



ways to newsworthy PR

The executive's guide on how to be newsworthy in New Zealand

- Launching a new product? Service? Facility?
- Want to build brand awareness?
- Tired of flying below the radar?
- Is your team doing good things that deserve recognition?
- Do you need to influence policy?
- Leverage decision makers further up the chain?
- Want to stand out from the crowd?
- Is the time right to build your brand?

Use this 8 Point Newsworthiness checklist tool to evaluate your options and generate some ideas.

What does this guide do?

This guide is a big picture strategic decision-making tool of the 8 elements which will determine whether your event, product, service or message will get traction in the media.

Who is it ideal for?

- CEOs, General Managers and Marketing Managers in mid-market companies – including not-for-profit organisations and Central and Local Government enterprise.
- Medium company owners and directors.
- Small and micro-business owners may also benefit.

How not to end up a one-hit wonder

To get some PR is not difficult if your press release or media pitch is sufficiently newsworthy and you're targeting the right media organisations. However, the risk – and this happens to 99.99% of organisations that make it into the news for the right reasons – is that you're going to end up a one hit wonder.

PR can be one big splash and you're gone by lunch, or a significant brand investment. You choose.

There are few feelings worse than being in the limelight for day and then disappearing without a trace – just ask the one-hit wonder artists like Los Del Rio, Soft Cell and Dexys Midnight Runners. Don't recognise them? Perhaps their tracks will ring a bell – 'The Macarena', 'Tainted Love' and 'Come on Eileen'.

But, you think, being a one hit wonder isn't too bad. I just want to launch a new product, or service or facility. I'm not really interested in being viewed as a market leader, or a thought leader, or you don't really care about sustainable recognition for your brand and your team.

Convert your audience into equity

Whether you want to be in the media for a brief moment or build long term profile, none of it will do you much good unless you can convert the interest, the awareness or the visitors that the media generates into equity.

To do this...

1. Ensure you have sufficient information available on your website and in social media for those potential customers who hear about you, and visit your website because they have questions.
2. Put in place a process to engage visitors in an ongoing dialogue or relationship.
3. Back-up the media attention by presenting as professional, trustworthy and expert.

Good PR leverages your expertise to help your audience make better decisions.

How you do that is not the subject of this guide. But if you want to learn more, visit our blog for more insights and education.

Right, now let's get down to business. It won't take long.



How do journalists decide what's newsworthy?

1

Timely

The 'state' of being newsworthy — whether by accident or design — is measured against the following eight points:

- Is your content topical?
- Did it happen recently? Like yesterday, today or tomorrow?
- Are people talking about it now?

The trick is to capitalise on trending news. Some call it “news jacking”, but it is essentially the practise of developing content based on current news events because it's logical that those events are topical and featuring high in search activity.

For example, when news of New Zealand's Chinese tourism boom made it into the news a training company client of ours, Great Scott Training Company, followed up with a press release about cultural awareness training for staff. As a result, the CEO was featured in a prime-time interview with Larry William on NewstalkZB just after the 6pm news.

**Watch the media.
Hitch a ride on a trending
news story.**

2

Impact

- How many people, or who specifically, will your content impact?
- How will they be affected?

Define your audience. Is it niche or does it affect all Kiwis? The more people your story impacts, the more chance it has of being picked up by mainstream media. However, if your article is niche, it may be more likely to be shared between those affected, for example, between members of a fishing club if the story is pertinent to their fishing activity.

For example, Moratti & Associates – a firm of private investigators – specialises in re-uniting adults who had been adopted as children with their birth parents. They successfully put out media about how to approach the 'other party' without frightening them off – an all too common occurrence.

3

Prominence

- Is your content important? Sales content is rarely important in the greater scheme of things, but if it touches on a current event, for example, imminent changes to legislation that will impact your target audience, it becomes important.
- Is your information based on comment or opinion from a prominent person or expert?

Consider quoting prominent people like experts, even independent industry experts who are not associated with your company. It builds credibility and trust. For example, an article we wrote for Meridian Energy – on lighting for businesses – quoted ‘how to’ advice from an award-winning lighting designer.

4

Proximity

- How pertinent is your content to the audience? An event in Christchurch is unlikely to appeal to an Auckland audience. Local content is very important to local and community media in particular.

