GETTING THE MEDIA’S ATTENTION
BUILD YOUR CONTACT LIST

GETTING STARTED

The first thing to do is identify the type of journalist who is most likely to cover your story and get their contact details. Building a really good list may take to or three days of solid research. But it’s worth it.

For each journalist you contact the key thing to think about is who is their audience, and will that audience be interested in what you have to say?

Taking the example of the paint manufacturer featured in our training video some obvious journalists for him to contact would be:

- Interior design bloggers, magazines writers and TV show producers
- The writers of the Home & Garden sections of Sunday broadsheet newspapers
- Local journalists that cover his home town (possibly looking for a 'local boy made good' story)
- Science & Technology bloggers and magazine writers; radio show and TV show producers that cover inventors.
GET CONTACT DETAILS

Once you have a list of publications/broadcasters to target, scour their websites, and the publications themselves for any names and contacts you can find. In the case of smaller publications or blogs the contact details are often easily discoverable.

If you can’t find any contact details or contacts call the publication or broadcaster and ask to be put through to a department who covers your niche (in newspapers these are called desks – e.g. ‘the culture desk’). When you get connected don’t pitch your story – just ask for the name and contact details of the journalist who is most likely to cover your area of interest.

If you have names of useful contacts but not email addresses try inputting the internet address (a.k.a. URL – e.g. www.bbc.co.uk) of their organisation into the website email-format.com. The results will give you the way that your target organisation constructs their employees’ email addresses. For example if you are told that the BBC has an email format of firstname.surname@bbc.co.uk and you’re looking for a journalist called joe bloggs, it’s a pretty good chance that his email address will be joe.bloggs@bbc.co.uk.
USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN YOUR CONTACT SEARCH

It’s well worth searching for a journalist that you know will be interested in your subject on www.linkedin.com. If you haven’t got an account it’s free to set up. On the right-hand-side of the journalist’s profile page will be two lists of more profiles. One is called ‘people similar to x’ and the other is called ‘people also viewed…’. Both lists are likely to contain journalists that cover the same topics as the original one you searched for, and you may not have got contact details for already.

![A LinkedIn page marked with areas to find potential contacts](image)
Alternatively people curate lists of journalists who cover a certain niche on twitter (www.twitter.com – again you’ll need a free account to search). Do a google or twitter search for a key journalist’s twitter profile page. Once you’re there you’ll see some statistics on their numbers of tweets and followers. To the right of those is a ‘More’ option. Clicking that will reveal a ‘lists’ option. Hitting that will take you to the lists of people that the journalist has added themselves to, but also (and perhaps more usefully) the lists that other people have added them to. Look for the lists that are most appropriate for you and the chances are it will be filled with names and contact details of useful media professionals.

A twitter page showing the lists the user is featured in, plus the ‘more’ link you need to click to find the lists
CREATING A MAILING LIST

Once you have your list of media contacts collate them all into a list on your computer and keep notes as to whether you manage to capture each contact’s interest. That way you’ll know which are the journalists who are interested in you (and therefore worth spending time on cultivating a relationship with) and which aren’t. Your list will change and grow with time as the quality of your contacts improve.

You may find it useful to import your list into an online email service like mailchimp (www.mailchimp.com). These websites allow you create attractive looking group emails and give you details on who has opened them. You can format your press releases into these emails and send them to your contact list with one click.

However be warned that bulk emails often get caught by email spam filters, so it’s better to go for individual emails tailored to the media organisation you are trying to reach, at least at first. When you’re more established group emails will be more successful.
GETTING NOTICED

Once you have your list it’s time to write your press release. Watch part 1 of the video if you need a reminder of how to do this. But the essentials are keep it short, colourful and relevant to the audience of the media outlet you’re sending it to.

You would have heard journalists refer to their articles, or broadcast news pieces as ‘stories’. That’s because journalists like to present their subject as a story – a drama with a cast of characters, and a plot unfolding right before your very eyes. Every journalist knows the story is the oldest and still the best way of communicating. So the more you can turn what you want the media to pay attention to into a story, the more chance you have of getting the media’s attention.

