

# Using Social Media to promote your business

How to use the Social Networks to Generate Media Coverage and Improve Brand Recognition

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# 1. Introduction

The web and social media are making it easier for businesses to communicate with their customers, clients and potential clients. Where there used to be a clear delineation between marketing and public relations, the impact of the web has resulted in a blurred line between those two aspects of marketing.

Some commentators argue that this is leading to the “death” of public relations. On the contrary, the web is actually helping to enhance the efficiency of the PR industry. So how can you incorporate social media and inbound marketing to enhance your PR efforts? This ebook will discuss the evolution of public relations and explain how you can successfully incorporate social media and other internet marketing strategies to improve your company’s public relations efforts in those areas.

## Why PR Will Always Be Important

Public relations has been around for almost 100 years and will not be going away anytime soon. Put simply, public relations is the practice of managing communication between a particular organisation and its ‘publics’. Any given organization has a number of publics – they can be prospects, customers, media, investors, the government, or internal employees so PR is something that businesses will always need.

## Why Social Media Participation is Critical for PR

People have always had good and bad things to say about a particular brand. Now that social media has risen in popularity, it means people have another platform to talk about your company and its products/services. The major difference, however, is in the viral nature of this platform. When someone mentions your brand in social media, there is much more potential for other people to notice, and it’s so much easier for conversations to spread much more quickly. In addition, these conversations have the potential to reach a much larger audience than ever before. If your company is not participating in social media today, not only is it missing an opportunity to spread its message but also missing valuable (and sometimes damaging) conversations that could be taking place about your brand.

## 2. Generating Media Coverage

### Media & Blogger Relations: Communicating With the Media and Generating Coverage

While media relations is only one aspect of public relations, it is the topic that is most often thought of when public relations is mentioned. Obtaining coverage in media publications (TV, radio, podcasts, online video, newspapers, magazines, online news sites, blogs, etc.) is a great way to spread the word about your business and its products/services. Where advertising consists of paid placement in media publications, PR coverage is free. But third-party validation, which often results in more credibility for your business, is not forthcoming. So how do you secure coverage in these publications and media, and how can social media help you do this?

#### Strategy 1: Connect & Develop Relationships with Influencers in Social Media

One of the best ways to land a mention (or maybe even a feature!) of your business in the media is to start by connecting with the journalists, reporters, bloggers, and influencers who cover topics in your industry. Fortunately the web and social media are great facilitators of this. Where you previously had to go through mass media to get your message across, the web and social media now give you access to a whole heap of influencers, with which you can easily interact and develop relationships. And, you don't have to pay anyone for this service – you can do it all by yourself. By communicating with these influencers, you can ensure your business is to the forefront when an opportunity for a story comes along. Below are some great ways social media can help you build relationships with influencers.

##### Twitter

Are you aware that many journalists, reporters, and bloggers make themselves available on Twitter? Using Twitter is a great way to introduce yourself and your company to the media. But how do you find the influencers in your industry on Twitter? One way is to look for influential blogs in your industry (use blog search engines like Technorati), subscribe to them, and start following their authors on Twitter.

Another way is to start following journalists who target your industry. Then start tweeting with them, but don't oversell your business or product. Develop relationships by tweeting about an article of theirs you enjoyed or ask how they feel about a particular topic on which they write. Sometimes reporters will also use Twitter to broadcast that they are seeking subjects or sources for a particular story they are currently working on. If it is a fit for you, reply!

### **Twitter Tools for Finding Influencers:**

**Twitter Grader:** Twitter Grader is one of our free Grader tools that can help you find the top Twitter users by location and also measure the authority of a particular user.

**Muck Rack:** Muck Rack is a free website that enables you to search for and locate journalists by source (publication) or by beat (topic).

**JournalistTweets:** This free site curates tweets from journalists and allows users to filter journalists on Twitter by industry.

## **Facebook & LinkedIn**

Facebook and LinkedIn are great ways to maintain relationships with media, but beware: These tools are a little bit more personal than Twitter. Don't start "friending" every reporter you find in your industry. Instead, use Twitter as a way to initiate and grow the relationship. Once the relationship exists, consider connecting on Facebook and/or LinkedIn.

## **BatchBook**

Although it's not a free tool, BatchBook is a great way to keep track of your communication with influencers. Its core function is to serve as an address book that you can use to keep contact information (including social media credentials) for people (e.g. the journalists or bloggers you connect with), but it also allows you to keep track of any email or other communication so you have a record of who you've been in touch with.

