

Own Your Own PR

How to Tell Your Story, Get Your
Message in the Media & Create a Buzz
Around Your Business,
Without Breaking the Bank

Ten Top Tools of the Trade - Your Free Guide

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About the Author



I have been writing professionally and working in the media for more than 20 years. I've worked full-time for Reuters and Bloomberg, as a foreign correspondent in Mexico and Brazil and as a political and general news reporter based in the Houses of Parliament. During my years as a news journalist, I've covered elections, economics, technology, tsunamis, earthquakes and terrorist attacks. I've also accompanied two of our prime ministers on foreign trips.

Since turning freelance in 2008, I've published stories in Red, Psychologies, The Guardian, The Daily Mail, The Sunday Times, Time, Easy Living and The Huffington Post on topics ranging from women and wellbeing to social entrepreneurship. I've been blogging since 2010 and have appeared on Newsnight, BBC Radio 4, Sky News and ITV breakfast television. I've trained journalists around the world for the Thomson Reuters Foundation, lectured on the Masters in Multimedia Journalism at Bournemouth University, contributed regularly to Mind Tools and written content for companies including Fitness First and The Clark Group.

The Guardian logo in blue lowercase letters.The Sunday Times logo featuring a crown icon above the text 'THE SUNDAY TIMES'.Thomson Reuters logo featuring a circular orange dot pattern above the text 'THOMSON REUTERS'.The word 'Red' in white cursive script on a red square background.The word 'PSYCHOLOGIES' in red uppercase letters with 'MAGAZINE' in smaller red letters below it.The words 'HUFF POST UK' in white uppercase letters on a dark green square background.The word 'TIME' in white uppercase letters on a red square background.The words 'Daily Mail' in black serif font with a crown icon above the 'i' in 'Mail'.The words 'DAILY ECHO' in blue uppercase letters.The words 'Easy Living' in pink and purple lowercase letters.The word 'Bloomberg' in black uppercase letters with 'NEWS' in smaller black letters below it.The words 'BBC newsnight' in white lowercase letters on a dark background with vertical light streaks.The 'FF' logo in white on a red square background with 'Fitness First' in white lowercase letters below it.The 'Mind Tools' logo featuring a head icon with colorful dots above the text 'Mind Tools' and 'Essential skills for an excellent career' below it.The 'crown media' logo featuring a crown icon above the text 'crown media' and 'simulation • training • consultancy' below it.The words 'We Are The City' in red lowercase letters with a red high-heeled shoe icon to the right.

Over the years, I have learned what makes news, how to write stories that connect with people on a deep, emotional level and how to communicate with editors and journalists so a story gets published. I now use my journalism and storytelling skills, my industry experience, my credibility and my contacts to help individuals, entrepreneurs, startups and established companies craft a compelling, newsworthy story about themselves or their business and get that story into the media and out into the world.

Journalists and editors are crying out for great content. You just need to know how to give them what they need - how to craft a compelling story, how to time it right and how to pitch it in a way that will get you noticed.

It's not simple, but it's easier than it looks. I've put together these 10 top tips to help you get started.

Why Own Your Own PR?



But first, you may be wondering why you should worry about getting media coverage for your business or brand, particularly since your 'To Do' list is already as long as your arm.

Well, I know from experience that getting our name or our business in newspapers, magazines, online publications, on the radio, or on TV can boost credibility, extend our market reach, attract new customers or clients and open doors, no matter what field you're in. Plus, if our story goes online, we can multiply its impact by sharing the link.

To give you an example from a few years ago, a short comment piece I wrote for The Guardian's 'Comment is Free' section online led to an article in The Guardian newspaper the next day, a piece in The Sunday Times, an interview on Newsnight and five offers from agents who wanted to take on my book. Earlier this year, a Radio 4 journalist contacted me for an interview after finding a story I wrote in The Daily Mail and the Mail Online (the most visited English-language newspaper in the world) a few years back. So media coverage can have a powerful and ongoing impact, and it's much more cost effective and more engaging than paid advertising.

Even if you decide to work with a PR agent, knowing the basics in this guide will help you ensure you're getting value for money and will enable you to play an active role in getting your name out there.

