

# How to Leverage Social Media for Public Relations Success

Using Social Media to Generate Media Coverage and  
Improve Brand Sentiment



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# 1. Introduction

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Without a doubt, the web and social media are making it easier for businesses to communicate with their publics. At the same time, where there used to be a clear delineation between marketing and public relations, the impact of the web has resulted in a blurred line between the two industries.

Some would argue that this is leading to the “death” of public relations. On the contrary, the web is actually helping to enhance the efficiency of the PR industry. So how can you incorporate social media and inbound marketing to enhance your business’ PR efforts? This ebook will discuss major topics under the umbrella of public relations and explain how you can successfully incorporate social media and internet marketing tools and strategies to improve your business’ public relations efforts in those areas.

## Why PR Will Always Be Important

Public relations has been around for almost 100 years and won’t be knocking on death’s door anytime soon. Put simply, public relations is the practice of managing communication between a particular organization and its publics. Any given organization has a number of publics. Whether it’s by communicating with prospects, customers, media, investors, the government, or even internally with employees, PR is something that businesses will always need.

## Why Social Media Participation is Critical for PR

People have always said good – and bad – things about brands, and now that social media has risen in popularity, it means people have another platform to talk about your company and products/services. The major difference, however, is in the viral nature of this platform. When someone mentions your brand in social media, there is much more potential for other people to notice, and it’s monumentally easier for conversations to spread much more quickly and easily. In addition, these conversations have the potential to reach a much larger audience than ever before. If your company is not participating in social media today, it’s missing an opportunity to spread its message and missing valuable – and even damaging – conversations that could be taking place about your brand.



## 2. Generating Media Coverage

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### Media & Blogger Relations: Communicating With the Media and Generating Coverage

While media relations is only one silo of public relations, it's the topic that's most often thought of when public relations is mentioned. Obtaining coverage in media publications (TV, radio, podcasts, online video, newspapers, magazines, online news sites, blogs, etc.) is a great way to spread the word about your business and its products/services. Where advertising is paid placement in media publications, PR coverage is free, third-party validation, which often results in more credibility for your business. So how do you secure coverage in these publications and media, and how can social media help you do this?

#### Tactic 1: Connect & Develop Relationships With Influencers in Social Media

One of the best ways to land a mention (or maybe even a feature!) of your business in the media is to start by connecting with the journalists, reporters, bloggers, and influencers who cover topics in your industry. Luckily, the web and social media are great facilitators of this. Whereas you previously had to go through mass media to get your message across, the web and social media now give you access to a whole slew of influencers with which you can easily interact and develop relationships, all by yourself. By communicating with these influencers, you can ensure your business is top-of-mind when an opportunity for a story comes along. Below, we've highlighted some great ways social media can help you build relationships with influencers.



#### Twitter

Are you aware that many journalists, reporters, and bloggers make themselves available on Twitter? Using Twitter is a great way to introduce yourself and your company to the media. But how do you find the influencers in your industry on Twitter? One way is to look for influential blogs in your industry (use blog search engines like [Technorati](#)), subscribe to them, and start following their authors on Twitter.

Another way is to start following journalists who target your industry. Then start tweeting with them, but don't oversell your business or product. Develop relationships by tweeting about an article of theirs you enjoyed or ask how they feel about a particular topic on which they write. Sometimes reporters will also use Twitter to broadcast that they're seeking subjects or sources for a particular story they're writing. If it's a fit for you, reply!

### Twitter Tools for Finding Influencers:

- [Twitter Grader](#): Twitter Grader is one of our free [Grader tools](#) that can help you find the top Twitter users by location and also measure the authority of a particular user.
- [Muck Rack](#): Muck Rack is a free website that enables you to search for and locate journalists by source (publication) or by beat (topic).
- [JournalistTweets](#): This free site curates tweets from journalists and allows users to filter journalists on Twitter by industry.



### Facebook & LinkedIn

Facebook and LinkedIn are great ways to maintain relationships with media, but beware: These tools are a little bit more personal than Twitter. Don't start "friending" every reporter you find in your industry. Instead, use Twitter as a way to initiate and grow the relationship. Once the relationship exists, consider connecting on Facebook and/or LinkedIn.

### BatchBook

Although it's not a free tool, [BatchBook](#) is a great way to keep track of your communication with influencers. Its core function is to serve as an address book that you can use to keep contact information (including social media credentials) for people (e.g. the journalists or bloggers you connect with), but it also allows you to keep track of any email or other communication so you have a record of who you've been in touch with.

## Tactic 2: Pitching

We could write a separate ebook on the topic of pitching. The results of pitching really depend on the time and effort you put into it and can be very hit or miss. You could end up with some really great coverage, or you could end up spending many hours of your time with no results. If you'd like to spend some time pitching to journalists and bloggers, here are a few key points to consider:



**Stay Targeted:** Know the journalist/blogger and the beat(s) and topic(s) he or she covers. One of journalists' and bloggers' biggest pet peeves is getting pitched about something that doesn't coincide with what they write about. Don't spam them. It's a surefire way to end up on a blog like the [Bad Pitch Blog](#), and no one wants that kind of exposure. Before you pitch people, spend the time to get to know their style and the topics they write about. Make sure you read their content, and, when appropriate, leave comments. This will show them you've done your homework, are already engaged with their work, and will also help you make decisions about which journalists are appropriate for what you're pitching.

