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# Being brilliant at the basics of b2b PR

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Red Lorry  
Yellow Lorry

# Hello!

## — Welcome to Lorry 101. And congratulations, if you're reading this it means you're interested in a career in b2b PR.

Whether you've just accepted your first PR gig, or you're thinking about moving into the industry, you need to build your understanding of the fundamentals. How do you develop the right content? How can you become a pitching machine? And most importantly, what even is PR?

Let's start at the beginning. PR requires a set of skills that's transferable across industry disciplines – an ability to write and communicate effectively, a nose for industry news, and a proactive mindset. b2b PR is a bit more complex than b2c, as you need to tailor these messages to businesses and target business audiences.

Business audiences are constantly on the lookout for ways to amplify their messaging in their respective industries, which means as b2b PR pros, we need to look past traditional media relations. Instead, b2b PR for business audiences means broadcasting their signals through a robust client awards program, influencer outreach and engagement, social media management and social media presence.

Ultimately, it's much more than just your standard media relations job.

This eBook will serve as your entry-level course in b2b PR to help you get the passing grade in your writing, pitching, and tone of voice. So take a seat and get ready to start learning.



# Basics of b2b PR

**First up is grasping what public relations truly looks like, and how it can be applied to a b2b landscape. What are some of the basic industry lessons that we need to learn about to ensure success?**

## **PR and advertising are not created equal**

While PR and advertising have some of the same goals – like making a positive impact on the bottom line – both are very different. In advertising every action costs money and you could spend thousands of dollars, euros or pounds on a campaign without any guarantee that it will lead to sales.

The foundation of PR is trust and relationships driven by third-party endorsement. For example, it's one thing to see ads in a notable trade publication or website. But, if you read an article or review about a product you're considering for your company, or see a notable executive speaking as a thought leader on a trending subject, then buyers are more likely to consider doing business with that company. This presents the company and spokesperson as a leader in the industry and one whose opinion can be trusted. Earned PR placement therefore often has more value than a paid ad. (Note: It's true that some PR opportunities are paid but these shouldn't be the sole way of securing coverage for a PR campaign.)

## **It's all about keeping your ear to the ground**

Creating a great campaign and putting it into action is always important, but it doesn't end there. PR is about staying on top of what's going on in the industry and being agile enough to provide a quick response. Great b2b PR teams are always staying up to date on the latest industry blogs and newsletters like PR Daily, b2b Marketing, PR Report, Holmes Report and PR Week, as well as interacting with social media influencers. By doing this, they're making themselves aware of any negative sentiment and increasing their ability to respond quickly.

- **Getting placement in national news outlets is great, but b2b PR is about reaching the biggest quality audience possible.**

### Content is king

Creating and sharing content is a vital part of b2b PR. This gives companies the opportunity to showcase their expertise. This can be done through a company blog or a thought leadership piece placed in trade publications, for example. Having a steady stream of content is always great but the main point is to create visibility for your brand. Using Search Engine Optimization (SEO) tools like KWFinder and including strategic keywords in your content that can be picked up through basic searches, will ensure that your content gets seen by the right people.

### Expand reach through a diverse set of outlets

Getting placement in The LA Times, The Guardian, Bild or Wall Street Journal is great, but b2b PR is about trying to reach the biggest quality audience possible. It's important to try to tap into every channel that your audience engages with. Firstly, you need to understand your core audience, particularly their job title, sector, location, key challenges and motivators. When starting out, you need to know the top trade publications, websites, analyst and blogs for your audience. Who are the top influencers that speak directly to them? Which tradeshow do they go to? What about any online forums or groups? Which social media platforms do they use? You need to understand your audience inside and out in order to reach them in the most effective way. By knowing who you're trying to reach and how they like to be contacted, you'll increase your potential for impact.

### b2b PR can and MUST be measured

In order to prove the effectiveness of b2b PR activity (and ultimately increase budgets), all campaigns should be measured using a clear framework. The [AMEC Measurement Framework](#) provides a great example of how to organize your PR strategy to optimize success. PR teams should be able to show how their efforts have impacted awareness or increased advocacy. And remember to focus on outcomes not outputs. It's not about how many press releases you wrote, it's about what those press releases helped the company achieve. Has published content shown a direct correlation to increased web traffic? Was there an uptick in sales during the same time period of a campaign? Tracking and showing the direct impact of activity will build trust within the company and bring in more resources for future efforts.