With that in mind, let's get started.

Own Your Own PR - Your First 10 Steps

1. Craft a Compelling Story



We all love a good story. We love to read about adventures, about heroes and heroines, about the underdog, about heartache and struggle and about victory against the odds. We like to hear about people's battles – both internal and external. We like characters with whom we can laugh and cry, with whom we can identify and to whom we can relate. We like to hear stories of remarkable achievements, stories of passion and of transformation. Why should it be any different in business?

Your audience wants to know the story behind your business, particularly if it's gripping, remarkable, transformational, passion-led or has an emotional pull. Tell me something that pulls on my heartstrings, inspires me or makes me laugh. Tell me something that I can relate to, identify with and that makes me want to connect with you on a deep level. Even if you don't think your story is headline news, the bottom line is that people buy from people. They buy from people they can relate to and from people they trust.

If you want to get your message across to a wide audience and convince people to do business with you, you have to craft a powerful, compelling story. Your story is your greatest asset.

2. Inject Some Heart & Soul



Whether you're writing website content, blogs, press releases, stories for the media or other marketing materials, don't forget to inject your content with some heart and soul.

You can have a beautifully designed website advertising a great product or service but you could be missing a trick - you may not be connecting with your audience on an emotional level.

This comes back to your story - Step 1 - but there are other ways you can add some heart and soul to your content. Who's on your team? What do they love doing? What's quirky about them? What's the office dog called? Did you fail first and what did you learn?

To find out if you're hitting the mark, get some feedback. Ask the people who know you and who know your passion for your business whether your content and marketing materials reflect who you are. How do they feel when they read your story? Do they warm to you? Do they smile? Do you come across as authentic?

I've seen too many web pages that do a reasonable job of telling me the basics but that lack personality and have no heart or soul.

3. Identify Target Media



So you want to get your story into newspapers or magazines but you don't know where to start. The best place to begin is in your local WH Smiths or similar large newsagents.

Set aside a good portion of time to peruse the shelves. Pull down some magazines and take a look at the kind of stories they cover - what sections do they have; do they have regular features?

Look beyond the big names. It might be difficult to get published in The Guardian, The Mirror or Marie Claire at the outset but there are plenty of trade magazines and newspapers representing different sectors of the economy. WH Smith online has a great database of trade publications. Check out this link. These publications are always looking for good, relevant content.

Make sure you spend some time getting familiar with the magazine or newspaper you want to pitch to. Journalists like receiving pitches from people who've done their homework, who know which section their story is suitable for. When you send in your pitch, state clearly whether it's for the section on food, innovative ideas, life stories or somewhere else.

4. Tailor Your Story To Fit Your Audience



Decide who you're writing for. If you're writing content for your own website, this needs to reflect your brand's message and values. It also needs to appeal to the widest audience possible. This means using plain, simple and punchy language and avoiding jargon. When I worked for Reuters, we often had to convert complex ideas into language everybody could understand. I always asked myself if my Mum would understand what I was writing about. Don't leave your audience guessing what you're trying to say – they'll soon switch off or switch over.

If you're looking for media coverage, make sure you tailor your language to your target newspaper or magazine. For example, you can pitch the same story to HR magazine, to The Daily Mail and to The Guardian, but your approach needs to be different. For HR magazine, you need to play it straight, explain the benefits of your idea using the kind of language that HR professionals use (but stay clear of jargon!). For the Mail, you need to find a catchy, popular way to approach your story - can you link it to a celebrity, a TV show or a household brand name? Are you saying something controversial? Think of Mail readers and tailor your pitch to them. For the Guardian, you need something in between.

5. Find a Story Hook



Look for a 'hook' or 'peg' - something to hang your story on.

For example, if you make children's toys, think about pitching something in the run up to Christmas. If you're a coach working in the wellbeing arena, you could link your story to National Mental Health Week. There are anniversaries, national days and celebrations for so many topics these days. Find one that fits your story.