There are paid services out there ([Vocus](#) and [Cision](#) – formerly Bacon's – are the most popular ones) that offer monster databases that keep an accurate tab on the contact information for various journalists who write for different publications and what their specific beats are. If you're serious about pitching, these can be great resources, as it's often difficult and time-consuming to find contact information for specific journalists on your own, and sending a pitch to the newsroom's 'info@publication.com' email address is both ineffective and untargeted.

**Don't Pitch the Same People Repeatedly:** Don't keep pitching the same journalists and bloggers over and over again. That said, also don't assume that because a journalist or blogger has previously covered you, they'll want to do it again. Segment your targets and only pitch people who are very appropriate for the story you're pitching. The next time you pitch for something different, target different people.

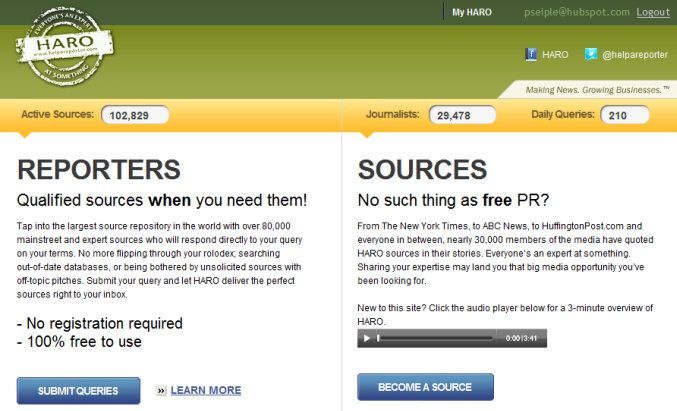
**Brevity Is Key:** Your initial pitch shouldn't be long, and you should avoid email attachments. Journalists often don't have time to read pages and pages of email or even press releases. Your initial pitch should be short, sweet, compelling, and highlight the key points you're trying to make as well as why that journalist should want to cover it. If they're interested, they'll request additional, more detailed information on their own.

**Have Something Interesting to Offer:** What's new and different about your story? Is it particularly timely? Have an angle, and make it interesting.

**Personalize It:** Show your target you've done your homework. Mention specific reasons why what you have to offer will benefit his or her readers.



[Help a Reporter Out](#) (HARO) is a great tool that helps to connect journalists' story needs with PR professionals who might be great sources. PR practitioners can register for a thrice-daily email that highlights queries submitted by journalists looking for sources on specific topics or stories. PR folks can then scan the email and instantly reply to any appropriate queries. HARO is especially helpful for businesses that are interested in reaching out to journalists but can't commit a lot of man-hours to pitching. Be mindful, however, that HARO has dramatically increased in popularity since its launch, and that for any given query, journalists could be receiving a very large number of responses. Therefore, it's extremely necessary that you not respond to a pitch unless it's appropriate, and try your best to make your pitch stand out. Even if your pitch doesn't end up getting selected for a particular story, journalists often put rejected pitches in their back pockets for future story ideas that might be more appropriate.



The screenshot shows the HARO website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with "My HARO", "pseipite@hubspot.com", and "Logout". Below that, there are social media links for HARO and @helpareporter. A yellow banner displays statistics: "Active Sources: 102,829", "Journalists: 29,478", and "Daily Queries: 210". The main content is split into two columns. The left column is titled "REPORTERS" and describes the platform as a "Qualified sources when you need them!" repository with over 60,000 sources. It lists benefits like "No registration required" and "100% free to use", and includes a "SUBMIT QUERIES" button and a "LEARN MORE" link. The right column is titled "SOURCES" and asks "No such thing as free PR?". It mentions that nearly 30,000 media members quote HARO sources. It includes a 3-minute audio overview player and a "BECOME A SOURCE" button.

### Additional Resources:

- [ReportingOn](#)
- [YourPitchSucks](#)

## Tactic 3: Using Creative Content as an Outreach Tool

At HubSpot, we're firm believers that creative content is often king. Content has the ability to showcase your company as an industry thought leader, in addition to having some major SEO, social media, and lead generation benefits. In terms of public relations, content also has the ability to get you some media coverage. It's simple, really. By creating something interesting, compelling, or even funny, people will naturally want to talk about it, share it with their friends, or even *write* about it – no pitching required. Think about why videos go viral. It's not because someone spent a lot of time crafting an amazing pitch to a journalist. It's because the content itself was so remarkable, people couldn't help but spread it.

Not convinced? Here are a few tactics and examples of how and which types of creative content can lead to media coverage:

## Create Fun, Interesting Content

In 2008, we did an experiment at HubSpot and released the first-ever, inbound marketing music video entitled “[You Oughta Know Inbound Marketing](#).” Without using a fancy PR campaign, strategy for the launch consisted of tweeting about the video and sharing it through HubSpot’s social media channels like Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, etc. We also utilized some of our relationships with influencers (see previous section on media relations) by “pinging” them. In other words, we sent links to the new video via short emails or even tweets and direct messages on Twitter to bloggers with whom we were already friendly. The result was 43 blog placements in 12 days, 19 of which were written on the same day as the video’s launch. The video wouldn’t have been such a success had no one liked it. The quality and creativity of the content is what made it excel. What kind of interesting, fun content can you create? A funny video? An interesting infographic? A clever cartoon?



