

## Media Relations and Social Media ... Out of Control?

**T**his Web 2.0 world pushes our comfort zone when it comes to media relations. How we always did it is still important, but now, bloggers, chatters, Tweeters, Facebookers and YouTubers come on the scene daily, sometimes hourly. The pace is fast. And, it can go viral.

That said, today no media relations plan is complete without a social media component. By understanding how this new media world differs from traditional media, you'll have better success in making these important connections.

**Not Your Mom's Journalists.** Many in social media didn't go to journalism school. They don't answer to an editor or publisher. They don't follow the Associated Press Stylebook. Rather, they're people with passion for a certain product, cause, company or industry. From mommy bloggers and celebrities to corporate CEOs and activists, these folks speak in their own voice and engage their friends, followers and subscribers in two-way conversations. They encourage their information to be shared through re-Tweets, reciprocal links and forwards.

**Read and Follow.** As with traditional media, social media players expect you to follow their posts, especially if you ever want your company to earn a mention. Stay informed of new outlets through industry publications, subscription media databases and social media posts and links. Read them and when appropriate, actively participate before asking for endorsements.

**Think Links.** When soliciting new media, forgo the standard press release and provide information in a format that can be quickly read, customized and shared. Shift Communications, a Boston public relations firm, designed a [social media press release template](#) that includes space for core news facts but also provides hyperlinks to photos, podcasts, graphics, video, RSS feeds, Technorati tags, a universal "share this" widget and more. Reporters can "grab" the information they need and go.



**Respond Quickly.** Todd Defren writes in his PR-Squared blog, "The responsiveness and diplomacy that a brand demonstrates today are going to be judged tomorrow". Thanks to Google, how a brand interacts with its customers is being evaluated by thousands of people who stumble upon blog posts, tweets and comments. Negative information can remain on the first page of a search for years—just type in [Motrin](#) to see the reaction to a campaign launched (and pulled) nearly a YEAR ago. It's critical that you quickly

respond to misinformation or issues in a calm, open manner so your position is part of the conversation thread.

**Encourage Dialogue.** Remember the goal of social media is to encourage dialogue, not stop the story or agree with the position taken. Identify yourself and your affiliation upfront and join conversations about your company or industry. Offer your viewpoint. Ask for feedback on new ideas. Provide resources people may find valuable.

**Pick YOUR Platform.** The best way to learn social media is to do it. Think about how you might use social media to engage your own important audiences. Pick channels that are most relevant rather than setting up a flurry of accounts. Be sure to keep your social media sites regularly updated with new information or discussions.

At Vehr Communications, we can help you better understand the changing media environment and how to leverage social media. Please don't hesitate to contact us. Check out our [Web site](#) to learn more about us.

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