Tour

It's rare for representatives of a design firm to go and visit with editors of key publications covering their market area and clients, but editors need your help to do their jobs. Editors need credible sources of information, and will turn to the people who go out of their way to connect and provide helpful information. It's a powerful tool to help gain coverage of the projects, people, and ideas behind Durrant.

2. Use Editorial Calendars

Each year, editors of publications compile a schedule showing what topics they will cover and when. These calendars can usually be downloaded directly from publications' websites. Look over the calendars to see when your topics or areas of expertise will be covered. Contact the editors to inquire how you can help them with that issue.

3. Partner with a Client

Most national editors don't understand the value of what you do. Unfortunately, architecture and engineering are often seen as merely support services. Enlist the help of a client to approach an editor with you to pitch a story. Your odds of success rise significantly, and you'll get a chance to impress the client along the way.

4. Find Something Interesting

Editors seek to inform readers on current events and explain how these events influence the world of the reader. They also want to sell copies of their publications. This requires a hook to capture the interest of the readers. You need to connect your story to a larger context. Tailor your piece for the publication's target audience, not just your local community. Consider the 'Imiloa Astronomy Center of Hawaii, for instance. When submitting an article on this project to *Metal Architecture* magazine, you might stress the unique use of titanium on the three cones. When submitting an article to *Astronomy* magazine, however, you would want your focus to be on elements within the world-class planetarium.



Keep your goals within reach. Don't expect the publication to do a full-length feature on Durrant. It is reasonable to expect them to use a short column of advice from a design expert, etc.



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Winning a National Reputation - in Print (cont.)

5. Contribute Provocative Articles

With staff positions shrinking at many publications, the opportunity for guest contributions is greater than ever. Talk to an editor at the target publication to gauge their interest. Next, look for author's guidelines on the publication's website. Trying to sell a pre-written piece can be tough if the topic, word count, or tone of the article is not exactly in line with editor preferences.

6. Go With What Works

Most publications use formats with shorter articles and more graphical content. Consider putting together a concise "How-To" article using a Top 5 or Top 10 approach.

7. Swing for the Fences

Can you get into the *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*? Maybe. Editors of these publications need stories about big ideas, first-ever achievements, and staggering success stories. When you approach them with a story idea, be prepared to answer one central question: So what? The express route to these big media targets will be found in the rare and unusual project, a client who broke all the old rules, or an idea that challenges conventional thinking.

Landing an article or company profile in a national publication can be a fast way to differentiate Durrant from the competition. Being creative in your methods will shorten the path to national ink and enviable results.

Wire services such as Archiwire also provide outlets through which you can send press releases. Always email your press releases individually, and do not include your entire contact list in one email.



The subject line of your email should grab their attention in much the same way a headline would. Make it easy for a reporter reading the email to see why he or she should be interested.



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A steady media contact is like a key to the city of free publicity.

How to Leave a Lasting Impression with the Media

The key to getting more exposure is to build relationships with media professionals. Once you build your relationships with the media, reporters will actually start contacting you for interviews and quotes instead of the other way around. Developing these relationships is not easy; they take work on your part.

Give Excellent Phone Interviews

Most of your interviews with the media will take place over the phone. When reporters can't see you, they draw conclusions about you from your tone of voice and word choices. Before the interview, prepare for the call. Collect your thoughts and make notes about the main points you'd like to cover. Don't prepare an entirely scripted response. You want to sound natural and honest, and you don't want the reporter to think you are reading off all of your responses.

Find a quiet spot where you can conduct the interview. You want to be in an area with few distractions so you won't struggle to sound relaxed and confident throughout the entire interview. Stand up and smile while you are talking. Although this may seem odd for a phone interview, standing will raise your energy level and make you more alert than if you were sitting. Additionally, a genuine smile radiates through the phone line, and the reporter on the other end will pick up on that. These two techniques can mean the difference between a mundane interview and a great conversation.

Be respectful and show the reporter that you care. Ask if you're talking too quickly, as reporters usually take notes by hand. Slow your pace so they don't miss any key points. Ask nicely if they will mention your business information. Don't be pushy. Show interest in the final piece by asking for a copy of the magazine after publication. As the interview begins to wrap up, inquire about other stories the reporter is currently covering. If a piece is relevant to your area of expertise, explain how you may be able to add to it and offer a unique angle that may interest the target audience. Make sure the reporter knows he or she is welcome to call you back with any questions. This shows that you're eager to be an accessible source of information in the future.



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How to Leave a Lasting Impression with the Media (cont.)

Add Integrity to Your Message

Reporters appreciate accurate sources with factual information. By conveying your message with integrity, you can score a space on their contact list.

- Stick to the facts. Don't overload the reporter with unnecessary information, and always back up your claims with numbers. Instead of saying, "A majority of my clients..." try, "Eighty-five percent of my clients..."
- Don't be afraid of giving away information. People often fear that if they give away details about their business, no one will need it. This is one of the biggest mistakes you can make with the media. The more people get, the more they want. And, there's no way you can sabotage your wealth of knowledge in the two or three quotes you may get in the article.
- Personal experiences add integrity. They place you in the real world performing real actions. Your experiences add a personal, unique touch to the story. They also show the reporter that you are an approachable person.
- Always speak with authority. Don't use weak language like "I think" or "maybe." Use the word "you" as often as possible. Back up your statements with facts. Eliminate technical jargon and out-of-date phrases. Always explain things as if someone is hearing it for the first time, making sure the reporter understands your message and can accurately convey it to the audience.

When you use these tips to make a reporter's job easier, you will get more interviews, more quotes, and more free publicity for Durrant.



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Avoiding and Dealing with Negative Press

Be careful with publicity. A reporter can write anything he or she wishes and often does. A clever editor can make you say things out of context. You have little control over the content of an article or news item.

Make Your Points Clear: If you don't understand a reporter's question, ask it to be repeated. It's okay to say, "I'm not sure I understand your question." If there is anything you've said that can be misinterpreted, clarify.

There's No Such Thing as "Off the Record:" Never, never, never say anything "off the record" to a reporter. There is no such thing. If you don't want it to appear in print, don't say it.

How to Say "No Comment:" With today's legal system, the "no comment" comment is a protection from the press on several different levels. Saying "no comment" frees you from making a denial. If you deny a rumor, media sources have a license to print the rumor. Not commenting also keeps members of the press from being able to use your words out of context, and creating a meaning you may not have intended.

When you use the phrase "no comment," people may assume you are being defensive, and that you have a reason to be. Instead of saying "no comment," try, "I'm very sorry, but I am not able to speak about that subject matter at this time." Soften the blow. Let them know you are sorry you can't answer their question, and that you simply aren't able to provide comments right now.

Practice Under Fire: Write down the questions you think a reporter will ask you. Think about the appropriate responses. Make sure the points you want to make are always clear and easily understood. Do a practice interview with a co-worker if you think this will help you prepare for the real situation.

"The hand that rules the press, the radio, the screen, and the far-spread magazine, rules the country"

- Judge Learned Hand
December 21, 1942



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