### It's not a sprint, it's a marathon

When creating a b2b PR strategy and campaign, it's important to remember that while fast results are great, building great relationships that will last for years to come should be the end game. By setting realistic goals and objectives and putting them into action, you'll be better able to deliver clear messages, a steady output of content, and strategic outreach. Following these steps will ensure your b2b PR success through the creation of long-lasting business results.



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#### MEET THE LORRIES

**"READ, READ, AND READ SOME MORE! UNLESS YOU CAME OUT OF THE WOMB BREATHING B2B TECH PR, YOU WILL NEED TO DO YOUR RESEARCH AND TAKE THE TIME TO LEARN ABOUT THE INDUSTRY. THAT'S THE ONLY WAY IT WILL COME TOGETHER AND START CLICKING."**

**TANYA ROBERTS | ACCOUNT MANAGER**



# Getting into your content marketing groove

**We talked earlier about content being 'king' and for PRs starting a career in b2b marketing, understanding what content marketing is and how it works will put you in good stead.**

## **What (exactly) is content marketing?**

Broadly defined, content marketing is the creation and distribution of high-value, quality content that is informative, entertaining and valuable to prospective clients and customers. Above all in the b2b realm, this content must be useful.

Like the rest of our b2b PR strategy, it takes a variety of forms – from written content such as blogs, whitepapers and eBooks, to the likes of infographics, videos and podcasts.

Like a publisher, you can craft and distribute your story on your terms. You can share content written specifically to appeal to those you want to reach and highlight your expertise.

Effective content marketing involves consistently creating content that prospects and customers want to read and share with their peers. It's all about building trust and credibility, expanding your audience, and ultimately gently pushing prospects down a sales funnel. Yet it's not just for sales and marketing. Content marketing can help areas such as recruitment, customer relations and investor relationships as well.

- **Good content evokes emotion and provides true value to the reader.**

### **Master storytelling**

Content should be developed in a way that's compelling and authentic to your audience. It doesn't need lots of bells and whistles, it just needs to be honest, genuine and what your audience truly cares about. Most importantly it needs to be a topic that you can talk about with conviction and the utmost authority.

Remember, good content evokes emotion and provides true value to the reader. It should always be conversational and human, and never sound too sales-y, which is an area where many b2b brands fall short. What's more, too many brands and spokespeople avoid talking about failure. What you've learned from failure or what a client has discovered from a misstep can be tremendously valuable to readers. It makes you human and it's interesting to read.

In the same way, few b2b brands seek out influencers to contribute to content, even though it can be a highly effective strategy. If you want to be inspired, have a look at how b2b companies are using humor, highly useful and targeted content, and compelling visuals and imagery to create standout, clutter-busting content that engages and motivates.

### **Formats and choices**

Whether it's a highly technical how-to piece or a high-level thought leadership article, both can yield the desired result. The most important thing is to make the content format fit the subject matter and tone you're looking to achieve. It's best to mix this up within a sustained content marketing effort and, whatever your subject and format, rejoice in the power over how and when you tell your story or share your unique insights.

And remember, everyone can write but not everyone can write well. If you're going it alone – solely through internal resources – with lots of different people authoring content, that content will need to be reviewed for style, grammar and tone. While great content can deliver stellar results, mediocre content will not only fail to move the needle, it will also waste valuable resources. So make sure your content is high quality and written in the right format for your target audience/s.

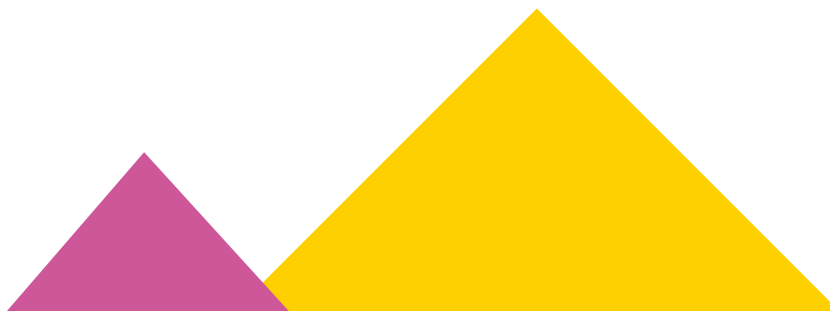
### **Complementary and integrated**

Content is used everywhere and influences every other type of marketing. In the same way, content marketing supports every other online strategy and vice versa. In fact, content marketing works best when it's integrated with other marketing efforts, becoming a part of your entire marketing strategy.

