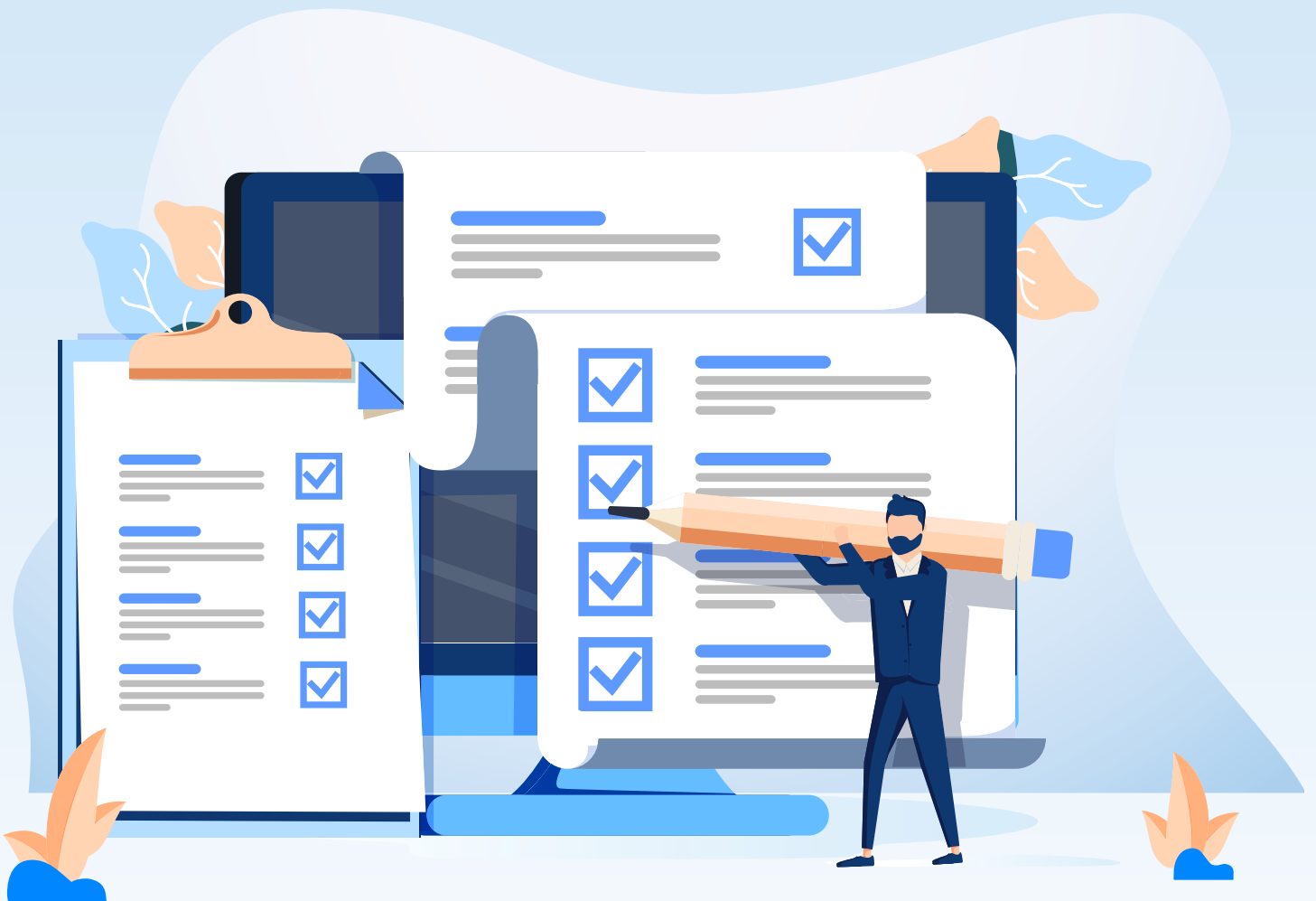


Ultimate Buyer's Guide to  
**MEDIA LISTS**



# Ultimate Buyer's Guide to Media Lists

So you've decided that you need a media list and outreach solution to help you discover and connect with journalists to get your stories heard. Great! Or maybe you've already got some tools but are considering a switch? Either way you've got marching orders to sally forth and procure the best solution on the market!

Where to start?

Media list providers typically (read *\*SHOULD\**) require interested buyers to get in touch and participate in a product demo. To make the best decision for your organization, it's critical to come to these calls armed with knowledge so you can ask the right questions and get the information you need.

Whether you're overseeing the procurement process or assisting someone in your organization, we know you're probably pressed for time. As a PR or communications pro, you've got a million other things to be doing. But trust us, putting in a bit of legwork at the beginning will save you a TON of frustration and disappointment (not to mention dollars) down the road.

