

MEDIA ENQUIRIES - THE GOLDEN RULES

As purpose-led business leaders, we all want our businesses to receive the press they deserve, going out into the world and reaching as wide an audience as possible.

But for the majority of us, we don't have a PR manager or media team to handle the enquiries that may come through the door (or more likely, on the phone or via email) each day.

The truth is, it can be intimidating to even think about speaking with journalists, let alone actually doing the speaking itself, especially if this is something you haven't had any previous experience in.

There are whole courses (both online and in-person) in media training, but in order to be able to effectively handle media enquiries for your business then the basics need to be learned first and foremost and so we have put together some 'golden rules' for handling media enquiries.

1. DON'T IGNORE THEM

All media enquiries are a sign that someone thinks your business is worth talking about. While we will always hope that this is for a positive reason, it's just as important to respond to any potential negative reasons that someone is reaching out to speak to you too.

Enquiries should always be handled swiftly and politely, always ensuring that the enquiry is directed to the most appropriate person within your business to handle it.

Ignoring a media enquiry could result in you missing out on some positive press, or in the worst case scenario, a negative story regarding your business not receiving balanced coverage because you / your business weren't available to comment.

Put simply, ignoring media enquiries offers no benefit to you or your business.

2. SPEAK CLEARLY

Remember that you are an expert when it comes to your business and industry. And while this is something to be applauded, remember that the journalist you'll be speaking to isn't likely to be as much of an expert as you.

As such, avoid using any jargon or technical language when speaking with journalists. If you cannot think of another way to state something and you require the use of such language, then ensure you follow up with an explanation of what you mean and clarify that they understand.

On top of this, they need to ensure they can write something their readers will understand. So the easier what you have to say is to understand then the higher likelihood of it being published becomes.

3. YOU'RE ALWAYS ON THE RECORD

It's very easy to use a conversation about your business as an opportunity to 'blow off steam' or to over explain. While there is a journalistic standard that suggests that if something is said "off the record" then it will remain unpublished, this isn't always the case. And even when it is, the information provided could lead to a journalist following up with external sources to confirm or corroborate something previously said "off the record".

As a rule of thumb, consider yourself to always be ON the record and don't say anything that you wouldn't be happy to discuss publicly.

4. ENSURE YOU COVER EVERYTHING

The easiest way to ensure you have provided the journalist who has contacted you with everything they need for their story is simply to ask them.

Ensure you have provided them with the information they require and check in case they need anything clarified. While it's best to avoid coming across as patronising, making sure that you summarise your conversation and confirm they're happy that their enquiry has been dealt with is always a good bet.

Ending each call by letting the journalist know that you're happy to chat through anything else further or to be called again for any related stories / media items can help build up a good relationship too.

Being able to effectively handle media enquiries is an essential part of being a modern business leader. It should be a part of your communications strategy, allowing you to help strengthen your business's public profile as well as protect against any negative press.

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