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## Strategy 2: Pitching

The results of pitching really depend on the time and effort you put into it and can be very hit or miss. You could end up with some really great coverage, or you could end up spending many hours of your time with no results. If you have some time to pitch to journalists and bloggers, here are a few key points to consider:

**Stay Targeted:** Know the journalist/blogger and the area(s) and topic(s) he or she covers. One of journalists' and bloggers' biggest pet peeves is getting pitched about something that does not coincide with what they write about. Don't spam them. It's a sure-fire way to end up on a blog like the Bad Pitch Blog, and no one wants that kind of exposure. Before you pitch to people, spend the time to get to know their style and the topics they write about. Make sure you read their content, and, when appropriate, leave comments. This will show them you have done your homework, are already engaged with their work, and will also help you make decisions about which journalists are appropriate for what you are pitching.

**Don't Pitch the Same People Repeatedly:** Don't keep pitching the same journalists and bloggers over and over again. That said, also don't assume that because a journalist or blogger has previously covered you, they'll want to do it again. Segment your targets and only pitch people who are very appropriate for the story you are pitching. The next time you pitch for something different, target different people.

**Brevity Is Key:** Your initial pitch should not be long, and you should avoid email attachments. Journalists often don't have time to read pages and pages of email or even press releases. Your initial pitch should be short, sweet, compelling, and highlight the key points you are trying to make, as well as why that journalist should want to cover it. If they get interested, they will request additional, more detailed information on their own.

**Have Something Interesting to Offer:** What's new and different about your story? Is it particularly timely? Have an angle, and make it interesting.

**Personalise It:** Show your target you have done your homework. Mention specific reasons why what you have to offer will benefit his or her readers.

## Strategy 3: Using Creative Content as an Outreach Tool

If you have spent any time on [www.website-consultant.co.nz](http://www.website-consultant.co.nz), you will know we are firm believers that quality content is king. Content has the ability to showcase your company as an industry thought leader, in addition to having some major SEO, social media, and lead generation benefits. In terms of public relations, content also has the ability to get you some media coverage. It is simple - by creating something interesting, compelling, or even funny, people will naturally want to talk about it, share it with their friends, or even *write* about it – no pitching required. Think about why videos go viral. It's not because someone spent a lot of time crafting an amazing pitch to a journalist. It's because the content itself was so remarkable, people couldn't help but spread it. Not convinced? Here are a few tactics and examples of how and which types of creative content can lead to media coverage:

## Create Fun, Interesting Content

If you are launching a new product or service, consider making a video and uploading it to YouTube. There is no need to use a fancy PR campaign; the strategy for the launch can just consist of tweeting about the video and sharing it through HubSpot's social media channels like Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, etc. We also utilized some of our relationships with influencers (see previous section on media relations) by "pinging" them. In other words, we sent links to the new video via short emails or even tweets and direct messages on Twitter to bloggers with whom we were already friendly. The video won't be a success if no one likes it. The quality and creativity of the content is what it needs to excel. What kind of interesting, fun content can you create? A funny video? An interesting infographic? A clever cartoon?

## Publish Interesting Industry Data & Research

Media mentions can also be received from publishing data and research your company has done. You can publish that on your blog, via social media, and then "ping" a few influencers who might find the data interesting. Such reports can result in coverage and mentions from countless media sources, including major publications.

## Promote Content in Social Media

As we mentioned, social media is a great vehicle to spread your messages and share your content. If your company does not have a corporate Twitter account or a Facebook Fan Page, it is essential to start them now. In addition to helping promote your content, maintaining a presence on these sites is extremely beneficial to helping manage your business' public relations.

Is there an opportunity for your business to publish some data or research on a particular topic in your industry? Do you have a sample of customers you can survey to produce a unique report?

# The Inbound Marketing News Release

Press releases have long been a staple in public relations practitioners' toolkits. But now that the web has begun to revolutionise PR and marketing, there's been a lot of discussion about press release best practices. To help PR pros get the most out of their news releases, we recommend you adopt an 'Inbound Marketing News Release'.

The Inbound Marketing News Release is a new way to think about press releases and has a heavy focus on search engine optimisation and optimising your releases, from that standpoint.

