

Public Relations



Getting The Most From Press Meetings

Publitek Ltd

18 Brock Street, Bath BA1 2LW, UK

Tel: **+44 (0) 1225 470000**



Getting The Most From Press Meetings



Attendance at industry trade shows is often one of the biggest expenses incurred by a marketing department, and it can also be one of the most time consuming.

With a myriad of logistical hurdles to overcome, speaking to the press is sometimes overlooked. The trade press attend shows and exhibitions in significant numbers and this is a rare chance to get some face-to-face time with them.

If you have a technology or strategy to discuss or are launching products then press meetings are a must. If the news is of major significance then a press conference may even be worthy of consideration to get you serious column inches and build your standing in the market.

The following tips should help you too get more from meeting members of the press.

Overview of the meeting

Think about the objectives of your meeting - many companies take the approach of just trying to arrange meetings whenever they exhibit at a tradeshow, regardless of whether they have something of real newsworthiness to discuss.

I remember only too well (and other journalists I know have been in similar situations) where I agreed to a briefing with a company only for their spokesperson to say to me when I arrived 'So what was it you wanted to talk about?'

This is an example of what happens far too often - the marketing departments of companies focus on tallying up meetings so that they create a nice quota to keep their bosses happy. Although you want to make sure you engage with the press whenever the chance arises you **MUST** have something to offer - and that something has to help them to create good editorial content.

If you call a meeting and then just talk about a product you introduced eight or 12 months ago you're clearly wasting the editor's time. They will begrudge this as they could be seeing other companies during that time, and what is more they will be unlikely to agree to meetings with your company in the future.

It's a bit like the boy who cried wolf - once you lose an editor's trust you will struggle to get it back. If you don't think you have anything new to say then you should consult your PR agency so they can work with you to help you identify genuinely newsworthy stories . If there's not a new product being introduced at the show, then alternatives can be found, such as: changes to company strategy; the company's opinion on a particular industry trend, or new application areas being explored.

However, if the timing is such that you really don't have anything to say then the golden rule is don't set up a press meeting!

Be fully prepared for every meeting

Ensure that you are FULLY prepared for every single meeting. For maximum effectiveness you need to have access to highly detailed information about the editor/journalist (and their media outlet) you are meeting well before the appointed time.

Firstly, you need to know if they have met with other spokespeople from your company (and if so, then how long ago), so you can determine whether full introduction of the company is necessary at the start of your presentation.

Secondly, it helps to understand whether their editorial slant is highly technical or more business related (this will allow you to gauge how best to approach your discussion with them).

Thirdly, what has that editor written about that relates to your company. If you can find some links here, then you are certain to raise the editor's interest. Your PR agency should provide you (though many sadly don't) with an up-to-date and comprehensive biography for each member of the press you are due to be meeting.

From that you should have everything that you need to make certain each meeting is a successful one.

Make sure your presentation stands out

The quality of your presentation material is pivotal to the success of your press meeting.

It is advisable not to have too many slides, and each slide should be concise rather than overloaded with too much information (you can always back up the presentation with additional documents that the editor can look through at their leisure). Prior to the show (ideally a week beforehand) you should go through your presentation with one of the senior contacts at your PR agency.

If they are of a good enough calibre, then they will be able to advise you on where improvements can be made. They should also, drawing on their industry experience and technical knowledge, be able to come up with a list of questions that you could potentially be asked during your meeting (if they can't do this, then you should be asking them questions about why you are paying them).

Giving your presentation

Once you are confident that your presentation material is polished enough and you are adequately prepared for the potential questions that could be fielded, then you are ready to go out there and meet the editors.

There are many do's and don'ts when meeting the press. Here are a few key things to remember though. Firstly, you will be aware of exactly how much time the editor/journalist has made available, so you must be sure that you can complete the presentation within the allotted period while still keeping enough room for answering their questions. It is always a good idea to be prepared to give an 'express' version too, if needed.

Tradeshows can be very hectic for members of the press, so the person you're meeting might be held up. If so you may be forced to shorten your meeting. If you aren't ready for this eventuality you might end up trying to squeeze the whole presentation into too little time and miss out some of the most critical points.



Secondly, NEVER avoid a direct question that is asked of you. If you don't have the technical knowledge yourself, or you are not in a high enough position of authority to comment on a particular matter, then you need to say 'I'll get back to you on this.' These should not be empty words though; you (or your PR contact accompanying you) really have to take care of this, as promised, and make sure that there is a timely response to the requested information.

Few things irritate an editor more than being fobbed off. That information could make the difference between your story getting covered or not - so if you fail to deliver, then it might just stay waiting on the editor's to do list indefinitely.

Thirdly, though the presentation document you are referring to won't change during the show, you should, over time, expect to develop a more fluid style with which you present it. With each meeting you should be able to get more of a feel for what works well and what not so well. You'll get asked new questions, so from these you should be better equipped to deal with anything that comes up.

You may even want to add lines into your presentation that pre-empt some of these questions, showing your company is the industry authority. Again your PR contact should be helping you with this. Rather than just twiddling their thumbs during each meeting they should be vigilantly listening/observing, then giving you candid feedback on how it has gone and what particular things might be improved.

Demos

If possible, after the presentations try to show the editor a demo that illustrates the technology you have talked about in action. This will allow the editor to get a much better understanding of what it's about than they would from just looking at a lifeless PowerPoint.

Resulting article opportunities

If you have got some face time with an editor it puts you in a great position to offer them an article relating to what you have been discussing. Ideally you should have several different article abstracts that you have worked on with your PR agency before the show commences. If you don't do this then you risk squandering a golden opportunity to extend the period of time you receive editorial coverage beyond the show.

Supporting content

It is of paramount importance that the additional materials are sufficient to back up everything that has been discussed during the press meeting. The presentation, as well as any press releases from the show, should of course be provided to the editor on a memory stick. In addition, datasheets, application notes, or white papers can be of use to support the topics that have been discussed. Increasingly videos should also be considered for inclusion. This is another area in which a good PR agency that is focused on quality content creation should be able to help with.

Summary

In summary, through well-planned and well-executed meetings with the press at tradeshow, your company will be able to cement a stronger relationship with the key media outlets serving your industry sector.

This will not only result in good coverage directly following the event, but also make the editors you've met with more inclined to publish future article and press release material they receive from you. So make a big impression!





Need help with **Press Meetings?**

To find out, contact:

Bob Jones
CEO

bob.jones@publitek.com
Europe: **+44 1225 470000**
US: **+1 408 786 5151**

Publitek is the world's leading content marketing and technology PR agency for the B2B electronics industry. By complementing our in-house capabilities with proven partners, we offer a multi-lingual, global capability encompassing both corporate and technical communications.

Publitek Ltd,
18 Brock Street,
Bath, BA1 2LW
Tel: **+44 (0) 1225 470000**

www.publitek.com