Smartly written and promoted content helps your SEO strategy. It's also needed to support whitepapers, sales collateral, social media posts, and to make sure your ads and visual messaging are in sync. Content marketing can and should serve every marketing channel.

### **Frequency matters**

When developing and implementing a content marketing strategy or campaign, you need to consider the long haul. A content marketing effort needs to be built up and sustained over time. And there's a balance to maintain when creating, promoting and distributing valuable content. Quality should trump quantity but developing a great, informative piece of content, and then disappearing only to reappear six months later with another piece, doesn't do much in the long term. So, take the time to plan a strategy before you jump in. Then be prepared to study your analytics and change course if needed.



### Search recognition

A critical part of today's digital world for b2b companies is the need to build organic search visibility. That's why SEO should always go hand-in-hand with content marketing. Optimized content that includes the right keywords can help brands rank for specific keywords and boost link acquisition.

Every new post you add to your blog is another page that Google will index. More pages don't always correlate with more search traffic, but having more quality pages will provide more opportunities to rank higher in web searches.

### Ramping up

Effective content marketing can do so much, often at a far lower cost than other methods – everything from building awareness, garnering trust and building brand recognition to driving traffic to your website, improving lead generation and helping conversions.

The vast majority of b2b companies are taking notice. The Content Marketing Institute's most recent [US benchmarks](#) and trends report indicates that 56% of b2b marketers are extremely / very committed to content marketing . According to the same study, 37% have a documented content marketing strategy, with 80% of organizations focused on building audiences through content.

### Press go!

There can be no ignoring the fact that content marketing needs to be part of your overall communications strategy. And you need to be as clear about your business goals as you are about your tone and messaging.

Where content marketing falls in the hierarchy of importance will be different for every business, but it's sure to grow with each passing year. We're in an age where consumers can simply ignore advertising and irrelevant content, which means brands must become their own storytellers and publishers to break through the noise. So if you haven't already started, now's the time to get planning and creating.



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#### MEET THE LORRIES

**"MAKE GOOGLE YOUR NEW BEST FRIEND. WHEN YOU GET STARTED IN B2B TECH PR, THERE ARE PROBABLY GOING TO BE A LOT OF PHRASES AND TERMS THAT ARE COMPLETELY FOREIGN TO YOU. THE EASIEST WAY TO GET UP TO SPEED IS TO START READING UP ON THE INDUSTRY, WHO THE KEY PLAYERS ARE RELATIVE TO YOUR CLIENTS, AND THE BIGGEST TRENDS IN THE SPACE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE."**

**JACKIE BLUNDELL | SENIOR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE**



# Making the pitch

**So, you've got this far – you've learned the basics of b2b PR, reviewed some of the best practices for developing a strategy for your clients, and built up an understanding of content marketing. Now it's time to take these strategies and put them into play. It's time to hit the phones and get some stories placed with one of the most important audiences of all – the media.**

Pitching over the phone presents a challenge for even the most seasoned PR pros. The prospect of an unfriendly voice on the other end of the line can be daunting, but it's a facet of the job that can't be ignored.

In some markets like Germany, phone pitching is the norm for contacting journalists and influencers. However, in the US you see far too many PRs hide behind time zone differences or geographical location as a convenient reason to send out an email media pitch instead.

The anticipation of rejection alone can create a very stressful experience for many – causing sweaty palms and shaky voices – especially when expectations aren't being met. That same anticipation can echo anxious feelings from childhood experiences, like the first time you jump into the deep end of the pool.

Nonetheless, the best way to cope with heart-stopping anticipation is to be prepared for your media pitch

Just as swimmers need to be strong enough to tread water and hold their breath for a certain amount of time, PR professionals who are phone pitching need to be prepared. Before picking up the phone, ask yourself some key questions – do you have all of the information lined up on the story you're pitching, do you know and understand your target's beat, and do you know how to succinctly communicate the worthiness of your story?

Don't let your nerves wreck your chances of landing key coverage for your clients. Check out these tips to help soothe those nervous butterflies before you pick up the phone:



### **Make sure you're prepared**

Before you even touch the phone to call a reporter, you need to make sure you know AND understand their beat and their interests. Reference a past article they've written and it will only help better prepare you for your conversation. Investigate days/times they are likely to face deadlines or be in editorial meetings and avoid them. (We use databases like Cision to help with this).

