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COVID-19:

Developing a PR Plan for Your Organization

As organizations across the country ramp up their operations, transparent communication with your employees, volunteers, customers and visitors will be key for your organization. From logistical details (how to enter your premises), to telling your story in order to stay relevant (a new fundraising goal for example), having a Public Relations (PR) plan ready to go is important.

What is a PR Plan?

A PR plan is a document that outlines how you are going to interact with your audiences, customers and stakeholders for an ongoing period. Its purpose is to deliver ongoing results that have a lasting impact on your brand's reputation.

For the plan to work, all content must be newsworthy and of interest to your stakeholders. The information must align to your brand's key messages, the goals of your organization, and be released in a coordinated schedule to generate the most impact for your organization and your brand.

What to include in your PR plan

- **Situation Overview:** Summarize your organization's current communication strategy in one or two paragraphs.
- **Target Audiences:** Define your stakeholders. Prepare a list of stakeholders (customers, visitors, employees, donors, media etc.) and prioritize them for this plan. Who do you need to hear your story?
- **Goals:** Set and define some specific goals. What do you want to accomplish through PR? Is it that you want to reach more people, or do you want to reach your existing database to give them an update about your organization?
- **Messaging:** What message do you want to communicate? Ensure the messaging is aligned to your brand.
- **Tactics:** By looking at your target audiences, you can gain an understanding of how they want to receive communications and build your tactic list from there. Some examples include social media, print media, newsletters, emails, and YouTube videos.
- **Budget:** How much money can you allocate toward PR? This will help you define your tactics and determine whether you'll be able to hire an outside resource, work with a social media influencer, subscribe to a database or use a press release distribution service.
- **Timeline:** A timeline will help you manage the tasks and tactics included in your plan. If you plan to send out one press release a month, it is best to plan when you will write the release and when you will send it out.
- **Spokesperson:** Select a spokesperson and ensure they have gone through media training.

Working with the media

Although there are many ways of getting your story out to the public, working with the media is still a good way to reach large audiences online, in print or via video/audio. Here are some hints on getting the most out of a media opportunity:

Your team

If you are making an announcement of any kind, make sure your employees know first.

Make sure all employees know who the PR point of contact is within the company, should they get a media call.

Messaging

Keep your statement simple and repeat the key messages that are the most important to be picked up by the interviewer.

Keep your messaging authentic — steer clear of tired or overused messages.

If there is an issue to respond to, think about posting a brief video statement from one of the company's leaders to social media, rather than

distributing a media release. This is often more personable and genuine.

Craft a list of key points, not verbatim key messages. This leads to a more natural conversation.

Have an email account developed for a crisis and direct all enquiries there. Post the address on your website. This will ensure tracking of all enquiries into a central point.

Media interviews

Prepare for interviews — think of what questions you will be asked, how long the interview will be, whether it will be live or taped, and research past angles and stories the journalist has written to give you an idea of the potential direction in which they will take the interview.

If you are doing several media interviews, treat each one individually and keep your energy level high for each one. Remember, you are talking to a new audience each time.

Don't repeat a negative statement when asked.

Don't have an interview in your office. Choose an outside location or foyer so that you can walk away afterwards.

Create an exit strategy if you are doing a media interview. Tell the journalist how much time you have, to set expectations at the beginning. Begin to wrap up your comments just before that time.

Switch your pitch

Effective PR is all about matching the message to the medium. Hand select twenty journalists/bloggers/influencers who cover what you do. Follow them on social media, read their articles and blogs and develop a strong grasp of what topics they cover.

Send story ideas or personalized pitches for each specific media outlet. A great pitch is tailored to the publication and can't be duplicated for other media. Demonstrate that you've done your homework and you understand what the writer covers.

PR is often more valuable after the fact!

Receiving a mention in an article or newscast is great but it doesn't always mean instant success. PR is sometimes more valuable after the fact. Share it with your stakeholders through your newsletter and social

media channels. Add it to the news section of your website and reference it in letters. PR is evergreen — it never loses its credibility.

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