## Publish Interesting Industry Data & Research

Many of the media mentions HubSpot receives are due to the data and research we publish. One example of this is our annual [State of the Twittersphere](#) report, which we’ve been publishing since 2008 and compiles and discusses data we’ve collected from our [Twitter Grader](#) tool. Our strategy for releasing this report is similar to our strategy for releasing our first inbound marketing music video – by simply sharing it on



our blog, via social media, and “pinging” a few influencers who might find the data interesting. These reports have resulted in coverage and mentions from countless media sources, including major publications such as the *Los Angeles Times*, TechCrunch, Mashable, GigaOm, the blogs of prominent industry bloggers like Brian Solis and a TV segment on NECN.

Earlier this year, the website Suitcase.com conducted a survey about how increased baggage fees and tightened security regulations are affecting consumer behavior and found that over half of respondents are planning to travel lighter and check fewer bags. With the results of the survey, they compiled a report and created a landing page about it on their website. Because the results of their research were so compelling and interesting, the report was subsequently featured in an article on ReadersDigest.com.



If you are traveling for Valentine's Day or President's Day and want to pack lighter to avoid tight security and hefty fees at the airport...you're not alone. [Suitcase.com](#) just released the results of their [survey](#) and found 57.4% of travelers are packing lighter and 56.5% plan to check fewer bags. I asked [Suitcase.com](#) for 10 ways to beat the baggage game. Read on.

## Promote Content in Social Media

As we mentioned, social media is a great vehicle to spread your messages and share your content. If your company doesn't have a corporate Twitter account or a Facebook Fan Page, it's a good time to think about starting them. In addition to helping promote your content, maintaining a presence on these sites is extremely beneficial to helping manage your business' public relations. We'll dive deeper into this later.

Is there an opportunity for your business to publish some data or research on a particular topic in your industry? Do you have a sample of customers you can survey to produce a unique report?

## The Inbound Marketing News Release

Press releases have long been a staple in public relations practitioners' toolkits. But now that the web has begun to revolutionize PR and marketing, there's been a lot of discussion about press release best practices. For example, you may have heard talk about the [Social Media News Release](#) (SMNR), a concept introduced by PR agency SHIFT Communications. While the SMNR is a step in the right direction toward making news releases work better for your business on the web, distributing these types of releases via wire services can often be pricey and ineffective. Therefore, to help PR pros get the most out of their news releases, at HubSpot we recommend what we like to call the Inbound Marketing News Release, which is a style of news release we've developed based on careful research.



The Inbound Marketing News Release is a new way to think about press releases and has a heavy focus on search engine optimization and optimizing your releases from that standpoint. The study we conducted to come to this conclusion compared the traditional style release to the social media release over multiple wire distribution services with the goal of learning how to optimize press releases for maximum PR benefits. Let's take a look at the research, conclusions, and our recommendations for creating an effective Inbound Marketing News Release. [You can also watch the webinar that explains the research and results.](#)

### Possible Goals for Creating News Releases

PR professionals create news releases for a number of different reasons. Here are some of the top ones:

- Generating traffic to your website
- Getting journalists and/or bloggers to write about your company's story
- Publishing "ceremonial announcements" over the wire
- Building inbound links and increasing SEO to help your website rank better in Google and other search engines

### Key Results of HubSpot's Research

Based on our research, we found that:

- Traditional releases syndicated 20% more often than social media news releases.

- Links were syndicated 14% more often from traditional releases than they were from social media news releases.
- Not all anchor text links are syndicated.

As you can tell from these results, the traditional style release actually did much better than the social media release in terms of syndication in general and in syndicating links. This is due in part because many portal sites (websites that syndicate releases in full) don't support anchor text, links, or multimedia elements such as embedded video, photos, or audio.

## News Release Best Practices

Based on our research as well as other news release best practices, we recommend the following guidelines when crafting news releases.

### Regarding Content and Format:

- **Be direct and concise.** Don't beat around the bush. The press release market is already very saturated, and journalists and bloggers can't read every release that crosses the wire. Making your release focused and to-the-point will give it a better chance for survival.
- **Have something worth saying.** Don't write a news release about nothing. Keep in mind that not every bit of company news is worthy of a release (It can get expensive!). Before you sit down to write a news release, make sure you have something interesting to communicate.
- **Write using a newsworthy angle.** Tying in your news with some kind of newsworthy angle or story will increase its chances of catching a blogger's or journalist's attention. Is it particularly timely? Does it fit in with some kind of hot-button issue in the news? Angle your company's story in a way that might make it more appealing to bloggers and journalists and, thus, more interesting to write about.
- **Conduct keyword research to discover your best keywords.** Use [Google's Keyword Tool](#) to help you decide on which keywords to focus. Then use those keywords in your release, especially in anchor text. This will help in terms of SEO.
- **Use a descriptive headline, and limit it to 80 characters or fewer.** Lengthy headlines often get cut off on portal sites. In addition, because search engines treat a news release's headline as an H1 (Header) tag, it's beneficial to also make your headline keyword-rich.

