



Expert Summit

MASTERCLASS TRANSCRIPT



Namecheap Expert Summit

PR tips to earn free media coverage for your business |

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Hi, my name's Derek Musso, Head of Public Relations and Communications for Namecheap. Welcome to our 2021 Expert Summit. I'm excited to be teaching a masterclass today for you on three ways to earn media coverage and publicity for your business.

Just a little bit about myself and my background. I've been doing public relations for nearly two decades. I've worked on everything from video games to independent apps, to many different types of software and hardware, and then even into toys and other consumer products.

One thing that remains consistent across all of those products and services are a few general strategies and tactics that anyone can implement in terms of their own PR or their own brand's PR, it's definitely a way that you're able to see if it's possible for you to get free media coverage and exposure, that potential for that exposure to bring more value to your brand, and ultimately more customers, is the biggest driving force of why probably somebody would want PR.

So before we jump into the masterclass itself, I wanted to say, make sure to click on the link and check out all of the experts doing masterclasses this year in Namecheap's 2021 Expert Summit. Also, feel free to connect with me on Twitter or LinkedIn, and any questions about the lesson itself, or PR questions related to your business, feel free to leave those in the comments, and I will make sure that I address all of those questions following the class. Feel free to follow along. There should be a link to the accompanying deck for the lesson, and we'll jump right into it.

And we'll start with... Pretty much go over three or four basic strategies and tactics that's going to put you in a position to get free media coverage or positive publicity or that essential exposure that's going to have more people find your business, service, product, or brand ultimately bringing you more business.

Unlike advertising PR is about earning media coverage, most of the time not buying it. Both advertising and public relations are important in terms of building brand awareness and driving sales. But most of the time, when people are researching a product or a service that they're going to use, the number one thing they're going to do is go online and see what type of expert, whether it's a journalist or an influencer has said about this product or service. And then, obviously, also sometimes what the customers and existing customers of a product or service are saying as well.

But as you can imagine, if you go and look up a certain product or brand or service that you're considering using, and you see that a journalist or an influencer that you find trustworthy is saying positive things about it, I think the likelihood that you'll maybe purchase that product or service is going to be a lot higher than just because you see a cool ad or something that's in the paid marketing space.

So, getting media coverage and those types of positive free publicity things online is going to be a value to almost any brand there is out there.

Implementing these smart and basic PR strategies are going to help you lead to that free coverage potential. Just in terms of what PR is in general, the Cambridge Dictionary says that, "Public relations is the activity "of keeping good relationships "between an organization and general public."

While that's true in a broad sense, public relations in a practical sense is more about how you publicly communicate what your brand stands for. What sets you apart? What makes you unique? What makes you different? What makes you better than your competition? These are all differentiating factors that you want to incorporate into your overall PR strategy and brand, and how you communicate who you are in the public space, which ultimately, hopefully, will be through media coverage.

For most people, whether you're an entrepreneur, a small business owner, or just a marketing hustler that wants to learn different aspects of marketing so you can be a jack of all trade, hopefully we could run through a few things here that's going to be helpful to you, and no matter what that endeavor is on your side.

So the first thing that we're going to talk about in terms of putting yourself in a position to even get coverage or free publicity is, you need to know your business, and you need to be an industry expert.

Knowing your business probably sounds obvious to most people, but really, before you do any type of marketing, you really want to know your business, as well as the ins and outs of your industry. You want to be an expert about your industry. You want to be familiar with all of the competition. That way you're able to position yourself as a leader, ultimately, or an innovator, or a disruptor. You want your product or your service, or you, if you're the product and service, to stand out among the others. So being an expert is going to put you in a position to do things like secure interviews, and then maybe potential other media opportunities. And we'll get into that later.

So the first thing that you're going to do, once you start learning a little bit about your industry and now you're confident, you know your brand, you know your business, you know what your competitors are about, now you want to create a media strategy. So, how do you do that?

Before you dream of being on these cool podcasts or getting a New York Times feature article written about you or your company, or even getting yourself on the local news, you need to see what kind of media opportunities are realistic and even out there for you.

So, this comes down to the first part of the research aspect of creating your media strategy, and how you're going to do that to starts with, your media lists and your coverage charts. And this is essential to all PR, no matter whether you're working for a big PR agency or working on a big team to do PR for a big company.

Media lists and coverage charts are essential, and how good they are, a lot of times dictates on how good your opportunities will be to create media coverage. How do you do this? How do you start from scratch and create a media list?

