



# PR IN

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**YOUR INTRODUCTORY HOW-TO GUIDE**

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## PR AND YOU

PR – that’s public relations, for the uninitiated – has changed a great deal in recent years. Because of the shifts of the digital revolution, there are new opportunities as well as new obligations. To effectively navigate the PR landscape in 2021, you need to be aware of all of these opportunities. You need to know what PR entails and where you should direct your efforts.

To start, let’s define PR. While you may find a variety of complex, wordy definitions, I only want to talk about what works in practice and what you are going to see in the real world. Thus, I am giving you a working definition of PR: what people are telling other people about you.

This places PR in contrast to marketing and advertising, which are the things that you are telling people about yourself.



Within PR, we can break everything down into two categories, the earned category and the paid category. Paid PR is, as you can guess, the PR that costs you money, whereas earned PR is the PR that you generate without paying – or perhaps incidental to paying. When you cover the costs of an article about your brand, that is paid PR, and when that article leads to additional articles, all of the additional articles are earned PR.

This brings me to the first lesson that I would impart to you about the two categories of PR. While each is valuable in its own way, I only ever purchase PR if it leads to earned PR later.

*Are you ready to learn more about earned PR and paid PR? Check out Darwin PR now!*

## KNOWING AND WORKING WITH INFLUENCERS



Next, let's talk about influencers. If you have heard the term "influencer" recently, you may have come to associate it with a specific subset of influencers – the ones whom you see on Instagram and Twitter. An influencer, though, is anyone whose opinion leads to trends or thoughts. In PR, these are people who can spread your message to their audiences, generating conversation and buzz about your brand.

If someone is an authority in a niche, you can think of them as an influencer. These people are critical to landing the highest-quality PR, so once you connect with them, you want to build long-term relationships with them.

***To start finding relevant influencers, ask yourself some pointed questions about your audience.***

***What are they interested in?  
What do you want to achieve  
through your PR strategy?***



Once you can answer these questions, you can start spotting the influencers who will make the most substantial impact on your PR. Add to that this tip: do not count out micro-influencers. Often wielding highly engaged audiences, despite their relatively lower numbers of followers, they can drive serious attention your way.

Of course, there is a layer of finesse to all of this too. We are talking about networking – and networking with people who are in-demand and know it. Building relationships without coming across as needy or insincere can be tough. It is doable, but if you try to go at it alone, you may need to accept some trial-and-error.

*Do you want to cut your learning curve in this area?  
See what Darwin PR can do for your influencer PR strategy.*

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR ROI

Once you are doing all of the right things, you want to know that you are making a difference. After all of the work that you have devoted to your PR, you want to be able to point to something and say “That is my result.” This is ROI – your return on investment.

Just as you would track ROI in any other area of business, from investing capital to manufacturing products, you are tracking ROI in PR so that you can tell when your strategy is working. There are some people who believe that PR is un-quantifiable, but in reality, there are a couple of tried-and-true methods tracking and understanding your ROI.

Take AVE, for example. This is your “advertising value equivalency,” and it refers to the PR space (usually in terms of time) multiplied by the rate that you paid or would have paid for the space. Developed in the 1940s, this metric has become somewhat dated in the digital age.

Today, PR professionals like to measure PESO, which accounts for paid, earned, shared, and owned media. You look at the combined value of all of these PR forms and, from that, determine the ROI of your PR strategy.



*Do you want to understand your ROI even more fully and learn how to improve it? Visit Darwin PR.*

## THE POWER OF PRESS RELEASES

Focused on cutting-edge PR and optimizing your strategy, you may forget the old adage: keep it simple. For all of the doomsday prophecies, press releases remain a cornerstone of any rounded and complete PR strategy.

Announcements that you pass on to journalists, bloggers, and influencers, press releases should ideally – earn you media coverage, alongside guest articles, expert comments, and media appearances. They should also build brand awareness, increase your authoritativeness, generate referral traffic, and improve your backlinks.

The sad fact, however, is that press releases often go ignored. The reason? Instead of writing press releases that make other people's lives easier, they write them in a way that creates more work for whoever is unlucky enough to receive them.



When you write a press release, you want to make sure that whoever reads it – a journalist, a blogger, an editor – can take one look at it and know what to do with it.

This, like so many other things in PR, is much easier said than one, but there is help available.