## Possible Goals for Creating News Releases

PR professionals create news releases for a number of different reasons. Here are some of the top ones:

- Generating traffic to your website
- Getting journalists and/or bloggers to write about your company's story
- Publishing "ceremonial announcements" over the wire
- Building inbound links and increasing SEO to help your website rank better in Google and other search engines

# News Release Best Practice

We recommend the following guidelines when crafting news releases.

## Regarding Content and Format:

**Be direct and concise.** Don't belabour the point. The press release market is already very saturated, and journalists and bloggers can't read every release that crosses the wire. Making your release focused, succinct and relevant will give it a better chance for success.

**Have something worth saying.** Don't write a news release about nothing. Keep in mind that not every bit of company news is worthy of a release (It can get expensive!). Before you sit down to write a news release, make sure you have something interesting to communicate.

**Write using a newsworthy angle.** Tying in your news with some kind of newsworthy angle or story will increase its chances of catching a blogger's or journalist's attention. Is it particularly timely? Does it fit in with some kind of hot-button issue in the news? Angle your company's story in a way that might make it more appealing to bloggers and journalists and so be more interesting for them to write about.

**Conduct keyword research to discover your best keywords.** Use Google's Keyword Tool to help you decide on which keywords to focus. Then use those keywords in your release, especially in anchor text. This will help in terms of SEO.

**Use a descriptive headline, and limit it to 80 characters or fewer.** Lengthy headlines often get cut off on portal sites. In addition, because search engines treat a news release's headline as an H1 (Header) tag, it's beneficial to also make your headline keyword-rich.

**Limit your release to 300-500 words.** This is the ideal length for a release. A longer release is a sign of verbose content, and a lengthy release also hinders its ability for syndication.

**Eliminate Gobbledygook:** Gobbledygook, a term coined by viral marketing strategist David Meerman Scott, is jargon, clichés, and over-used, hype-filled words that no longer mean anything. Eliminate these words from your releases. (Examples include "cutting-edge," "flexible," "easy-to-use," "innovative" etc.) Remember, because news releases are now syndicated on the web, the media aren't the only ones who will come across your news. Therefore, you should communicate in words everyone can understand.

**Don't use formatting bullets.** They rarely get syndicated.

**Include your logo.** It may not get syndicated, but it won't hurt either.

**Don't embed multimedia elements.** Instead of embedding a video or photo directly into the release, publish it somewhere on your own website (such as on your company blog), and link to it in the release. This will save you money as well as drive traffic to and centralise interaction on your own website.

## Regarding Links:

**Put the most important link at the beginning.** Some portal sites will automatically cut off your release after a certain word count. For the best chance of generating traffic back to your site, include the link to which you want to generate the most traffic early on in the release.

**Always use anchor text.** Not all portal sites will syndicate anchor text links, but for the ones that do, you'll receive maximum SEO benefit from inbound links utilising anchor text.

**Use full URLs next to anchor text links for important links.** Don't do this for every link, but do use it for the one to which you really want to drive traffic. This will ensure that the URL still gets pulled in when portal sites won't syndicate anchor text (example below).

**Don't repeat links or anchor text.** (The guideline above is the only exception to this.) Repeating links or anchor text within your release will dilute the value of the links in the eyes of search engines.

**Don't litter your release with links.** Search engines will frown upon very link-heavy releases. For a 300-500 word release, 3-4 anchor text links is appropriate.

**Link to internal pages, too.** Are you trying to generate some traffic or SEO authority to other pages on your site besides your homepage? Link to these pages within your release. (Example: <http://www.website-consultant.co.nz/SEOtactics>)

**When possible, make anchor text the same as your page title.** This will place increased emphasis on that link for search engines. (Notice how the page title below matches the link and anchor text from the above news release example.)

## Additional Resources:

- Press Release Grader (grade the effectiveness of your press releases)
- Gobbledygook Grader (check your content for gobbledygook)
- PitchEngine (build social media news releases)
- Social Media News Release template from SHIFT Communications
- Live Weekly Press Release Optimization Webinar
- Press Release Marketing Kit

# The Company Blog

Creating content is a great PR outreach tool for generating media coverage. Distributing news releases via the conventional media might not be worth doing for every bit of news but publishing articles on a company blog is a great way to share all of your company news. If you already have a blog, don't dilute it with company-centric information that will reduce the quality and credibility of the educational, industry-related content you publish there. Instead, consider creating a completely separate blog for company news, product updates, etc. Here are some great ideas for how you can use your company blog to spread your messages.