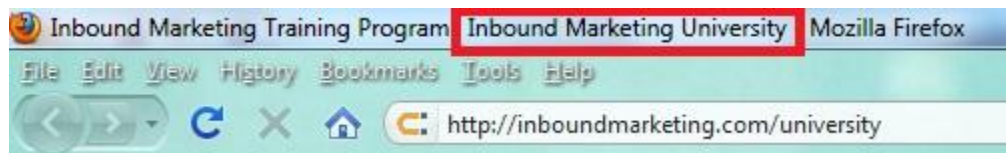
- **Limit your release to 300-500 words.** All wire services we spoke with during our research agreed that this was the ideal length for a release. A longer release is a sign of verbose content, and a lengthy release also hinders its ability for syndication.
- **Eliminate Gobbledygook:** [Gobbledygook](#) is jargon, clichés, and over-used, hype-filled words that no longer mean anything. Eliminate these words from your releases. (Examples include “cutting-edge,” “flexible,” “easy-to-use,” “innovative” etc.) Remember, because news releases are now syndicated on the web, the media aren’t the only ones who will come across your news. Therefore, you should communicate in words everyone can understand.
- **Don’t use formatting bullets.** They rarely get syndicated.
- **Include your logo.** It may not get syndicated, but it won’t hurt either.
- **Don’t embed multimedia elements.** Instead of embedding a video or photo directly into the release, publish it somewhere on your own website (such as on your company blog), and link to it in the release. This will save you money as well as drive traffic to and centralize interaction on your own website.

### Regarding Links:

- **Put the most important link at the beginning.** Some portal sites will automatically cut off your release after a certain word count. For the best chance of generating traffic back to your site, include the link to which you want to generate the most traffic early on in the release.
- **Always use anchor text.** Not all portal sites will syndicate anchor text links, but for the ones that do, you’ll receive maximum SEO benefit from inbound links utilizing anchor text.
- **Use full URLs next to anchor text links for important links.** Don’t do this for every link, but do use it for the one to which you really want to drive traffic. This will ensure that the URL still gets pulled in when portal sites won’t syndicate anchor text (example below).

CAMBRIDGE, MA--(Marketwire - September 16, 2009) - HubSpot, Inc. announces registration for its next [Inbound Marketing University \(http://www.inboundmarketing.com/university\)](http://www.inboundmarketing.com/university) (IMU), HubSpot's free marketing retraining program. The upcoming October program features all past IMU courses plus new Internet marketing webinar classes taught by two new volunteer professors: Google's Analytics Evangelist, Avinash Kaushik of [Market Motive](#) and video blogging and personal branding expert, Gary Vaynerchuk of [Wine Library TV](#). The IMU program launches on Tuesday, October 27 and concludes with the certification exam available from October 29 to November 12, 2009.

- **Don't repeat links or anchor text.** (The guideline above is the only exception to this.) Repeating links or anchor text within your release will dilute the value of the links in the eyes of search engines.
- **Don't litter your release with links.** Search engines will frown upon very link-heavy releases. For a 300-500 word release, 3-4 anchor text links is appropriate.
- **Link to internal pages, too.** Are you trying to generate some traffic or SEO authority to other pages on your site besides your homepage? Link to these pages within your release. (Example: <http://www.hubspot.com/marketing-resources>)
- **When possible, make anchor text the same as your page title.** This will place increased emphasis on that link for search engines. (Notice how the page title below matches the link and anchor text from the above news release example.)



#### Recommended Wire Services:

- [Marketwire](#)
- [Business Wire](#)
- [PR Newswire](#)
- [PRWeb](#)

#### Additional Resources:

- [Press Release Grader](#) (grade the effectiveness of your press releases)
- [Gobbledygook Grader](#) (check your content for gobbledygook)
- [PitchEngine](#) (build social media news releases)
- [Social Media News Release template](#) from SHIFT Communications
- [Live Weekly Press Release Optimization Webinar](#)
- [Press Release Marketing Kit](#)
- On-Demand Webinar: [How to Be Smarter Than Your PR Agency – Research on Creating News Releases That Work](#)



## The Company Blog

As we mentioned earlier, creating content is a great PR outreach tool for generating media coverage. Distributing news releases via a wire service might not be worth doing for every bit of news (especially if you're not using a free service, which can get expensive), but publishing articles on a company blog is a great way to share all of your company news. If you already have a blog through which you exhibit thought leadership, don't dilute it with company-centric information that could reduce the quality and credibility of the educational, industry-related content you publish there. Instead, consider creating a completely separate blog for company news, product updates, etc. Here are some great ideas for how you can use your company blog to spread your messages.

### HubSpot Company & Product News Blog

[Current Articles](#) | [RSS Feed](#)

#### HubSpot CEO Supports Research That Office Naps Should Be Encouraged

Posted by Pamela Seiple on Wed, Sep 22, 2010 @ 11:44 AM



Although HubSpot Founder and CEO [Brian Halligan](#) is often heckled by fellow HubSpotters about his tendency to nap at the office (see photo at left), he may be onto something.