*To put your press releases to work for you and your PR strategy, check out Darwin PR.*

## PITCHING JOURNALISTS PROPERLY

If you are struggling to make sense of what journalists are looking for in PR, then you need to consider what journalists do. First of all, journalists do not look to pitch products, services, or brands. They are not waiting around to advertise your business or your company, and if that is all you offer them, you are going to continue to run into the same barriers. Instead, you need to think about the ways that journalists measure their own success – through the success of the stories that they publish in their papers and on their websites.

Once you have pinned down this concept, you start to understand the distinctions between pitches to journalists. In your pitch, you need to create something that is valuable to the journalist who receives it. In order to earn press coverage through your pitch, the press coverage needs to seem as equally valuable to the journalist who is going to give it to you. There are specific steps that you can follow to optimize your pitch, ensuring that journalists will receive your ideas well and understand how they too can benefit from featuring the story that you are suggesting.



***The first step is to get clear about your goals. Your narrative, your perspective, and your insights should shine through in your pitch so that anyone who reads it can accurately describe the story that a journalist would tell in the form of an article or a report. After that, blend your product, service, or brand into the story, making an effort not to make the pitch seem promotional or to make the potential coverage seem like blatant advertising. From there, your pitch should hook journalists because it is newsworthy and intriguing, drawing them in because they recognize that their readers will find what you are saying to be of interest.***

At every juncture of the pitch process, you need to stand out. Whether you are saying something new or you are saying something in a new way, you need your pitch to feel groundbreaking and challenging, pushing back on any old ideas that readers may hold and encouraging them to think about the world. Journalists that if they are incentivizing their readers to use their minds, then everyone benefits: the readers feel like they have gained something, and they return to the journalists to read more later on.

You also want, throughout this process, to think about the type of press coverage for which you are aiming. A pitch for a guest article will differ from a pitch for a piece of breaking news, and both will differ from a pitch for a problem-solving piece. The clearer you are with yourself about the type of coverage you want, the more specifically you can angle your pitch. Be personal, present social proof, and minimize the work that journalists need to do: if you follow all of these guidelines, journalists are much more likely to receive your pitches as you intend.

*To delve deeper into journalist pitches, start a conversation with us at Darwin PR.*

## PR IN A CRISIS

There is an old saying among sailors: “A smooth sea never made a skillful captain.” While we may all agree that this is true in theory, crisis as it is happening seems much more likely to ruin a ship than to make it stronger. To navigate PR in a crisis, you need to be willing to think flexibly, seeing both the dangers and the opportunities within the crisis. Make no mistake about it: there are opportunities in every crisis just as well as there are dangers. If you can survive your PR crisis, you can end up better off than you were before it started.

The first thing that you need to realize when you are in the middle of a PR crisis is that your communication needs to shift. Public perception should take on a new meaning for you because throughout the crisis, your reputation is subject to intense scrutiny. Spectators will look at you much more closely, assuming that you are going to make a mistake or struggle to overcome your crisis. Expecting that you are going to succumb to the crisis, they will pay greater attention to you than they have, perhaps ever before. To respond to this scrutiny, you need a PR strategy that is complete.

Every question that you answer, every public statement that you need, it all needs to come into alignment. You cannot allow any of your messaging to run off course – lest you appear unprepared for the crisis or incapable of facing it. A crisis communication task force can serve you well for this reason, keeping your PR strategy in line with your branding and what you want the public to think of you. Add to this task force a spokesperson or spokespeople who will learn your strategy to the point of exhaustion, taking the lead any time your messaging needs to go out.



Once these pieces are in place, you can start thinking about the work you are doing to track and determine the effects of your PR strategy. You can track data through Google Analytics to determine how the crisis is affecting your web presence and what impact that will make on your business overall. Then, you can take your data and put it into context, determining what it tells you about your strategy and what tweaks it would seem to recommend.

While the crisis continues to change and shift, allow your communication to change and shift with it. Think about what your messaging should say as the crisis becomes more or less urgent. You want to strike a tone of confidence throughout the crisis, but at times, you can pull back, easing up on the time and resources that you are expending on your crisis communication. When all is said and done, look back on the crisis, seeing what you have learned from it and what it tells you about the future.

*Prepare yourself for your next PR crisis  
and talk with us at Darwin PR.*



## WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

***Does all of this seem like a lot? Are you feeling a little overwhelmed?***

Although PR may seem daunting when you are first approaching it, there is a rhyme and a reason to everything that you see. From influencer outreach to press releases to the PESO model, PR will start to open up to you and reward you the more that you view it as a series of opportunities, rather than a series of obstacles.



*At Darwin PR, we are working hard on our clients' behalf, putting world-class PR within their reach. That we can do for you, contact us today!*