**Publish Blog-Friendly News Release Content:** Consider rejigging your news release content for your company blog by making it less formal and more conversational in tone. You can also include a link back to the article from the original press release to drive traffic back to your site

**Publish Other Company News, Updates, or Achievements:** Is your CEO speaking at an upcoming industry conference? Did you recently win an award? Use your blog to share news of your company's achievements, but be humble when talking about yourself.

**Communicate Product/Service Launches or Updates:** Did you recently tweak something in your product or add a new service offering? Communicate it to your customers, prospects, and fan base with an article on the blog.

**Demonstrate Your Company's Unique Personality:** Did you recently hold a fun company-wide event like a scavenger hunt, a holiday party, or a softball tournament? Write about it! Or even better - create a corporate Flickr account, upload pictures from the event and embed a slideshow into the blog post. People will love getting to know the people and culture that make your company's gears turn (see an example of this on Zeald's Flickr posts).

**Include Social Media Share Links:** Give the readers of your blog an easy way to share articles with their networks and spread your messages. Include social media share links on every article to enable readers and subscribers to spread your article on social media sites like Google+ and Facebook.

**Improve SEO:** Like any blog, a company blog can have great search engine optimisation benefits. In addition, influencers are always looking for story ideas and writing an article about something unique will get indexed in search engines. Who knows – your article just might pop up as a result in Google for a story for which a journalist needs sources. Then he or she might come right to you. Talk about inbound PR!

# The Social Media Newsroom

Are you making it easy for journalists and bloggers to learn about your company, its products/services, and who to contact for additional information? It's a great idea to have a page on your website where the media and bloggers can go to easily obtain this information. Below are some tips for creating an effective social media newsroom for your website.

**Provide Clear Media Contact Info at the Top:** Sometimes a journalist or blogger is simply looking for someone to talk to so don't bury this information. The last thing you want is a journalist losing interest because he or she can't find the contact information. Instead, clearly position it at the top of your newsroom, and include multiple methods of communication – an email address and a phone number.

**Links, Links, Links:** Instead of cluttering your page with tons of information, include links to other pages on which you expand upon certain information. For example, if you'd like to showcase your award wins or the media coverage you've generated, provide links to separate pages you have built to store that information.

**Incorporate Social Media Elements:** Your newsroom is a great spot to aggregate the various places your company maintains a presence in social media. Include links to your Facebook Fan Page, your company's Twitter feed, Flickr account, YouTube channel, LinkedIn page, etc.

**Include Interactive Elements:** People like to absorb information and be stimulated in different ways. Give your visitors variety. Some ideas include embedding a video overview of your company or product, including eye-catching icons and photos, or including links to audio (e.g. a podcast interview featuring your CEO).

**Insert a Feed to Your Company Blog or Corporate Twitter Account:** If you publish a company blog (or two) or maintain a corporate Twitter account, add feeds that display recent posts/tweets and the link to subscribe.

## 3. Social Media Monitoring & Crisis Communication

Social media monitoring is important for any modern PR professional. And beyond monitoring, social media participation is also critical. It's one thing to be paying attention to conversations; it's another to actually get involved. Fortunately, social media come with some great tools for monitoring the conversation about your brand so you know where people are talking about you and can participate accordingly. While paid social media monitoring tools and services exist, there are also many free tools available to help.

**Google Alerts:** Set up multiple Google Alerts for your company, brand, products, leaders, etc. The alerts will get delivered directly to your email inbox at the frequency you indicate (e.g. daily or as they happen) and is a great way to help you track media coverage and mentions of your brand on the web on news sites, in blogs, etc.

**Twitter:** Monitor mentions of your brand on Twitter with tools like Twitter Search or HootSuite. CoTweet is also a great tool to help manage multiple users on a corporate Twitter account and allows you to assign particular tweets to the appropriate team member for follow-up.

**Google Reader and RSS Feeds:** Set up RSS feeds in Google Reader of searches of your brand in other popular social media sites such as Flickr, Digg, Delicious, etc. Scan the results in your reader daily for mentions.

**Facebook Insights:** Stay on top of and participate in discussions occurring on your company's Facebook Fan Page. Use your Fan Page's Facebook Insights Dashboard (found in the left sidebar when you're on your page as an admin) to show you stats such as fan growth and page views to gauge your page's interaction and engagement.