On HubSpot's internal wiki, Brian recently posted a link to a research-based article published by the *Harvard Business Review* regarding the benefits of napping during work hours. The article, entitled "[Why Companies Should Insist That Employees Take Naps](#)," discusses the reality of naps and their ability to be powerful sources of competitive advantage.

The article cites results from a research study, concluding that the more hours we work continuously, the greater the toll on our performance. It also points out that naps are not only physically restorative but also improve perceptual skills, motor skills, reaction time, and alertness.

- **Publish Blog-Friendly News Release Content:** Consider repurposing your news release content for your company blog by making it less formal and more conversational in tone. You can also include a link back to the article from the original press release to drive traffic back to your site. (We talk more about this in the previous section about the Inbound Marketing News Release.)
- **Publish Other Company News, Updates, or Achievements:** Is your CEO speaking at an upcoming industry conference? Did you recently win an award? Use



your blog to share news of your company's achievements, but be humble when talking about yourself.

- **Communicate Product/Service Launches or Updates:** Did you recently tweak something in your product or add a new service offering? Communicate it to your customers, prospects, and fan base with an article on the blog.
- **Demonstrate Your Company's Unique Personality:** Did you recently hold a fun company-wide event like a scavenger hunt, a holiday party, or a softball tournament? Write about it! Even better: Create a corporate [Flickr](#) account, upload pictures from the event and embed a slideshow into the blog post. People will love getting to know the people and culture that make your company's gears turn.
- **Include Social Media Share Links:** Give the readers of your blog an easy way to share articles with their networks and spread your messages. Include social media share links on every article to enable readers and subscribers to spread your article on social media sites like Twitter and Facebook.
- **Improve SEO:** Like any blog, a company blog can have great search engine optimization benefits. In addition, influencers are always looking for story ideas, and writing an article about something unique will get indexed in search engines. Who knows – your article just might pop up as a result in Google for a story for which a journalist needs sources. Then he or she might come right to you. Talk about inbound PR!

## The Social Media Newsroom

Are you making it easy for journalists and bloggers to learn about your company, its products/services, and who to contact for additional information? It's a best practice to have a page on your website where the media and bloggers can go to easily obtain this information. Below are some tips for creating an effective social media newsroom for your website.

The screenshot shows the HubSpot Press Room page. At the top is a navigation bar with links: WHAT IS HUBSPOT?, WHO USES HUBSPOT?, MARKETING RESOURCES, ABOUT US, DEMO, FREE TRIAL, and a search bar. On the left is a sidebar menu with links: Overview, News, Management, Board of Directors, Events, Speaking Info, Press Room (highlighted), Awards, News Coverage, Company & Product News, Fact Sheet, Partners, Careers, Contact Us, Subscribe, and Culture. The main content area is titled 'HubSpot Press Room' and includes a section 'What is HubSpot?' with text describing HubSpot's inbound marketing software. Below this is a video player showing Brian Halligan talking about inbound marketing. To the right of the video is a 'Media Contact' section with contact information for Pamela Seiple, including an email address, telephone number, and a link to follow her on Twitter. Below that are 'RSS Feeds' with links to subscribe to all company updates, the HubSpot Internet Marketing Blog, and tweets from @HubSpot. At the bottom right is a 'HubSpot in Social Media' section with links to the Facebook page and YouTube channel.

- **Provide Clear Media Contact Info at the Top:** Sometimes a journalist or blogger is simply looking for someone to talk to. Don't bury this information. The last thing you want is a journalist losing interest because he or she can't find contact information. Instead, clearly position it at the top of your newsroom, and include multiple methods of communication – an email address, a phone number, even a Twitter handle!
- **Links, Links, Links:** Instead of cluttering your page with tons of information, include links to other pages on which you expand upon certain information. For example, if you'd like to showcase your award wins or the media coverage you've generated, provide links to separate pages you've built to house that information.
- **Incorporate Social Media Elements:** Your newsroom is a great spot to aggregate the various places your company maintains a presence in social media. Include links to your Facebook Fan Page, your company's Twitter feed, Flickr account, YouTube channel, LinkedIn page, etc.

- **Include Interactive Elements:** People like to absorb information and be stimulated in different ways. Give your visitors variety. Some ideas include embedding a video overview of your company or product, including eye-catching icons and photos, or including links to audio (e.g. a podcast interview featuring your CEO).
- **Insert a Feed to Your Company Blog or Corporate Twitter Account:** If you publish a company blog (or two) or maintain a corporate Twitter account, add feeds that display recent posts/tweets and the link to subscribe.

SHIFT Communications offers a great template for creating an effective social media newsroom.

Download it: [http://www.shiftcomm.com/downloads/smnewsroom\\_template.pdf](http://www.shiftcomm.com/downloads/smnewsroom_template.pdf)

## 3. Social Media Monitoring & Crisis Communication

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As we mentioned at the beginning of this ebook, social media monitoring is important for any modern PR professional. And beyond monitoring, social media participation is also critical. It's one thing to be paying attention to conversations. It's another to actually get involved. Luckily, with social media come some great tools for monitoring the conversation about your brand so you know where people are talking about you and can participate accordingly. While paid social media monitoring tools and services exist, there are also many free tools available to help.