### **Don't jump in head first**

When you're ready to pick up the phone to call your reporter, don't just jump right into your media pitch. It's always polite to first introduce yourself and then to ask, "do you have a minute?" This shows the reporter that you're respectful of their time and conscious of any upcoming deadlines that they might have approaching.

### **Make your jump quick, but flawless**

Don't get caught rambling about your news or client. Make your pitch short, sweet and to the point but do so while painting a picture inside your reporter's head. For example, "I thought you'd be interested in a story about how predictive AI is helping to save millions and improve productivity for technology businesses." The shorter and more descriptive your pitch is, the more you'll grab their attention.

### **Always swim with a buddy**

Throughout your media pitch, focus on making a long-lasting connection with your reporter. It's easy to forget they are people too, so be friendly and energetic. Most journalists are open to chatting as long as they aren't facing a deadline so it's important to gain their trust. That way the relationship will be there when you have a news announcement or materials they might be interested in.

### **Wait until after you eat before you jump back in**

Lifeguards say we should wait 30 minutes after eating before going swimming again – the same goes for calling a reporter. If you call them and they don't answer, don't call again in the next 10 minutes. Wait an hour before calling them back. If they still don't answer, chances are they're on a tight deadline and unable to pick up the phone.

At the end of the day, reporters are just like you – they're people. They may be on a tight deadline and can't listen to what you have to say, but they're just trying to get their jobs done. So, if at first you don't succeed, try again. Building and maintaining these relationships with reporters is ultimately what places clients in the press.