Social media monitoring can also be extremely helpful in managing crisis communication. By staying on top of mentions of your company in social media, you'll be aware of any negative or potentially harmful conversations taking place about your brand. This will help you thwart any possibly reputation-damaging discussions in a more time-sensitive manner. Here are some helpful ways to stave off negative reactions about your company in social media during a crisis.

**If you're in the wrong, admit it.** Keeping quiet has the potential to do more harm than good. If you notice something negative spreading about you on the web and/or in social media, it's best to address it head on. If you'd like an example of how keeping quiet about a problem has contributed to a damaged reputation, read about the Kryptonite Lock case study.

**Update people early and often.** Whether it's something as small as a webinar malfunction or something as severe as a security breach, if the situation is happening in real time, you should continuously update the public on the status of the situation. Twitter and Facebook are great ways to release updates in real time, but use your best judgment about the best way to get the word out to your affected audience.

**Be transparent.** Tell people what happened. If you don't know yet what happened, say you're looking into the root of the problem, and always apologize for any inconvenience it may be causing the affected people. What people hate even more than a crisis is when a company does not take responsibility for that crisis. Once the actual crisis is over, write a blog article explaining everything – what happened, how you reacted, what you're doing to make things better in the future, and how you plan to keep it from happening again.

# Value of Awards & Speaking Engagements

## Value of Awards

Submitting your company for and winning industry-related awards is a great PR tool. Winning awards has a similar effect that media coverage does – it shows your publics that your company and its products/services are worthy of third party validation. Award wins can also be great as a recruiting tool.

Start researching relevant awards in your industry and putting together a database that you can use to keep track of deadlines. If you win an award, publicise it in your press room and/or create a dedicated page on your website to showcase your award wins. Why not also write an article for your company blog and share your success (humbly) in social media?

## Value of Speaking Engagements

While social media has made building relationships and connecting with constituents much easier, it shouldn't completely replace the personal touch of face-to-face communication. Securing speaking engagements for your executives at educational, industry-focused conferences and events is a great way to facilitate face-to-face communication with potential and current customers as well as an effective way to exhibit the knowledge, thought leadership, and expertise of your company's leaders.

Start researching local events relative to your industry and reach out to event organisers to pitch a particular speaker within your organisation about presenting an educational topic he/she has expertise in. Once a speaker has a solid repertoire of speaking experience, start reaching out to higher-level, more popular conferences and summits that attract larger audiences (these usually have a more formal submission/pitching process using online forms and strict deadlines). Ultimately, putting a speaker of yours in front of a large audience of potential customers can do wonders for your brand by connecting your company's thought leaders with prospects face-to-face.

Once a speaker is confirmed for an event, use social media channels to generate buzz and publicity about your speaker's presentation. Share the news on your Facebook Fan Page or via your Twitter feed, write an article on your company blog, or create a web page that aggregates upcoming speaking engagements. Even if people are unable to attend the event in person, reading about your speaker's presence at the event will show that your company is actively committed to thought leadership and connecting with its publics face-to-face. Create a corporate SlideShare account and let people know that the speaker's presentation will be uploaded there after the event. This will enable those who cannot attend to access the speaker's slides afterward.

When speakers are preparing for speaking engagements, they should think of ways to infuse social media elements into their presentations. As a speaker, offer ways for audience members to connect with you online by providing your (and/or your company's) social media credentials such as Twitter handles, Facebook Fan Page link, etc. By giving the audience a way to connect with you, your brand, company, etc. beyond the day of the event, you can help nurture and build the connections you make at the event into more mature relationships online.

Make sure your audience knows that, following the event, you will upload the presentation to your company's corporate SlideShare account so attendees can access and share your presentation slides even after the event is over. Make sure speakers' business cards provide ways to connect with them in social media, and consider adding their Twitter handle or Facebook link.

Check out the Science of Presentations ebook for more ideas about how to make your presentations more social.

## 5. Customer Relations & Evangelism

Your customers are a great public relations tool for your business. Happy customers can become powerful evangelists of your company, products, and brand. Social media is an effective tool to help you facilitate and improve communication with your customers as well as a great way to promote your happy customers' successes. Here's the why and the how:

**Using Social Media for Customer Feedback and Support:** It does not matter whether you are a B2B or B2C company, your customers are participating in social media. Making yourself available to them in this space is a great way to communicate with them about a number of things, whether it's a product update, a maintenance issue, or the intention of receiving feedback about your products or services. Businesses are increasingly using Twitter for customer support by using corporate representatives on Twitter to help support customers. Businesses are also taking advantage of their Facebook presence to survey customers and foster two-way communication.