- **Google Alerts:** Set up multiple [Google Alerts](#) for your company, brand, products, leaders, etc. The alerts will get delivered directly to your email inbox at the frequency you indicate (e.g. daily or as they happen) and is a great way to help you track media coverage and mentions of your brand on the web on news sites, in blogs, etc.
- **Twitter:** Monitor mentions of your brand on Twitter with tools like [Twitter Search](#) or [HootSuite](#). [CoTweet](#) is also a great tool to help manage multiple users on a corporate Twitter account and allows you to assign particular tweets to the appropriate team member for follow-up.
- **Google Reader and RSS Feeds:** Set up RSS feeds in [Google Reader](#) of searches of your brand in other popular social media sites such as Flickr, Digg, Delicious, etc. Scan the results in your reader daily for mentions.
- **Facebook Insights:** Stay on top of and participate in discussions occurring on your company's Facebook Fan Page. Use your Fan Page's [Facebook Insights Dashboard](#) (found in the left sidebar when you're on your page as an admin) to show you stats such as fan growth and page views to gauge your page's interaction and engagement.

Social media monitoring can also be extremely helpful in managing crisis communication. By staying on top of mentions of your company in social media, you'll be aware of any negative or potentially harmful conversations taking place about your brand. This will help you thwart any possibly reputation-damaging discussions in a more time-sensitive manner. Here are some helpful ways to stave off negative reactions about your company in social media during a crisis.

- **If you're in the wrong, admit it.** Keeping quiet has the potential to do more harm than good. If you notice something negative spreading about you on the web and/or

in social media, it's best to address it head on. If you'd like an example of how keeping quiet about a problem has contributed to a damaged reputation, read about the [Kryptonite Lock case study](#).

- **Update people early and often.** Whether it's something as small as a webinar malfunction or something as severe as a security breach, if the situation is happening in real time, continuously update the public on the status of the situation. Twitter and Facebook are great ways to release updates in real time, but use your best judgment about the best way to get the word out to your affected audience.
- **Be transparent.** Tell people what happened. If you don't yet know what happened, say you're looking into the root of the problem, and always apologize for any inconvenience it may be causing the affected people. What people hate even more than a crisis is when a company doesn't take responsibility for that crisis. Once the actual crisis is over, write a blog article explaining everything – what happened, how you reacted, what you're doing to make things better in the future, and how you plan to keep it from happening again.

#### Additional Resources:

- [Alerts Grader](#) (tool to help you easily manage your Google Alerts)
- On-Demand Webinar: [How to Monitor Your Social Media Presence in 10 Minutes a Day](#)

## 4. Value of Awards & Speaking Engagements

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### Value of Awards

Submitting your company for and winning industry-related awards is a great PR tool. Winning awards has a similar effect that media coverage does – it shows your publics that your company and its products/services are worthy of third party validation. Award wins can also be great as a recruiting tool.

**Just Named the Number 1 Best Place to Work in Boston!**



HubSpot was named the number one [Best Place to Work in Boston](#) in the midsize companies category by the Boston Business Journal!

### Open Positions

See who you know at HubSpot Inc. [in](#)

Are you an "A+" player? Do you like challenges? Are you passionate about your work? Do you like free espresso? Will you fight others for the last slice of pizza? Do you want to work at a venture-backed startup in Cambridge, MA, the cradle of high tech? HubSpot is currently looking for star players to add to our team. If you enjoy an unstructured, fast-paced environment where the only limit to your growth is your own capabilities, contact us today. All of our employees receive stock options and plenty of freedom.

Please check our open positions below. If you don't see a position that interests you, [click here](#) to let us know how you can make a difference at HubSpot Inc..

Start researching relevant awards in your industry and putting together a database that you can use to keep track of deadlines. If you win an award, publicize it in your press room and/or create a [dedicated page](#) on your website to showcase your award wins. Why not also write an article for your company blog and share your success (humbly) in social media?

### Value of Speaking Engagements

While social media has made building relationships and connecting with constituents much easier, it shouldn't completely replace the personal touch of face-to-face communication. Securing speaking engagements for your executives at educational, industry-focused conferences and events is a great way to facilitate face-to-face communication with potential and current customers as well as an effective way to exhibit the knowledge, thought leadership, and expertise of your company's leaders.



Start researching local events relative to your industry and reach out to event organizers to pitch a particular speaker within your organization about presenting an educational topic he/she has expertise in. Once a speaker has a solid repertoire of speaking experience, start reaching out to higher-level, more popular conferences and summits that attract larger audiences (these usually have a more formal submission/pitching process using online forms and strict deadlines). Ultimately, putting a speaker of yours in front of a large audience of potential customers can do wonders for your brand by connecting your company's thought leaders with prospects face-to-face.

Once a speaker is confirmed for an event, use social media channels to generate buzz and publicity about your speaker's presentation. Share the news on your Facebook Fan Page or via your Twitter feed, write an article on your company blog, or create a [web page that aggregates upcoming speaking engagements](#). Even if people are unable to attend the event in person, reading about your speaker's presence at the event will show that your company is actively committed to thought leadership and connecting with its publics face-to-face. Create a corporate [SlideShare](#) account and let people know that the speaker's presentation will be uploaded there after the event. This will enable those who cannot attend to access the speaker's slides afterward.