Remember to contact journalists well in advance. Magazines in particular plan several months ahead and most newspapers and broadcast media like to line up their Christmas and New Year stories weeks before. You can find out how your medium of choice schedules its content by giving them a call. Don't be shy! Remember, they need you just as much as you need them. You just need to get the story right.

Also, look out for opportunities to jump on news stories that are already out there or obvious trends. We call this 'newsjacking'. Maybe a celebrity has hit the headlines because of a bout of anxiety and you've designed a mindfulness app. Be creative. Think of ways to slot your story into the news agenda.

6. Think Outside Your Business Box



If you want to get your name in the media and get known, don't limit yourself to stories directly related to your product, service or business. Think creatively. Think outside the box.

For example, you run a business with your brother or your best friend from childhood. What makes it work is the fact you have completely different personalities. The yin and yang is the secret to your success. So why not pitch a more personal story based on how the two of you interact?

Perhaps you started your business after your husband left you with two young kids. It was a means of survival. Make or break. Tabloid newspapers and women's magazines love this kind of story.

Maybe you're a young female working in tech or an entrepreneur who's also a single dad, juggling work and family life. What makes you different? How do you stand out? What's your struggle?

Even if the article isn't about your business, you'll still get namechecked. And you never know where your next client, customer or investor is coming from.

7. Connect with Journalists



So you want to connect with journalists but you're not sure where to find their contact details. Twitter is a great place to start - journalists love to hang out there. You can find out the name of the features editor of the magazine you want to target or identify who edits the education section of your chosen newspaper by putting some simple search terms into Twitter. Next, keep an eye on their feeds. What are they tweeting about? Are they looking for stories on any particular topics? Would your topic fit? Also, check out [#JournoRequest](#) on Twitter. Journalists tweet about the case studies they're looking for under this hashtag. For example, I've just spotted 'Looking for someone who suffers from chronic back pain to appear on breakfast TV tomorrow'. This goes back to Step 5 - Think Outside Your Business Box. You might not be on the breakfast sofa talking about your business, but your name and your company will get a mention as you talk about your lower back pain. Be quick when responding to these requests!

You could always try the old-fashioned way too. Newspapers and magazines have mastheads, generally on the first or second page, listing the names and numbers of department heads. Ring up your local newspaper editor, sub-editor or radio show producer and ask if you can have a quick coffee with them. Building relationships with journalists is the best way forward and face-to-face is great.

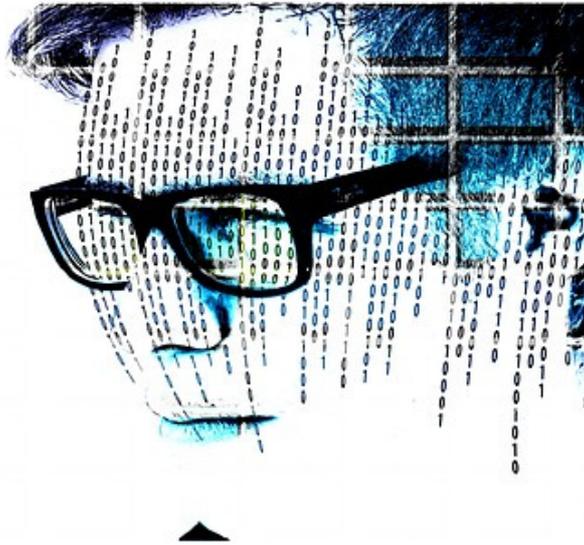
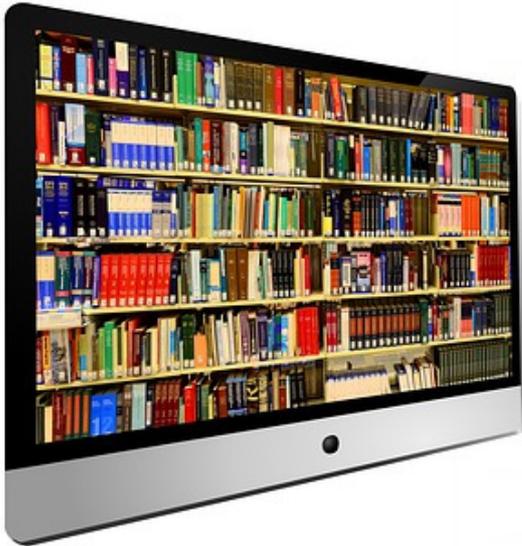
8. Blog Wherever You Can