KEEP IT UNUSUAL AND USE HUMAN INTEREST

Is there anything unusual about your story? Perhaps it’s the biggest, first, smallest, or last example of something in the world. Or is there a human-interest angle? Maybe two people fell in love (or divorced!) or went from rags to riches whilst creating a business. Perhaps a celebrity endorsed your product, or your business accidentally solved a crime. Whatever it is, adding some kind of original angle to your story will go a long way to helping it get noticed.

USE TOPICALITY TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

You may have noticed that when a good story breaks the media often jump on the bandwagon and all get involved until the next story comes along. Classic examples are really big events like the Olympics or a Royal Wedding, a big tragedy like a plane crash, or a big scandal like a married celebrity cheating on their partner. Because everyone’s talking about the same thing the media are always looking for new
angles on big stories to make them stand out. So if you can offer a fresh angle on a big current story get a press release out as soon as possible, mentioning the current event and how your company, cause or you relate to it.

For example, in the case of the paint manufacturer featured in the video course:

• for a cheating celebrity story he could announce some research that certain wall colours are more likely to keep couples together
• for the Olympics he could release a new Gold, Silver and Bronze paint collection
• for the Royal Wedding he could suggest the best colour for the nursery of the couple’s first baby.

If it’s a big upcoming scheduled event make sure you get your press release distributed early – at least six weeks in advance of the event, especially in the case of magazines.

FOLLOW UP

Don’t be disheartened if you don’t get much response. Relationships with media outlets are like any other relationships - the best ones take time to grow. So don’t be scared to follow up with calls and further emails. Keeping yourself in the attention of journalists is important if your story is going to get covered.
MEDIA RELATIONSHIPS

It’s only natural for there to be a certain amount of wariness between the public and journalists. The objectives and perspectives of the two are different - and often conflicting. Nevertheless, both can benefit from the development of a healthy, professional relationship.

The keys to developing good relationships with the media are accessibility, co-operation, credibility and, where possible, transparency. The media will trust and believe you if they can obtain useful and accurate information from you, It’s valuable for you to be known as a helpful, knowledgeable news source who gives as much information as possible without jeopardising their interests.

When establishing relationships with reporters and other media professionals, remember that the journalist should never be considered as your friend. But neither are they your foe either. Establishing a friendly relationship is certainly desirable. A congratulatory tweet or email to a key journalist after they’ve published a good story will go a long way to keeping you in their minds. But don’t assume that a friendly reporter will emphasise your perspective in the story just because you have a good relationship.

Journalists are never off-duty. So you should never be off-guard with them, even in casual remarks when socialising. Don't say anything you wouldn't want to read in the newspaper or hear on air.

Journalists don't like you to tell them how to do their jobs. Don't ask to see a story before it is printed or aired. However, it's a good idea to offer to review technical or otherwise complex material for accuracy before publication or airing, and it is always appropriate to tell a reporter to feel free to call you back if clarification or additional information is needed.
SO REMEMBER…

- Make yourself accessible.
- Show professional respect.
- Avoid saying anything you wouldn't want printed or aired.
- Offer to review materials before publication, particularly if it's of a technical/complex nature.
- Avoid telling journalists how to do their jobs.
Deal with the Media is quite simply the best training and support available for those who are serious about harnessing the power of the media to attract and leverage massive publicity. It’s a website packed with information to turn you into an effective media performer, able to get your message out to a massive audience and get the edge on your competition. Think of it as your personal media consultant.

The site is perfect for:

• Entrepreneurs and business owners who don’t have a big marketing budget but could use extra publicity from TV, Radio, Newspapers & Blogs.
• Experts looking to get their research/message to a wider audience
• People who are going to face the media on a regular basis such as local politicians and campaigners
• Anyone who wants to turn negative publicity into positive publicity

At the heart of the site is an e-learning course hosted by one of the UK’s most respected journalists, Sir Trevor McDonald which can be bought for a one-off fee. But membership also unlocks a host of extra features allowing you access to bespoke advice from our experts.

To arrange a call to discuss the benefits of the site email dwtm@first-takeuk.com or visit dealwiththemedia.com