The screenshot shows the SlideShare profile for 'HubSpot Internet Marketing'. The profile includes a 'Follow' button, a 'Like' button with a count of 5, and a 'PRO' badge. The profile information lists the name as 'HubSpot Internet Marketing', the street address as 'One Broadway, 5th Floor', the location as 'Cambridge, MA, United States', and the industry as 'Technology / Internet'. A bio states: 'About HubSpot provides inbound Internet marketing software to help companies leverage inbound marketing to get found online in search engines, blogs, and social media, and also convert more visitors into leads and customers.' Below the profile information is a search bar for 'Search content from HubSpot Internet Marketing' and a 'Search' button. The main content area is titled 'Presentations (220)' and features a grid of four presentation thumbnails with titles and view counts: 'Google Instant: Major Change fo...' (5 days ago, 683 views, 1 comment), 'Internet Marketing Strategies f...' (6 days ago, 203 views), 'The Science of Twitter: State o...' (6 days ago, 516 views), and '19 Marketing Experts Share Tips...' (1 week ago, 892 views).

When speakers are preparing for speaking engagements, they should think of ways to infuse social media elements into their presentations. As a speaker, offer ways for audience members to connect with you online by providing your (and/or your company's) social media credentials such as Twitter handles, Facebook Fan Page link, etc. By giving the audience a way to connect with you, your brand, company, etc. beyond the day of the event, you can help nurture and build the connections you make at the event into more mature relationships online. Make sure your audience knows that, following the event, you will upload the presentation to your company's corporate SlideShare account so attendees can access and share your presentation slides even after the event is over. Make sure speakers' business cards provide ways to connect with them in social media, and consider adding their Twitter handle or Facebook link.

Check out the [Science of Presentations ebook](#) for more ideas about how to make your presentations more social.

## 5. Customer Relations & Evangelism

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Your customers are a great public relations tool for your business. Happy customers can become powerful evangelists of your company, products, and brand. Social media is an effective tool to help you facilitate and improve communication with your customers as well as a great way to promote your happy customers' successes. Here's the why and the how:

- **Using Social Media for Customer Feedback and Support:** Let's face it: Whether you're a B2B or B2C company, your customers are participating in social media. Making yourself available to them in this space is a great way to communicate with them about a number of things, whether it's a product update, a maintenance issue, or the intention of receiving feedback about your products or services. Businesses are increasingly using Twitter for customer support by using corporate representatives on Twitter to help support customers. Businesses are also taking advantage of their Facebook presence to survey customers and foster two-way communication.



- **Fodder for Media Coverage:** Journalists are always looking for a great story. Do you have a unique or interesting customer who has used your product or service to achieve great business results or personal success? Customer success can be great fodder for an interesting pitch.
- **Using Case Studies:** Generating customer case studies is a win-win situation. You get to show that your product or service actually works, and your customer gets to demonstrate how successful they've been! Consider creating a separate blog for customer case studies and promoting those case studies in social media. Case studies are also great to reference when pitching a customer success story to a journalist or blogger.

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the HubSpot website with links for 'WHAT IS HUBSPOT?', 'WHO USES HUBSPOT?', 'MARKETING RESOURCES', 'ABOUT US', 'DEMO', and 'FREE TRIAL'. Below the navigation is a search bar. On the left side, there is a sidebar menu with categories: 'Recent Case Studies', 'Case Studies by Industry', 'External Case Studies', 'Customer Quotes', 'Customer Journeys', 'Partner Case Studies', and 'HubSpot Testimonials'. The main content area features the article title 'HubSpot Internet Marketing Case Studies' with links for 'Current Articles' and 'RSS Feed'. The specific article title is 'Boston Health Club Drops Direct Mail and Pumps Up Leads with HubSpot', posted by Magdalena Georgieva on Tue, Sep 28, 2010 @ 07:20 AM. Social sharing links for Twitter, Facebook, delicious, and StumbleUpon are provided. A video player is embedded, showing a woman speaking with the text overlay: '“We stopped doing all of our direct mail.” —Lee Crabb, Beacon Hill Athletic Clubs'. The video player includes a 'Play Video' button and a 'VISIBLEGAINS' logo.

HubSpot recently published a separate ebook about customer evangelism called [Digital Word of Mouth: Let Customers Transform Your Marketing](#). Download it to learn more about how to benefit from customer evangelism.

## 6. Employee Relations

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A company's employees double as PR representatives for your business, whether you (or they) like it or not. Now that social networking has become so popular and is working its way into how we do business, many people have their own personal presence on social media sites. They tweet from their own Twitter accounts, publish personal blogs, participate on Facebook, have a profile on LinkedIn, and host their own YouTube channels. While this may be scary to some business leaders, the reality is that your employees will participate in social media, and it's very difficult to control what they say.



While businesses may find comfort in blocking access to social media sites at the office or drafting strict social media guidelines for how employees should behave on these sites, our recommendation is a more laidback approach. The biggest fear businesses have about their employees' participation in social media is that they'll do or say something that might misrepresent the company or cause damage to the company's image and reputation. While these are valid concerns, our belief at HubSpot is that a lot of these fears can be thwarted by simply making your employees happy and facilitating good employee relations. Happy employees equal positive PR. Thankfully, there are a few things you can do using social media to facilitate this:

- **Internal Wikis:** An internal wiki is a great hub for internal communication and collaboration within a company. Use a wiki both to help communicate new ideas within the company and receive feedback from employees or to rally people to organize a company picnic or group activity to increase morale!

