

How To Get Good Press Coverage

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But first...

- I'm focused here mainly on companies that don't have professional marcom staff or PR agencies
- These concepts are generic to high-tech publications, not just ours -- but of course, each is different
- But these principles really do apply to everyone
- Feel free to talk to me afterwards about your specific situation
- And... in the spirit of code reuse, you may have seen *some* of these slides before

Unless you're the Foundation...

- It can't just be about Eclipse
 - “Look, it's Callisto!” “Look, here's a new plug-in!” “Look, here's a new project!” doesn't cut it any more in most cases
 - With the exception of the Eclipse-specific media, or someone doing an Eclipse story, your story has to be bigger than Eclipse
- And watch the EclipseBabble!
 - Don't refer to GEF or TPTP or Callisto
 - Eclipse has evolved its own jargon. Do not expect the reporter to be familiar with it, or interested in it

Know your reporters

- You should know the top 10 publications in your field
 - Know who their editors and regular reporters/freelancers are
 - Know what that publication publishes, and what they don't
 - Understand their biases and personality quirks
 - Know which reporters cover your beat regularly
 - Know when they've most recently covered you
 - Know the general tone of the writer's coverage

Who writes about you?

- Become friendly and known to key reporters
 - Have you set up press briefings or casual coffees at the most recent conference you attended?
 - EclipseCon?
 - EclipseWorld?
 - JavaOne
 - Even this member meeting?
- Just talk -- get to know the reporter
 - Look for opportunities to build a personal/professional relationship

Pitching a story

- As mentioned, know your key publications
- Know what each key publication does
 - Do they cover new products? Product upgrades?
 - Do they do product reviews? Case studies? Customer wins?
 - Do they look for 3rd-party commentary, or technical tips?
 - Learn what they consider important, or not important
- Pitch the publication directly
 - Send personalized pitches to the right editors
 - Don't put announcements on wire services
 - Don't assume that blasting a press release to a list is enough

Following up after the pitch

- Some editors like follow-ups, some don't
 - Think of reporters as “customers” – each is different
 - Like customers, they don't want to be “sold”
 - Remember, they don't owe you a story or coverage -- writing about YOU isn't their job
- Reporters are busy
 - And have more stories than they can publish
 - Sometimes a good idea simply doesn't get taken up due to lack of bandwidth or lack of paper
 - Citing other pubs' coverage hurts, not helps
- Don't hold a grudge; you can't win 'em all
 - Not every story will get covered. That's reality!

Be prepared!

- After pitching, get ready for return volley!
 - Do you have the new product features list ready?
 - Do you have screen shots? Analyst quotes? Customer names?
 - Can you support a product review on Day 1?
 - Can you deliver the CEO? CTO? Other expert?
- The reporter has a limited attention span
 - With some publications, there's a daily publication cycle
 - If they can't get it written and filed in the next hour, it's toast
- Reporters have long memories
 - If you pitch stories but can't follow through, that'll be recalled next time you pitch a story

“There’s a reporter on line 2”

- Why is the reporter calling you?
 - News about you that you initiated/pitched
 - News about you that you *didn't* initiate
 - News about someone related to you, that you may/may not know about
 - Broader “industry” story for which you may add insight or color

When the reporter calls...

- Do your best to make yourself available
 - If the story is about you, it looks bad if you delay
 - And frankly, you may only have an “opportunity” of a few hours
 - If the call is based on your press release, ensure that the “contact” will be available within a few hours
 - If the story isn’t about you, either take the call or reschedule for later that day
- Depending on the reporter’s time and style, you may not get a second chance
 - This may include future calls on future stories, by the way

Prepare follow-up materials

- Everyone who talks to the press should have:
 - Digital photos of executives and other spokespeople, in high-res (megapixel) TIFF/JPEG and Web-sized GIF formats
 - Native (unaltered and lossless) screen shots of your principal products in compressed TIFF or BMP format
 - High-res and Web-sized box shots of your product packaging
 - Your logo in high-res TIFF, Web GIF and EPS formats
 - A “press kit” with company backgrounder and product briefs on the Web
 - Price lists, customer references, analyst references
- Put these on your intranet and on the Web

Taking the call

- You have to drive the conversation...
 - ...while making the reporter think that he/she is driving it!
- The reporter has a job to do, and story to write...
 - But you have a message to communicate. It's all about *you*
- Lead off by asking what the story's about
 - Ask how much time the reporter would like, so you can budget
- Start with the one-minute about your company
 - Don't ask if it's okay, just do it
 - Make sure it's not too long or too preachy

Answering questions

- Reporters want information *and* sound bites
 - Make sure the reporter understands what you're saying
 - Try not to be condescending – or overwhelming
 - Some reporters are shy and won't ask for explanations
- Be definite, not wishy-washy
 - Don't be pulled into saying things you're not comfortable with
 - Respond to gossip or leading questions with, "I don't really have an opinion about that"
 - Always answer with something. Never say "no comment"
 - Don't violate your NDAs!