The easiest way to do this will be to Google your competitors and see what kind of media coverage they've received. And then when you find that coverage, take note of the media outlet, the journalist, or the influencer, and then you're going to create a media list. So you're going to want to find those coverage details, add them to the coverage chart, and then find that contact information for the influencer or the journalist that did the coverage and keep that in your media list, 'cause they're going to be a target for you for later on.

These two things, the media list and the coverage chart, are something that you will always be building and improving, and ultimately, after months or

even years, you're going to be able to establish a strong media list, and then have a coverage chart that's going to tell you a lot about your competition, about the landscape of coverage and things that are possible in terms of your own media coverage success. So those two elements are going to be very important.

In Namecheap, we would research somebody like our competitor, see who's reviewed them lately. So these two resources are going to be essential to you in terms of having a strong media list and a well thought out smart coverage chart.

All right, so with the media listening coverage chart, you're going to be researching maybe competing products or services or other people that are within your industry, and you're researching to see if any media have done reviews or what we call roundup.

So roundups are those lists that you'll see where they name maybe like, the best five web hosting providers or the top 10 domain registrars. Nowadays, nearly every industry and product category or service will have media outlets who dedicate these online guides and rankings of the best, or sometimes worse. Make sure you don't get in those worst categories of worst list of products. But you want to find as many as possible and add them to your master media list.

Most journalists have fairly easy email addresses to find. So when you do uncover them, a lot of times you could find their email address in the byline, or almost all publications have general news email addresses. You could find them sometimes on the about page or contact lists. It's always best to have a direct contact for someone from the editorial team or the influencer or the writer themselves, but if you can't find that, a lot of times you could find these generic email contact addresses. Sometimes there'll be like `newstips@` whatever the media publication's name, or `info@thecompanyname` or `editor@` that whatever publication.com. Those are what you're going to add to the media list. And, I mean even if you have direct people to add, you also want to add those generic ones that are there anyways, especially when you're sending out press releases, which we'll talk about in a little bit. But like I said, always better in terms of reaching out to press to have a direct contact.

Make sure you're adding all those to your media list, and then on top of it, maybe you want to set up some Google Alerts. Google Alerts are great in terms

of tracking coverage at real time. So, you want to set up Google Alerts for your company, for your competitors, for your industry. That way you're keeping track of any, obviously, any coverage opportunities that people that cover your competitors. But also, in addition to that, you're also going to be keeping track of industry news or things that might relate to your business that you could have an opportunity to get coverage for, and we'll talk about that in a little bit too.

So, now that you've finished a lot of this research and you have these items in place, you have an awesome media list, you have a great coverage chart that's showing you the whole landscape of the coverage opportunity for your business and your industry, now you want to go to that next step of generating media coverage opportunities.

So, you're an expert on everything, you're ready to go, you're checking out your media list, you're looking at your coverage chart, and you're seeing all these, which will probably be the number one way that you're going to get any type of coverage for your product or service, is going to come in the way of a review or an inclusion in a round up.

So, when you did all that research and you found all that awesome free coverage, that all of your competitors were getting, now you want to craft an email pitch to let them know why they should review your product or include you in their roundup of best products and services in that category.

When you reach out to them, you want to be short and concise in your email, and you really want to give them a compelling reason why they want to include you. I mean, you have to let them know what you do better than anybody else. What makes you unique? What sets you apart from maybe your competitor that they already reviewed? So, you're reaching out to them for that. You want to be included in these best of lists, these roundups.

Most media sites will update those roundups every year or maybe every two years, but usually every year. So don't be afraid if you see a round up of best lawn services in Denver or something like that, and you have a lawn service that you want to pitch for that roundup, even if it's two years old, see if you could get the journalist to update or the influencer to update that for 2021. Definitely going to be possible, and most publications will want to do it anyways, for their own SEO reasons in terms of people finding their coverage.

You're going to spend the bulk of your time trying to reach out to people for those. And again, a positive review is something that is way more influential to a potential customer than seeing an ad, by getting served an ad in Google, by seeing a print ad in the magazine. If you have a journalist or an expert that you trust saying a product or service is great, you're much more likely to give it a shot.

After you get through pitching all of the roundups and review possibilities that you have, maybe the next thing or next component that you might have at some point would be a big news announcement. And how would you issue that news announcement to the world and also to press, more importantly. And that you're going to do it in the form of a press release.