- **Corporate Instant Messaging:** Enable communication between employees and across departments by implementing a corporate instant messaging system, such as [Spark](#).
- **Transparency:** Being transparent is critical to maintaining trust among your employees. Use email or your internal wiki to discuss company-wide issues or to communicate changes and announcements. Keeping your employees in the dark about major issues is sure to create unhappy workers.
- **No (or Little) Social Media Policy:** No one wants to be told what to do, especially if it involves their personal life. You can't dictate how your employees participate in social media on their own time, and creating disgruntled employees by implementing a strict social media policy will only fuel the fire and create disgruntled workers. If you're going to initiate a social media policy, keep it simple, and use it to serve as a reminder that employees should use good discretion when engaging in social media. Your employees should have good common sense not to disclose confidential information on Facebook, but sometimes a reminder doesn't hurt.

Remember, for businesses' presence in social media, reach is key. Every person your company employs has their own social networks, and thus their own reach. Empowering happy employees to spread the message of your company, its products, and its mission positively is a great way to tap into a larger pool of potential customers.

For additional resources on the importance of personal branding, see Dan Schawbel's [Personal Branding Blog](#).



## 7. Measuring the ROI of Public Relations

So you've started becoming more actively engaged in social media to aid your public relations efforts. But can you tell if it's working? Measuring the return on investment -- and more appropriately for PR, the return on effort -- is an important part of any marketing initiative. You should always be measuring the success of your programs to determine whether your efforts are generating positive results. Measuring ROI can also help you decide if you need to make adjustments to your current processes so you can get the most from your efforts.



Measuring ROI in public relations has always been a pain point for practitioners. However, the web has helped to make tracking ROI more reasonable and less of a headache. The following are some quantitative and qualitative ways you can track if your PR methods are delivering results.

- **Track Mentions in Media Using Google Alerts:** As I mentioned in the section about social media monitoring and crisis communication, Google Alerts can be a great way to track mentions of your brand on the web and in social media and blogs. What is the tone of your mentions? Are they positive? Negative? Neutral?
- **Compare Mentions of Your Company Against Competitors:** Consider measuring how your company is faring against competitor brands in terms of media mentions and their tones by setting up Google Alerts for your competitors as well. [Compete](#) allows you to compare specific metrics of your website against its competitors, and [Website Grader](#) also enables you to compare your website with your competitors' websites in terms of statistics like traffic rank and inbound links (see Website Grader report example below).

### B. Competing Websites

Site	Website Grade	Moz Rank	Google Indexed Pages	Traffic Rank	Blog Grade	Inbound Links	del.icio.us Bookmarks
www.pepsi.com	91	6	69	52,010	0	304,195	108
www.coca-cola.com	94	7	181	26,674	0	411,974	131

- **Track Press Release Syndications:** Track how many times the press releases you distribute via wire services get syndicated on portal sites. Some newswire services like Marketwire offer customized reports per release to show you where your release has been syndicated.



- **Evaluate the Reach of Media Coverage:** If your brand was mentioned on a popular news site or blog or your CEO was interviewed on a podcast or online radio show, use free web analytics tools like Compete or [Alexa](#) to determine the reach of those sites. Similarly, if your CEO was interviewed on a traditional radio show, find out what the listenership is typically like for that particular show.
- **Evaluate Your Reach in Social Media:** How many Twitter followers do you have? How many Facebook fans have you accumulated? Check out your [Facebook Page's Insights](#) to determine if you're effectively engaging your fans.
- **Net Promoter Score:** [Net Promoter](#) is a management tool that can be used to gauge the loyalty of a company's customer relationships. Has your score increased since you've been dedicating more time and effort to customer relations?
- **Analyze Your Website's Sources:** Use [Google Analytics](#) to help analyze how people are finding you online. Did your site visitors find a press release of yours on a portal site that linked back to your website? Are you generating traffic from social media sites like Facebook or Twitter?
- **Count Your Award Wins:** How many awards have you won? Have any of your award wins resulted in media coverage or talent acquisition?
- **Evaluate Your Speaking Engagements:** How many speaking engagements have you secured? What was the size of the audience to which you presented?
- **Ask Your Customers How They Found You:** While it might be difficult to determine otherwise, consider asking customers or prospects how they initially found out about you to determine if your PR efforts are actually working to attract prospects and, ultimately, customers.
- **Compare Results Before and After Specific Initiatives:** Maybe you launched a Facebook Fan Page or corporate Twitter account recently. Do you notice any difference in your business' reputation or public perception since you started devoting more time to specific PR efforts?

## About HubSpot:

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HubSpot is online marketing software that:

- Helps businesses get found online by more qualified visitors.
- Shows businesses how to convert more visitors into leads.
- Gives businesses tools to close those leads efficiently.
- Provides businesses with analytics to help make smart marketing investments.

Based in Cambridge, MA, HubSpot can be found at [HubSpot.com](https://www.hubspot.com)

To start a free trial of HubSpot software today, go to: [HubSpot.com/free-trial](https://www.hubspot.com/free-trial)

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