Blogging is a fantastic way to build an audience, establish yourself as an expert in your field and get your message out there. Blogging helped me establish myself very quickly as a women's lifestyle and wellbeing writer after many years spent reporting on global news and politics for Reuters. Regular blogging gave me a body of work I could show to editors and it demonstrated my expertise in my field. My blog opened doors at Psychologies and Red, got me an article in the Daily Mail, an interview on Newsnight, blogs on The Huffington Post and We Are The City and it's now the basis of my book.

I'm pretty sure you're already blogging on your own site, so now it's time to seek out opportunities to write guest blogs. Track down people on Twitter and Facebook who are talking about your area of interest. Do they have a blog and if so, can you write a guest post for it? There are plenty of places you can blog for free - everybody is looking for content. The Huffington Post accepts blog copy from business owners and individuals and there are plenty of other opportunities out there. Blog posts can be short - 300-400 words can be enough. Make sure you include images and links. Vlogging (video blogging) is a great way to build an audience too. Again, keep your videos short to begin with. Most of all, be consistent.

9. Get Known as an Expert



Becoming an expert in your field is an excellent way to boost traffic to your website and build your customer or client base. The goal is to become the go-to person on your topic. If you're a coach who helps mums get back to work after having families, you want your local radio station or, better still, Woman's Hour to ring you up when they're doing a feature on new mothers returning to the office.

You can start small by speaking on panels or running workshops locally. If you're an entrepreneur, seek out start-up events and ask if you can present for 10 minutes. Go to networking breakfasts and evening meetups. You could also record your own podcasts or YouTube videos and build up a following that way.

Next, keep abreast of the media. Find out what's coming up on your local radio show that week, or on Jeremy Vine or Woman's Hour. If it's relevant to your topic, put yourself forward as an interviewee or ring up on spec. I'm not saying this is easy, but it's worth a shot. Once you've been interviewed a few times, you'll be in journalists' databases. And if you've had a few articles published in the media, journalists will be able to find you. Make sure you've got your contact details displayed clearly on all your social media channels and websites.

10. Be Persistent & Don't Lose Heart



When it comes to getting great PR, think of it as more of a marathon than a sprint. We'd all love to become an overnight sensation but that doesn't always happen. Think about the slow build, about speaking on panels, blogging as a guest on a better known site, writing for free for The Huffington Post and being interviewed on your local radio station. Make sure you promote everything you do via all your social media channels and showcase it on your website.

It's a good idea to get used to rejection and to being ignored. Journalists are busy people and they won't always get back to you. But remember, they do need content and if you can make it easy for them by sending them a succinct, eye-catching email pitch outlining a fantastic story that's relevant to their audience, they may well jump on your idea. If you don't hear back, though, don't be scared to pick up the phone. What have you got to lose? A few times, I've thought my idea had been rejected when actually my email had arrived on a particularly busy day and went unnoticed. So make the call. At least you'll know if they want your story or not, and if they don't, you can move on and send it to someone else rather than wait around.

So when it comes to owning your own PR, be confident, consistent and persistent.

Where Do I Go From Here?



So there you have my 10 top tips for getting started on the journey towards getting great media coverage and owning your own PR. Do share this guide with anyone you think might benefit and if you have any feedback or you'd like to share any success stories, write to: katherine@katherinebaldwin.com or [@KBJournoPR](https://www.instagram.com/KBJournoPR).

Free Call

I've offered some general tips in this guide but if you'd like some guidance specific to you or your business, do take advantage of my free 30-minute call offer. You can book a time slot via my website: www.kbjournopr.com or drop me an email on katherine@katherinebaldwin.com.

Stay in Touch

I regularly run small group workshops in Bournemouth and London and give talks on storytelling and PR, some for free, so sign up to my mailing list on my website and I'll let you know what's coming up.

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That's all for now.

Thanks for reading.
Now over to you!

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reading all about you in the
press!

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