Look for ways to localise your media by referencing local names, events or people. For example, use the names of the areas or regions you want to reach in your media release or pitch.

If you want to reach audiences in Pahiā, Karapiro, Opatiki, Reefton or Amberley, then reference those places in the content – local media will notice and it also makes you more likely to be found by your target market online.

5

Bizarre?

- Is your story something different or outside the norm? “Man bites dog” is an old gem, but you get the general idea.

This kind of content is difficult to achieve, but a notable international instance that has been viral for some years is the ‘will it blend?’ example.

Blendtec, a blender company, makes a series of videos where they blend anything, including iPads, paint balls and a bottle of Old Spice to show – not tell – how powerful their blender is (note how they blend whatever is topical at the time).



6

Controversy and conflict

Fact is, people love conflict and controversy. Media love controversy because it's an easy win.

One way to harness this is to highlight how to turn a negative into a positive. For example, if a Postie is in the news because she got bitten by a dog, a dog training company might put out a press release that offers advice on how to avoid dog attacks.

7

Current

- Does your content address the current needs of your audience?
- Ask yourself, what present and future problems are confronting your audience today?

The housing crisis in Auckland is one example. The banks have tightened up their lending criteria. Mortgage advisors LoanPlan are frequently featured in the media with advice on how to overcome the obstacles and get the mortgage finance that you need.

Too middle class for a loan – New Zealand Herald

8

Human-interest

Human-interest stories have to be just that – about people in interesting situations.

It is perhaps in this category that you can explore the true definition of a story. For example, if you're selling hair care products, perhaps you could tell a story about somebody who had a disaster at the hairdresser – and the social problems and emotional angst this caused her. Highlight what's wrong with modern hairdressing methods or chemicals, and then offer advice on alternatives or treatments to mitigate the damage.

You can use one person, one good news story – a customer or a patient – to highlight a local or national problem, offering education and advice on how to solve the problem.

Education makes good news newsworthy.



A Word of Warning: Don't sell

Public relations, and content marketing for that matter, are not advertising. Advertising has its place – even alongside PR – but never should the two meet. Advertorials are the sad and broken prodigy of that particular marriage.

Remember that everybody loves shopping, but we hate to be sold to. Nobody wants to be pinned down by a sales person for two or three minutes, least of all when we can choose to dis-engage with no social cost.

Customers volunteer to engage with your content. There is no slick salesperson to hold them there. Don't bore them by talking about yourself.

PR and content marketing are not the same as advertorials.

It is important not to be sucked into the advertorial trap through so-called native ad products.

Those hideously boring articles are hopelessly overpriced and written by mostly junior journalists who hate every minute of it. Open your local newspaper and they're easy to find somewhere near the back, with headlines like:

- Be friends with your dentist
- Send anything anywhere
- Serious fun for a serious purpose

It's fairly obvious little thought or effort has gone into the articles and their headlines, and as such they don't invite serious engagement either. The headlines say little to nothing, and the text isn't much better. It's fair to ask the question, how can anybody expect strangers to invest any of their precious time with content that makes little or no effort to be meaningful?

Good PR adds value. It informs, educates, inspires and entertains.

The sales, conversions, credibility and brand building happen as a powerful by-product of good stories.



The most important tip of all

This is the most important element of being newsworthy for the right reasons. News lives and breathes problems. Don't shy away from those problems. Confront them, but follow-up with advice and information that helps solve the problem.

Whether you are launching a new product, trying to influence policy or gain market leverage, use the benefit of your expertise to educate your audience.

For example, a business coaching organisation highlighted the Christmas cash flow crunch problem that many small business and self-employed tradespeople have to confront each year. Then he offered tips on how to prepare for it and manage through. One of the journalists who picked up his story told him she did so because her husband was a tradie and she was personally all too aware of the problem.

Journalists are people too. They will recognise common problems and respond to them like anybody else.

Problems are good. Problems are what make news. Your job is to be problem solver.

When you inform and educate your audience, you automatically position yourself as an expert, and that is good for your brand. Think about giving them tools and 'how to advice' that helps them do better, and make better decisions.

That's why I say, education makes good news newsworthy.



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