



How to Write For and Engage With Media



Smart Prosperity
Institute

How to write for, and engage with media

Annette Dubreuil

What we'll
cover

Why do media?

1. Strategy
2. Media Products & Preparation
3. Media Pitching
4. Relationship Building

Why do
media?

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO MEDIA RELATIONS GUIDE

1. help great grad **students** and post docs find you
2. granting agencies consider your media activities when making **funding** decisions
3. could attract more in-field and cross-field **collaborations**
4. influence the private sector, **policy** makers and non-governmental organizations
5. key part of research translation and **knowledge mobilization**

1. Strategy

Research Goals

Communication Goals

Media Goals

Research Goals

- What are you trying to achieve with your report?
 - Change the government's carbon pricing policy
 - Change business ESG practices
 - Educate the public about water scarcity
 - Etc.

Communications Goals

Who do you need to communicate with in order to achieve your research goals?

What part of the research do they need to know?

When is the best time to communicate it?

Where can you find your audience?



Media Goals

EXAMPLES

- Change the conversation on an issue
- Get as much coverage as possible to educate the public
- Influence a specific audience via the media
 - business audience on sustainable finance
 - water practitioners in municipalities
- Get as many of your findings into the public discourse, by writing an opinion piece
- Educate the media

How: The many tactics available to achieve your comms and media goals

DIRECT TO YOUR AUDIENCE

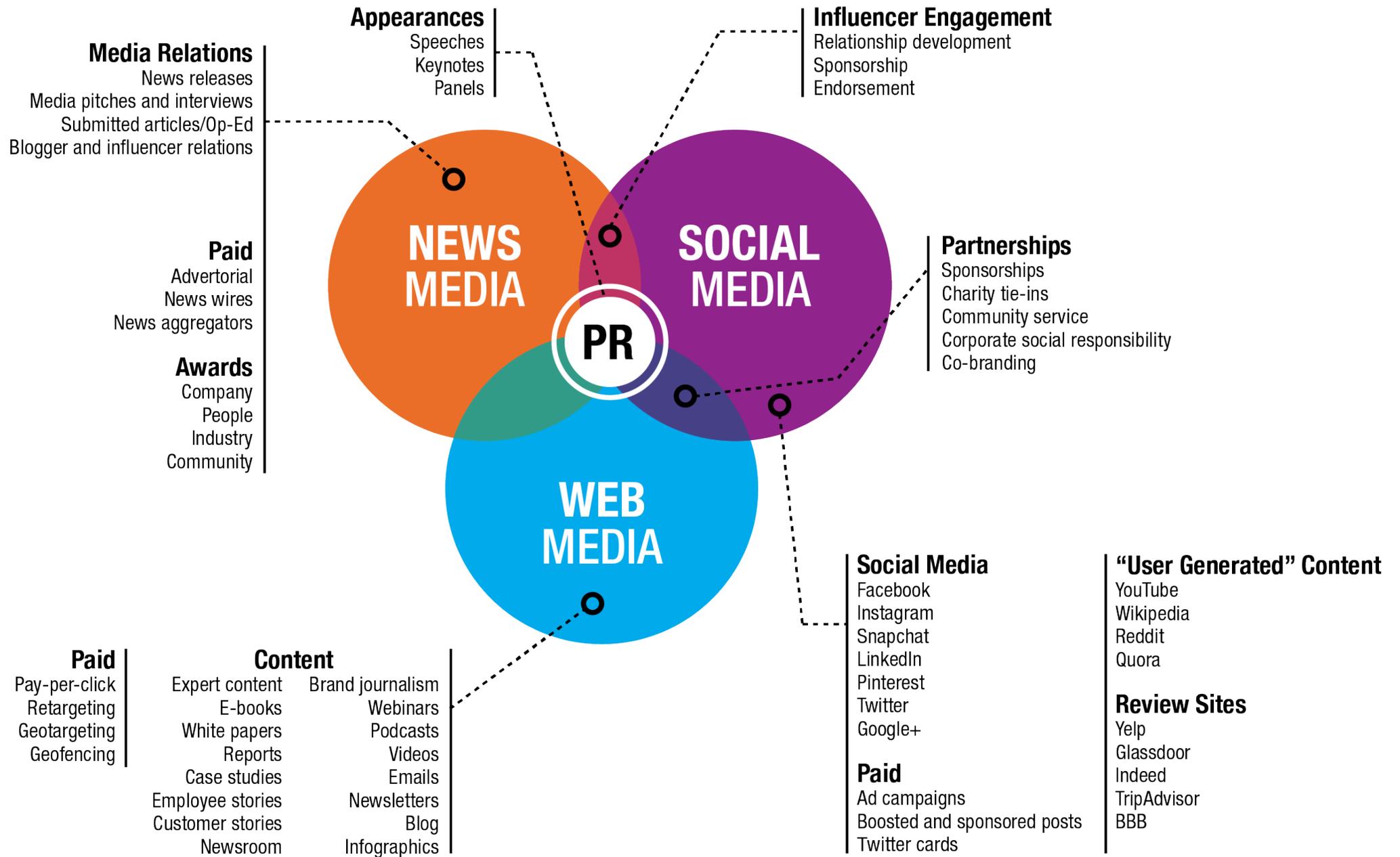
Owned & Paid Media

- Newsletter/emails
- Report
- Brief
- Blogs
- Videos
- Infographics
- Social Media
- Events
 - Presentations
 - Webinars
- Advertising (paid)

VIA THE MEDIA

Earned Media

- Generic tools: Press release, Backgrounder, Media Training, Message map
- Article/Opinion pitch
 - Opinion pieces
 - Magazine articles
- Editorial Board Meetings
 - Editorials
- Interviews with journalists:
 - Articles (print, online)
- Interviews with hosts:
 - Television
 - Radio
 - Podcasts



2. Media Products and Preparation

Key Messages

Spokespeople

Media Training

Q&A

Press release

Backgrounder

Technical Briefing

Media Lists & Outreach

Key Messages

Spokespeople

Media Training

Q&A

- Message map
 - 3-5 key messages that we want to really nail down
 - Can be developed with a media relations expert, or on your own
- Spokespeople
 - Who are credible people who can speak on this issue?
 - Researchers, senior staff, board members
- Practice or mock interviews
 - A way to iterate the messages, as they change as we use them
 - Refresh yourself before interviews. Again, can get outside help
- Q&A
 - Think of questions that will be tricky, and draft answers
 - A tool to be used during the media training

Press release

Backgrounder

Technical
Briefing

- Press release
 - Headline: eye-catching and newsworthy
 - Informative lead paragraph: key information/summary up top
 - Details: statistics, facts, and other relevant information. So what?
 - Supporting quotes