The most important thing for the press release, and again, for pitching media in general, is that you need to have something newsworthy and compelling. It's great to want to announce to the world that you're doing something that's self-serving, but our media are going to care. So maybe you want to make a press release and big news announcement for big things like, whether you're launching a new product or service, whether you are creating some type of new feature or process that's better than anybody's ever done something before, maybe you're doing something charitable or for the community. These are all things that could potentially be press worthy, and then you might want to announce in a press release.

Milestones for companies in terms of, maybe it's your 10 years, is the number one of doing something in your category. These are all things that could be compelling to press. But, if you're a hair salon and it's your third birthday, issuing a press release about that, probably isn't going to be newsworthy. But, maybe you want to do something like, on your third birthday for your hair salon, maybe you want to try to break a Guinness World Record for having the most haircuts done in 24 hours. Something like that. But something like that you could see why local media would want to cover it, and maybe even national media, if there's compelling video footage or story there that somebody is interested in.

So that's the big hook with a press release, and that's going to be one of the main components you have in terms of communicating news about your company, and communicating what sets you apart from other people, and what you're offering that's new and unique, and all of those different things.

The third thing, the third component of coverage opportunities, probably the most advanced, and that comes down to thought leadership. And that's, in the beginning, like we were talking about knowing everything that you can about your business to start, and then knowing as much as you can about the industry and having an opinion and a take, and something that would be a resource for media to come to you, a reason to have you on a podcast, a reason for the local news to interview you, these are all things that you want to offer by having expertise.

The best way to do all that is by keeping up with what's topical in your industry. Offer your expertise to a news outlet. Maybe there's coverage going on in the news about certain regulations or laws or a new method of doing some type of service that's going to be newsworthy, and you're able to offer yourself to, whether it's a local news outlet or a national outlet. You're able to offer them something by being a person that could talk about it with an area of expertise, or you could tell them how it's impacting your business, those laws and regulations or whatever it is, in a positive or negative way. These are all things that journalists and potential influencers would be able to get from you a value that would be compelling and add something in terms of a source to make their story more newsworthy and interesting to their audience.

So, that aspect in terms of making yourself an expert, in the long term, is going to be one of the most important things you could do as a business owner, as an entrepreneur, as a startup founder, any of those things. Like, that's the most important thing that you could do is to position yourself as a leader or an expert.

The last thing we're going to talk about is, managing your company's reputation wherever you can. And this is definitely something that gets more and more time consuming as the internet grows, and as technology grows, and the ways that people can find out about you, or hear about you, or complain about you. These are all things that you can mitigate by managing your reputation online.

You can't always control what the media and influencers and customers write about your business in a public space, but you can do your best to respond and try to make sure that you're presenting yourself in the most positive light all the time. So clearly, that starts with social media, and I highly recommend that you check out Namecheap's Head of Social Media, Pino Bonetti's masterclass, where you could get into this more.

But the one thing that you really want to going to do is manage your reputation online, and that starts with social media. But also besides social media, also places like Yelp and Shoppers Approved or Angie's List, or any of those places where people have the capacity to write about your business or your service and review you, those are all places that you want to engage with the audience. And even if it's a bad review, maybe you soften the bad review that you've gotten from a customer or someone in the public space by responding and saying, we will do X, Y, and Z to make this better.

All of those things in all of these things really matter in terms of your overall brand perception. So, making an unhappy customer happy is definitely something that's going to lead to long-term success.

I can tell you from Namecheap's standpoint, one of the reasons why we've been around as long as we have as a company, over 20 years now, is that we really have, not really from just a public relations standpoint, but from a company priority standpoint, as a company we prioritize customers first. So, our first goal is to always make our customers happy. Another goal is to offer products and services and features that our customers want.

So, really when you're out in this public space and you're engaging with customers, and you're engaging places where people have forums to talk about you, you're going to want to portray yourself in the most positive light possible. Even by responding to negative and positive ads, you're letting people know that you're listening to them and that you're taking whatever they say to heart, in terms of improving your business from the long term.

All right, given you a few things to think about in terms of developing a PR strategy in tactics that will work for your small business or your product or your service. Like I said, any questions, I'd be more than happy to answer, so please leave them in the comments. And again, connect with me on Twitter or LinkedIn.

I appreciate everybody who took the time to listen to this class. I hope you learned something useful. Also check out the other classes available for Namecheap's 2021 Expert Summit. Thank you very much, and bye.