

# CATALYST

the **MARXGROUP**

Business Strategy | Marketing Communications

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## What's the deep, dark secret to leveraging media?

*By Tom Marx*

How many times have you seen editorial coverage of a competitor in a trade magazine, as well as their ad in the same issue?

How many times have you seen your ad in a trade publication and griped about the lack of editorial coverage in that same issue?

Do you ever wonder why this is happening? Or do you know why and simply don't do anything about it?

We see both situations happen time-and-again. However, we also know that if there is an integrated media/PR plan with proper execution in place, this should seldom happen.

The deep, dark secret? JUST DO IT!

How?

**STEP ONE:** Always integrate your media plan with your PR plan – from the beginning. When you start your planning process, discuss BOTH your PR objectives and your media objectives with your sales and marketing teams. In fact, both campaigns should share the same objectives: to develop brand awareness and increase interest in what you're selling.

During the planning process and throughout the year brainstorm with your marketing and sales teams to come up with a steady stream of article ideas and outlines. Don't forget to negotiate PR with your paid media placements where possible. PR is that "third party" endorsement that is always stronger with your target audience. By themselves, PR and media are good investments. Integrated together, they are a force to be reckoned with.

**STEP TWO:** Produce well-written news releases, month-after-month. Articles that are published most often include new product announcements, personnel changes, new catalogs, and case studies showcasing innovative ways in which you solve your customers' problems. Make them useful and current. When possible, tie them in with scheduled conferences, news events, editorial calendars and happenings in the industry. Collaborate with the media to provide timely articles that coincide with featured editorials.

**STEP THREE:** Don't let PR take a back seat to all the day-to-day 'urgent matters' and end up being one of those "when I get around to it" activities. Make sure that the articles don't get hung up in the approval process. Whatever it takes, make the deadlines.

It pays to be timely and consistent:

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**The equivalency value of PR is often 3-5 times the cost of the paid media. That means for every \$1,000 you spend on paid media, you could be getting \$3,000- \$5,000 equivalent value in FREE editorial coverage. You could better realize this substantial return simply by submitting articles and editorial content on a timely basis – month-after-month.**

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Two things happen when you combine media and PR into one collaborative process:

1. Your advertising and PR manager(s) will more seriously take on the responsibility of PR, making it more reliable and more effective.
2. The media will better understand your objectives and will work harder to satisfy your expectations. Editors will even be more aware that they need to deliver appropriate coverage, or risk losing revenue.

**In Conclusion:** Leverage your relationship with the media in both print and online buys. With a consistent stream of quality PR, you can even expect a decent pick-up rate from the media from which you're NOT buying, stretching your media buy dollars even further. Remember to assign one person be accountable to meeting media agreements and deadlines.

If you cannot get it done yourself on a consistent basis, then hire an outside PR or ad agency to work with you (call The Marx Group!). Hold their feet to the fire and demand accountability, verified placement and assured ROI as part of your agreement. In the end: JUST DO IT!