 - Media contact: who will handle requests
- Backgrounder
 - Informational document, that goes into more detail than the press release. Typically a narrative (vs. fact sheets which are lists)
 - Write it with your target audience in mind. It should be brief
- Technical briefing
 - For very complex topics, invite the media to a webinar or briefing
 - E.g. The National Press Theatre can be booked

Media Lists

- Building your lists
 - Use software like Meltwater or Cision (paid service)
 - At Universities, can access Factiva, to search for journalists that cover your topics, or ask your media relations office for help
 - They may even contact media for you
 - Google News search and Google Alerts are free ways to follow your topics in the news, and discover journalists writing about your issue
 - Search for your issue on Twitter, to see who is talking about it

3. Media Pitching

Media context
List prioritization
Lead times

Today's media context

- Media convergence
 - Few large media companies own many former independent papers, and many have been consolidated
- Shrinking budgets
 - Reporters now do a lot of multitasking: write for print and online, take photos and make videos, and do radio segments
- Shorter deadlines
 - 24/7 news cycle thanks to social media
- Metrics
 - Clicks and shares

List prioritization

Lead times

- List prioritization
 - Sort your list by media outlet
 - Rank each journalist as top choice (A list), second (B list) and rest (C list, to email on launch day for media education)
- How to contact the media
 - Directly – typically by email. A (and if needed B) in advance
 - Indirectly – get your press release on a newswire
- Lead times
 - Magazine: 2+ months
 - TV: up to 1 month
 - Opinion pieces: up to one week, depends how timely
 - Print/Online: 2-4 days
 - Radio: 1-3 days in advance

4. Relationship Building

Media Outreach
Amplify your work

Media Outreach

- Relationship building
 - Important for media to know you before you bring them a potential story, increases the chance they'll consider your pitch
 - Follow journalists on Twitter; engage with them in conversations
 - Ask to meet them for coffee/drink/meal when in their town/city
- Be helpful
 - Send them relevant information, every so often, when you're not asking them for a story. This can include very topical blogs
 - Respond to requests quickly (calls, emails)
 - If you're not the right expert, refer them to an appropriate one
 - Prepare for interviews
- Expert advisories
 - Email media when you can speak to a current news story
 - Helpful to include a blog or other plain language piece to substantiate your position and expertise
 - Can include a quote from a spokesperson (or yourself)

Amplify your work

- Share your media and research:
 - media relations office or comms team
 - share your interviews and contacts, for them to amplify on their social media
 - on your own personal social media
 - tag the reporter, news outlet
 - partners and colleagues
 - via email with an amplification guide



Thanks!



info@smartprosperity.ca

institute.smartprosperity.ca

[@SP_Inst](https://twitter.com/SP_Inst)



Smart Prosperity
Institute