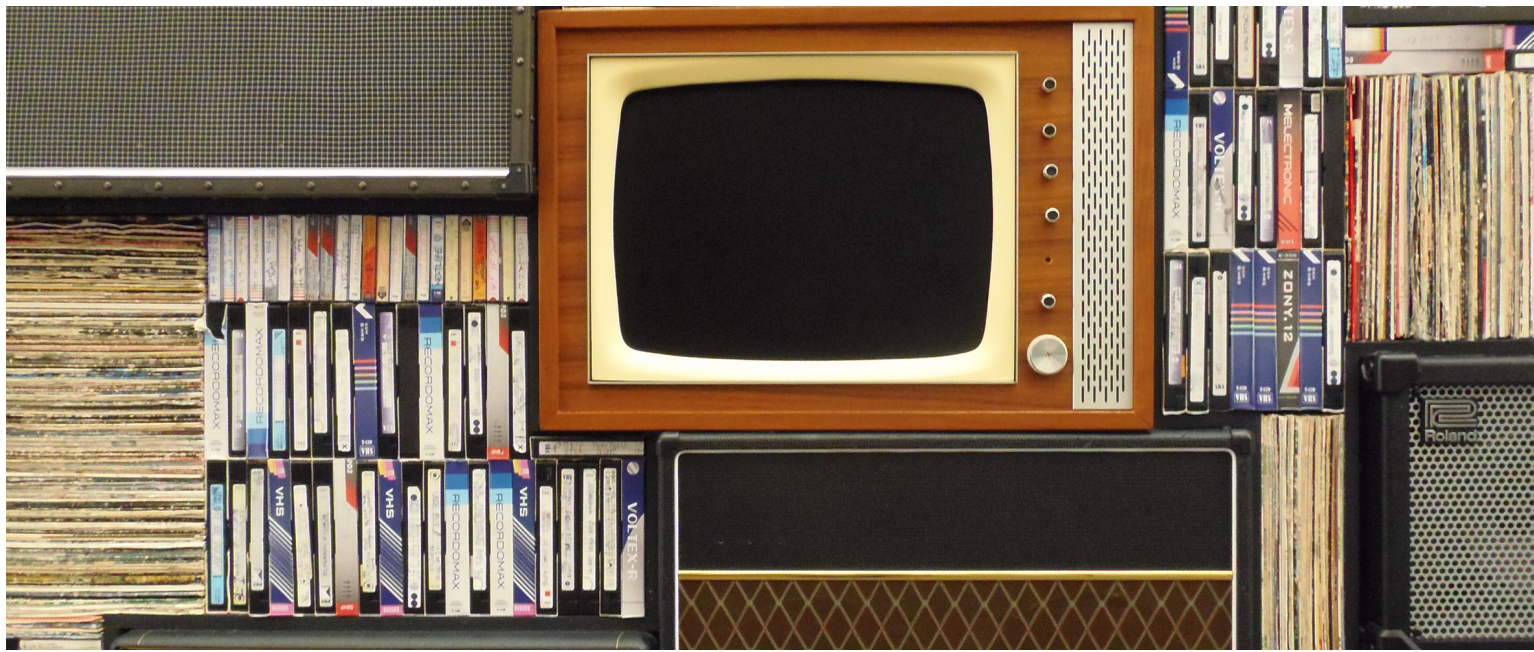


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#### **MEET THE LORRIES**

**"IT SEEMS OBVIOUS AND A BIT SILLY TO SAY, BUT HAVING THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY - WHETHER WRITTEN OR VERBAL - IS THE ABSOLUTE MOST IMPORTANT SKILL. BEING ABLE TO SIMPLIFY A COMPLEX TOPIC AND CONVEY IT IN A WAY THAT'S EASY TO UNDERSTAND FOR SOMEONE THAT DOESN'T HAVE A SUPER TECHNICAL BACKGROUND, WHILE STILL BEING COMPELLING, IS KEY TO B2B PR."**

**LAUREN JOHNSON | ACCOUNT MANAGER**



# Becoming a media relations pro

**When it comes to PR, most activities fall into one of two buckets: reactive or proactive. In other words, defensive or offensive.**

Defensive PR is exactly what it sounds like – brands responding to an unexpected, negative event that could have potential repercussions on the business. It's a reactionary approach.

On the other hand, proactive PR gives brands greater control over their messages and puts them on the offensive. It not only allows them to shape their own image and bring attention to industry issues that are of importance to their customers, but also helps to build recognition and credibility among key influencers.

Too often, though, marketers take an assembly line approach to proactive PR: write a press release, issue it on the wire, and email it to some reporters. Lather, rinse, repeat.

Not too long ago, this may have been enough for some companies to coast by. But, the PR landscape today is a dynamic one, giving brands multiple channels – and opportunities – to be proactive. So, we've put together four of our best PR hacks to consider when developing a proactive strategy:

- **PR today has grown beyond simple media relations. The most successful campaigns take an integrated approach by incorporating marketing, social and digital elements to amplify awareness.**

### Look at the bigger picture

Consider the wider business objectives and the goals you are looking to achieve for your client. Is it to become the authoritative voice in a particular industry? Is it to generate more leads? Once you've set clear objectives, carry out an assessment of your milestones for the upcoming year, such as any major product announcements or tradeshows, and develop mini-PR campaigns around them.

### Step outside your comfort zone

The media loves a controversial figure. And whether it's a media placement, a blog, a video or something else, people love opinions. If your company has a bold statement to make, don't hold back. You just need to be able to back it up with evidence to prove your point. But, also keep in mind that reporters are allergic to marketing messages. So think beyond merely promoting the company or its products and speak about bigger trends and issues that are impacting not just one specific industry, but also everyday life through ripple effects. This will make your client much more appealing to reporters as an industry expert.

### Build relationships

Engaging with media takes a lot of work, with long-term success hinging on developing and nurturing relationships with key reporters. Become a media encyclopedia by identifying a handful of top reporters, familiarizing yourself with their coverage, and engaging with them as appropriate on social. Find out if they're going to be at a tradeshow you're attending and invite them out for coffee. Most importantly, like all relationships, it's a two-way street. Reporters will be more receptive to your message if you've already proven yourself to be a credible resource without a hidden agenda.

### Go beyond media

PR today has grown beyond simple media relations. The most successful campaigns take an integrated approach by incorporating marketing, social and digital elements to amplify awareness. Don't put all your PR eggs in one basket; reach a broader audience by having a presence across multiple channels.

Remember, although there's nothing inherently wrong with taking a reactive approach to PR, it will fail to get companies the kind of attention they're seeking without combining it with an offensive strategy. Proactive PR allows companies to seize control of their own narratives, drive the conversation on industry trends, and increase visibility against competitors.



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#### MEET THE LORRIES

"KEEP TRACK OF WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE INDUSTRY - WHAT ARE THE TRENDS? WHAT'S THE LATEST TECH? WHERE ARE THE RELEVANT CONVERSATIONS HAPPENING? IF YOU HAVE AN INTEREST IN THE LATEST DISRUPTIVE MEDIA, YOU'RE KEEN ON TELLING A STORY AND YOU'RE HIGHLY ORGANIZED WITH A FLAIR FOR NETWORKING, THEN I'D RECOMMEND YOU SEEK A CAREER IN THIS SECTOR."

ALEX HUMPHRIES-FRENCH | ACCOUNT MANAGER



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