Which is why we've put together this Ultimate Buyer's Guide, to help you identify the most important steps to prepare for conversations with media list vendors and offer some key resources.

## Step #1: Identify your needs

First and foremost, once you've made the decision to move forward with a new media list and outreach solution, you need to see what your options are.

NOT SO FAST!



While this is the most common first step, it should actually come second to this seemingly obvious but crucial step: **getting a clear, defined understanding of your needs.**

To ask the right questions and conduct a thorough evaluation of your options, you need to know what you're expecting of your media list and outreach tools beyond just "finding journalists".

A few questions to consider before embarking on research:

- What is your forecasted media relations activity for the year?
- How are your media relations achievements currently being presented to upper management or clients?
- What are the biggest challenges you're facing in achieving your media relations goals?
- How are you currently conducting media outreach activities?
- What are the gaps or pain points in these activities?
- What would be your wish list of items included in a media list and outreach solution?
- How do you want to be able to search a media list?

## Step #2: Do Your Research

**Required Reading:** G2 Crowd, vendor websites

While Google or Yelp are the most popular places to start for most research inquiries, what if we told you there is a service that essentially serves as the Google of business-related product reviews? That it would introduce you to options beyond the same-old vendors you assumed you were limited to?

If you're not already familiar, allow us the pleasure of introducing you to \*drum roll please\* [G2 Crowd.com](https://www.g2.com).

### G2 Crowd

[G2 Crowd](https://www.g2.com) is a peer-to-peer, business solutions review platform. They provide verified user reviews from fellow business professionals to help you objectively assess which company and products are

best for your organization. Luckily for PR and communications pros everywhere, they have a category for [Media and Influencer Targeting Software](https://www.g2.com/categories/media-and-influencer-targeting-software). For media lists and outreach tools, you'll want to explore this. Here, you can see which organizations are ranked as leaders and high performers, and then see the organizations' profiles containing their reviews. These peer reviews are the sole factors determining an organization's G2 Crowd scores and cannot be moderated or altered by vendors. Vendors also can't pay for better ratings or to influence their position on the grid, and all users posting a review need to verify (using screenshots) with G2 Crowd that they are



an existing client of the vendor. All user reviews are provided by fellow business professionals and moderated independently by G2 Crowd.

To help users clearly identify high-scoring organizations, G2 Crowd provides badges that will be featured on an organization's profile page.

To figure out your shortlist of vendors, a good place to start is in the leader's quadrant of the [Media and Influencers Targeting Software](#) grid. Check out the profiles of the vendors included here, figure out who you'd like to learn more about, and then dive in. For more info, we'd suggest consulting the following:

- **Websites**

An organization's website is a great place to start. Take a look at their offerings and the information they have made available. Some things to look for:

- Solution descriptions and highlights: Are they clear? Do they address some of the questions in your "Identify Needs" process?
- FAQs
- Pricing: Is pricing included on the website? Are they being transparent?
- Demo videos that show the products in action
- Do they have a live chat where you can ask questions and get answers quickly?

- **Google and Reddit Reviews**

- If you'd like to do some more review research, Google, Yelp, and Reddit can provide, shall we say, candid opinions on organizations and products. It's important to keep in mind that unlike G2 Crowd, these are not verified or moderated. Anybody can post reviews on these forums (including the companies themselves).

- **Social Media**

- Monitor the vendor's handle or hashtags to see what people are saying
- Like Google, Yelp, and Reddit, other social media channels may give you a sense of other people's experiences with an organization.

- **Glassdoor Reviews**

- Some people would say you can learn a lot about an organization based on what its employees are saying. While certainly not necessary, if you've got some extra time and want to get an "inside scoop" on the flavour of the company, it might be worth checking out their standing on [Glassdoor](#). This job recruiting site has a database of company reviews provided by employees, and you may find it reassuring to work with a company you know has the thumbs up from its own employees.

If you're as busy as we assume you are, you may only have time for a few of these resources. If that's the case, we suggest at least checking out G2 Crowd and the websites of your shortlisted

vendors. We promise you won't regret it!

## Step #3: Requesting a Demo

**What to look for:** Rapport, vendor questions

So you've had a look at what other PR and communications professionals are saying about some of the options, and looked into your shortlist candidates' websites.



Now the fun really starts. It's time to get on the phone and chat with a real-live human.

More often than not, this will require starting the process of requesting a product demo from the company. Whether you have a few calls before the demo itself, or you get an intro call and a demo all wrapped into one, requesting a demo is the best way to get a sense of the quality of the organization, their solutions,

and to ask questions to get the details that will help you make the best decision.

