



Blogger Relations Best Practices

The Society's Fellows and members of the Best Practices Committee share their thoughts and advice on the keys to success when conducting blogger relations.

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From Meghan Hindman

Transparency and a deep understanding of the blogger and the blogger's audience are critical for effective blogger relations. I recommend tracking target blogs as far out as possible prior to an announcement and participating, as appropriate, by offering comments and participating in discussions to establish yourself as an ethical and vested partner/participant. Additionally, you or your client should be prepared to comment on any resulting post, positive or negative, so it is best to keep outreach limited to a manageable number of blogs.

From David Parmet

The key is not to intrude but to do your research before even approaching a blogger. And, approach them on their level – not as a PR person coming on high to offer them a story. If you know who the key bloggers are covering your industry, company or topic, make friends with them early on and keep feeding them interesting tidbits, you'll have them on your side when you need them.

From Elisa Camahort

My one piece of advice is actually four steps:

1. Explore, read and listen. Forget *the* blogging A-List. Find *your* A-List: the 30–40 blogs that are relevant to what you do and who might care about what you do.
2. Get to know your A-List. Read them over time. You'll learn about their specific ethical framework and their specific attitudes towards being approached by marketers. You'll learn how they share info they get, if they do at all. You'll learn whether or not they'd be open to your various pitches.
3. Be honest about who you are. Don't lay on the hyperbole or pretend to be just a fan of the company you're working for.
4. The blogger doesn't care what you want, and what's in it for you. They care about their blog and their readers. Think about what is in it for them.

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(cont'd.)

From Mark Hannah

Each communication you send to a blogger should be brief and personalized. Never send a blogger an unsolicited press release, but instead offer it as additional information if s/he is interested. On a related note, don't add bloggers to the media list unless specifically requested by them to do so.

Remember, you're always on the record with bloggers. Don't expect a professional code of conduct as you do with journalists.

Also don't expect a "news cycle" to play out. Bloggers post whenever it's convenient for them so it's important to respond to bloggers' e-mails promptly.

Many "journalistic bloggers" like to be able to scoop their counterparts in the mainstream media. A positive post might come about if you're able to offer exclusive access to a company spokesperson, or some type of information.

From Brian Solis

Beware and be aware of exclusives and embargoes. They can come back at you when not practiced carefully. Remember, bloggers don't necessarily honor these as you might expect of traditional journalists.

From Mike Manuel

Before you contact a blogger, pause and ask yourself this: Does this person know me? Have we corresponded in the past?

If yes, game on. If no, game over.

Alright, that's a bit extreme, it's not game over, but you're shooting yourself in the foot by missing a critical first step — introduce yourself. And I don't mean "Hi, my name's Joe, I work for Acme, I wanted to tell you about blah, blah, blah." Take the time to make a genuine introduction *outside* the context of your announcement. That's how

relationships start. It's also how trust forms. Anything short of this and you're treating people as a means to an end, don't kid yourself into thinking otherwise.

Also, offer the bloggers you're approaching the choice to simply opt-out. This is important.

You could argue that 99% of blog pitches gone bad are because too many marketing folks believe "the audience" is presumed interested until they state otherwise.

By making a genuine effort to introduce yourself first and offering people the chance to opt-out of hearing more about "what Acme has cooking" you demonstrate some tact and respect for those you're approaching, plus it dramatically improves and informs your future blogger outreach efforts. A big payoff for a little extra legwork

From John Cass

Blogger relations can be defined in two ways: as an extension of media relations, where PR people pitch bloggers in the same way that they pitch journalists; or there is no attempt to "pitch" bloggers, but instead try to get involved in the dialogue with the organization's blogging community.

Blogging is about establishing credibility through an authentic dialogue. If a corporate blogger is one day conducting a dialogue and the next day pitching a blogger, the contrast is confusing and can tarnish the blogger's credibility.

Separating these functions and using the PR person to "pitch" actually adds credibility to the process.

Both techniques are legitimate, but rarely should they be used by the same person.