Features/benefits

- The Volvo example:
 - Feature: Internal roll-bars and door stiffeners
 - Benefit: Withstands greater impact than cars without these features
 - Consequence: Moms and their kids will have a better chance of walking away from being hit broadside by a bus when picking them up from school
- Always put some real-world benefit behind the techno-babble!!!

More on answering

- Be definite and concrete
 - Don't just say "Eclipse saves money." Tell the story about the customer who saved \$100,000 in dev costs and cut time by two months by using your add-in.
 - Anecdotes are powerful. Named customers are powerful.
 - Vague statements are worthless to the reporter and his/her story
 - "The plural of anecdote is NOT data."
- Substantiate any claims you make
 - Market-size figures or growth estimates should be sourced
 - Independent studies are better than your own numbers -- which are worthless
 - Bonus points if you can provide those studies to the reporter, shame if you can't

Making a good impression

- Try to sound like a great source
 - Be intelligent, well-spoken, polite
 - Sound like a visionary expert, rather than a company executive
 - Listen, ask for the reporter's feedback
 - You want to be remembered as a great source for the future
- Make sure your answers answer the questions
 - Make your points, get out your message, of course
 - But answer those darned questions, and don't try to "spin"
- Have PowerPoint or WebEx prepared but
 - Don't force it on a reluctant reporter. It shouldn't be a crutch

Closing the interview

- Ask, “Did you get everything you need?”
 - Review the list of follow-up items that you promised
 - Remind the reporter that you’re available if he/she has more questions.
 - Give the reporter your direct line or e-mail address
 - Ask if the reporter knows when the story’s coming out
 - Thank the reporter for his/her time and attention
- Be respectful of the time constraints
 - If it’s a 30-minute call, don’t use the first 29 running through PowerPoint!!

Following up

- Do not wait for the reporter to remind you
 - Send it out NOW. The reporter should have it within an hour
 - Be careful about delegating – make sure follow-up happens
- Send along a link to the on-line media resources
 - Or offer, in e-mail, to send out the photos, press kit, etc.
- It is okay to thank the reporter again via e-mail
 - Do NOT ask to review the story or quotes
 - Do NOT praise the reporter for “asking good questions”
 - Do NOT volunteer additional detail on interview questions

What about reviews?

- Not all publications do them
- And they may not go the way you want
- But reviews are often the best way to get product coverage
 - “Worth their weight in gold”
- Time doesn’t permit me to go into them, but...
- If you have key publications that do reviews,
 - Talk to the reviews editor. It’s generally not the same person as their reporters/news staff
 - Be super-cooperative -- but don’t be pushy
 - Feel free to ask me offline about reviews

What about ads?

- With reputable publications, such as SD Times, editorial coverage is not tied to advertising
 - Editors won't write stories to thank advertisers
 - Editors won't write stories to attract advertisers
- Attempting to tie advertising to editorial will sour your relationship with the publication's editors and reporters
- Convince reporters to cover your company and its news due to your relevance, not your ad budget
 - Editors aggressively eschew any appearance that their journalistic ethics have been compromised

Some final do's

- Do remember your relationship with the reporter
- Do listen carefully to the entire question
- Do look at the reporter's eyes if you're in person
- Do be polite and respectful
- Do tell the truth at all time
- Do make sure you're being understood
- Do back up vague claims with examples
- Do watch your use of Eclipse jargon!
- Do make sure to make your four key points
- Do correct mistakes on the spot
- Do be careful about answering loaded questions
- Do be sure to follow up immediately

Some final don'ts

- Don't fake an answer
- Don't say "no comment"
- Don't invoke your business relationship with the publication
- Don't ever go off the record.
- Don't use the phrase "editorial opportunity"
- Don't speak to fill the silence
- Don't lose your cool or get frustrated with the reporter
- Don't ask to review or edit the story
- Don't expect that every story will be covered
- Don't "dis" your competitors anyone
- Don't answer hypothetical or leading questions
- Don't talk for more than a minute to answer a question

Thank you

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