Once you're on the phone with a vendor, you'll want to take note of a few things:

- **Rapport**

Is the person on the other end of the phone friendly? Do they seem genuinely interested in you and your needs? Or are they just trying to sell? Are they giving the impression that this is a person and organization you'd enjoy doing business with?

- **Focus of the Call**

Important distinction to make: is the call more about you, or more about them? Because we can tell you right now, it should be about you. Take care to notice if the vendor is talking mostly about themselves without giving you room to talk. They should want to thoroughly understand you and your unique needs before moving forward.

- **Questions**

Which brings us to our next point: what kinds of questions are they asking you? Are they asking questions that effectively get to the heart of what you're looking for? That would help them fully understand the scope of your goals? That would ensure they can come to the table with the most relevant and helpful information for you? If they're not taking the time to get information that will help them tailor a product demo, that should be a red flag.

## Step #4: Questions

The vendor of course shouldn't be the only one asking questions!

We've included here a list of questions you may want to consider asking the vendor when you've got them on the phone with you. While these might vary depending on your specific case, they

should help thoroughly assess the company and their media list and outreach solution:

### **1. How easy and intuitive are the tools?**

If you need an advanced degree to figure out how to search and build a media list, that's a red flag. If the user reviews you read on G2 crowd are matching up with the info you're hearing/seeing, you might have a winner.

### **2. What are the components of your media list and outreach solutions?**

Is it just a media database? Does it have press release distribution capabilities? Newsroom? Integrated newswire? Can it help you discover journalists as well as connect with them directly?

### **3. Is your media database global?**

Or are there core markets, regions, industries, etc. that they specialize in? Your business will determine which type of database you require.

### **4. How does your media list find results?**

Do I search by beat? Keyword? Region? A solid media database should have several options for discovering and pinpointing media contacts.

### **5. How many UNIQUE journalists and influencers does the list have in your industry? In your region?**

Some list vendors will claim huge numbers of contacts but count a single journalist who works for three outlets as three separate contacts. Beware of vendors who say they have millions (or billions) of contacts.

### **6. How often is contact information updated, new contacts/outlets added to the media list?**

You want this to be as frequently as possible. Ideally, there's a research team adding and updating records every day.

### **7. Can you request research into new contacts in a niche market (Harry Potter-loving healthcare writers in Malawi)?**

Some media list vendors will do custom research and find contacts in a niche market or region – and really amazing ones will do it with a smile, usually within a couple business days.

### **8. Can you save, import, and export media lists?**

Yes, you can? Good.

No, you can't? Bad.

### **9. Is it possible to save search criteria so your lists can be automatically updated with the latest contacts and info?**

The biggest issue with maintaining your own media list is keeping up with the high turnover and

constant changes in newsrooms that is part and parcel of the current global media landscape. You want a list that lets you save your searches (using keywords and filters, of course) so your lists automatically update and clearly indicate when this happens, without you having to lift a finger.

**10. If the outreach solution has distribution capabilities, can you easily format your journalist pitch or press release and add multimedia to it?**

**Hint:** It's so much easier when the answer to these questions is simply "yes".

**11. How much do your solutions cost?**

Look for a company that's open and transparent about [pricing](#). You may think you've agreed to a great price, only to find out that the features you were most excited about in the demo are missing because they are technically "add-ons" that cost extra and need to be purchased separately. Make sure the vendor is crystal clear on what you'll be getting and for how much. The simpler the pricing structure, the better! If they're being vague or cagey about things, you may want to consider other options.

**12. What are the payment terms?**

Is there room for flexibility? For example, can you pay monthly instead of annually?

Is there an auto-renew clause? What are the details? (Most have this so make sure you read the fine print.)

**13. What post-sales support and training is provided?**

Is it free or is there an additional cost? Are you given a login and that's the last you hear from them until it's time to renew? Who do you contact when you need help and how do you get in touch with them (i.e phone, email, live chat)? Will you be dealing with chat-bots and automated support systems, or humans? How fast can you get in touch if the issue is urgent, like a time sensitive press release? Do not underestimate the importance of top notch and continuing product support!

And there you have it! Some questions and steps to consider before you hop on a call with a media list and outreach solutions vendor.

By taking the time to:

- Zero in on your unique needs
- Research the best in the business
- Know what to look for when you're talking on the phone with a vendor
- And ask all the right questions

You'll be well on your way to the media list and outreach solution of your (and your organization's) dreams!

And if we may be so bold, if you're ready to dive into your research (after you've zeroed in on your

unique needs of course!), allow us to start you off with yours truly.

We're happy to walk the walk and invite you to see what people are saying about our intuitive media outreach solution on [G2 Crowd](#) and [how we measure up to the industry competition](#).

Like what you see? Check out our [demo videos](#) or [get in touch with us](#) and we'll gladly give you a personalized tour and answer ALL your questions.