



# WHERE'S WALDO?

## Three Ways to Find Your Voice in a Cluttered News Landscape

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Your company wants to announce a new product, talk about a new hire, gain attention for a speaking event or be featured for a recent acquisition. The news hits the wire, but the silence is deafening. What went wrong? The reality is that the PR landscape has changed and gaining the attention of media in a cluttered news landscape can be as difficult as finding Waldo in a sea of red-striped shirts.

Media outlets continue to evolve into a 24-hour/day news cycle. This development has increased the workload for staff reporters, it has increased the amount of articles written by “contributors” and it has made it even more important to understand the reporter’s area of coverage in order to gain media attention and cut through the competition. These three points should serve as a starting place to find your voice.

### 1. Create Your Own Editorial Calendar

In the past when print was king, an editorial calendar served as a yearly guideline for what the media would be discussing. It was a tool to compare outlet topics with an organization’s areas of expertise. Today, many editorial calendars are more of a loose guideline. As online continues to outstrip print, editorial calendars are on the fast-track to extinction – taking with them a purpose-filled reason for outreach to the media. It takes planning to have an editorial calendar, and in an immediate news cycle, that has become a luxury rather than a rule. The best way to get over this hurdle is twofold. First, be able and willing to talk about news that happens on-the-fly, and second, create your own strategic editorial calendar.

Determine the outlets that you are targeting – this will help in deciphering who you are looking to reach – but don’t be too narrow. After all, the editorial calendar topics should focus as much on a niche audience as on the CEO or CTO within a general business environment. The larger your audience, the more likely your pitch will draw attention from the media. Create a new topic for each month that is fitting with the outlet and based on the organization’s areas of expertise or what will be happening throughout the year. Then, generate a pitch for each topic that will go to your targeted list of media through the months. Coming up with an internal editorial calendar will help in keeping outreach aligned with the company’s strategic goals. Though not all topics will get bites – which is normal – having a continual flow of ideas to a reporter is necessary. As the need for content has increased, these editorial calendar topics will serve as a way to break the ice when reaching out for the first time.

### 2. Identify What Differentiates Your Thought Leaders

Securing the attention of editors and writers has become increasingly difficult as publication formats continue to rapidly evolve. A company can either submit bylined articles for consideration, written by an internal thought leader, or they can pitch reporters on a topic that may be of interest with the hopes of being quoted or mentioned in an upcoming staff-written article. Either way, the ideas for articles or expert pitches can come from either what you have read by a specific reporter as an idea for a follow-up story or from the internal editorial calendar discussed above. Be sure that your thought leader can not only speak about your specific industry but that he or she can wrap a point and message around business in general. This will open up the area of interest and make an idea more appealing to a reporter. When pitching an expert, be sure that you give an editor or writer a



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nugget that sets your thought leader apart from the competition. Get specific. It may not be enough to say that your expert can speak on the topic of cloud computing. There are people still in college who can speak to that. What really makes this person's knowledge fall into the category of "expert"? If you can communicate this effectively, you will be far ahead of the others fighting for the writer's attention.

### 3. Know the Reporter's Expertise

If there is one thing that can turn an opportunity into a dead end it is not understanding the area of coverage for a reporter. Let's say that you have made a list of publications that you are targeting and you have determined specific reporters for each of them. You are ready to send an email to them regarding your pitch idea from your internal editorial calendar. Remember, every time your pitch changes, the subject matter changes. Therefore, it is imperative that the reporter would change too. If you keep one reporter as the same contact for every pitch, your efforts will fall on deaf ears. That reporter will think that you have not done your homework in researching coverage areas and consider you uninformed. Even though you may stay within the same outlets, it can be time-consuming to find new reporters for each pitch, but it is an important step if you want to get a response and cut through the clutter.

Every company in search of media coverage starts out as Waldo: everything looks the same to the reporter. It is your job to give reporters the tools to find you and to help them see your relevance, making them want to include your news in their pipeline. Reporters want to find experts to make their articles concise, educated and relevant, and this can be done by creating a timeline of content that you will distribute. This keeps your ideas fresh and shows a variety of expertise within your company. Additionally, if you differentiate your thought leaders and get specific, you will set them apart. Lastly, writers will take notice if you do your homework. Know what they write about and reference it when you talk to them. The more you know about them, the more they will want to know about you. Waldo is there. Now it's your turn to help them find it.

#### *About the author*

*With a decade of experience up her sleeve, from agency work to corporate efforts to her own client initiatives, Clark focuses her energy on the magic of PR. She creates strategic plans that increase client visibility and generate the "ah" factor. After all, Clark believes that clients should be given the tools to perform the illusion of walking on water too.*

*In June 2013, Edge Marketing borrowed Clark's wand, and "poof," she became the director of media relations for its legal industry clients. She handles anything and everything that falls into traditional media for clients – getting their names front-and-center through interviews, writing opportunities and analyst relations. She continues to pull the rabbit out of the hat, generating buzz and building relationships, as she draws attention to the real stars of the show: the clients.*