**Fodder for Media Coverage:** Journalists are always looking for a great story. Do you have a unique or interesting customer who has used your product or service to achieve great business results or personal success? Customer success can be great fodder for an interesting pitch.

**Using Case Studies:** Generating customer case studies is a win-win situation. You get to show that your product or service actually works, and your customer gets to demonstrate how successful they've been! Consider creating a separate blog for customer case studies and promoting those case studies in social media. Case studies are also great to reference when pitching a customer success story to a journalist or blogger.

## 6. Employee Relations

A company's employees double as PR representatives for your business, whether you (or they) like it or not. Now that social networking has become so popular and is working its way into how we do business, many people have their own personal presence on social media sites. They tweet from their own Twitter accounts, publish personal blogs, participate on Facebook, have a profile on LinkedIn, and host their own YouTube channels.

While this may be scary to some business leaders, the reality is that your employees will participate in social media, and it's very difficult to control what they say.

While businesses may find comfort in blocking access to social media sites at the office or drafting strict social media guidelines for how employees should behave on these sites, our recommendation is a more laidback approach. The biggest fear businesses have about their employees' participation in social media is that they'll do or say something that might misrepresent the company or cause damage to the company's image and reputation.

These are valid concerns, but our belief is that a lot of these fears can be thwarted by simply making your employees happy and facilitating good employee relations. Happy employees equal positive PR. Thankfully, there are a few things you can do using social media to facilitate this:

**Internal Wikis:** An internal wiki is a great hub for internal communication and collaboration within a company. Use a wiki both to help communicate new ideas within the company and receive feedback from employees or to rally people to organize a company picnic or group activity to increase morale!

**Corporate Instant Messaging:** Enable communication between employees and across departments by implementing a corporate instant messaging system, such as Spark.

**Transparency:** Being transparent is critical to maintaining trust among your employees. Use email or your internal wiki to discuss company-wide issues or to communicate changes and announcements. Keeping your employees in the dark about major issues is sure to create unhappy workers.

**No (or Little) Social Media Policy:** No one wants to be told what to do, especially if it involves their personal life. You can't dictate how your employees participate in social media on their own time, and creating disgruntled employees by implementing a strict social media policy will only fuel the fire and create disgruntled workers. If you're going to initiate a social media policy, keep it simple, and use it to serve as a reminder that employees should use good discretion when engaging in social media. Your employees should have good common sense not to disclose confidential information on Facebook, but sometimes a reminder doesn't hurt.

Remember, for businesses' presence in social media, reach is key. Every person your company employs has their own social networks, and thus their own reach. Empowering happy employees to spread the message of your company, its products, and its mission positively is a great way to tap into a larger pool of potential customers.

## 7. Measuring the ROI of Public Relations

## 7. Measuring the ROI of Public Relations

So you've started becoming more actively engaged in social media to aid your public relations efforts. But can you tell if it's working? Measuring the return on investment -- and more appropriately for PR, the return on effort -- is an important part of any marketing initiative. You should always be measuring the success of your programs to determine whether your efforts are generating positive results. Measuring ROI can also help you decide if you need to make adjustments to your current processes so you can get the most from your efforts.

Measuring ROI in public relations has always been a pain point for practitioners. However, the web has helped to make tracking ROI more reasonable and less of a headache. The following are some quantitative and quantitative ways you can track if your PR methods are delivering results.

**Track Mentions in Media Using Google Alerts:** Google Alerts can be a great way to track mentions of your brand on the web and in social media and blogs. What is the tone of your mentions? Are they positive? Negative? Neutral?

**Compare Mentions of Your Company against Competitors:** Consider measuring how your company is faring against competitor brands in terms of media mentions and their tones by setting up Google Alerts for your competitors as well. Compete allows you to compare specific metrics of your website against its competitors, and Website Grader also enables you to compare your website with your competitors' websites in terms of statistics like traffic rank and inbound links (see Website Grader report example below).

**Track Press Release Syndications:** Track how many times the press releases you distribute via wire services get syndicated on portal sites. Some newswire services like Marketwire offer customized reports per release to show you where your release has been syndicated.

**Evaluate the Reach of Media Coverage:** If your brand was mentioned on a popular news site or blog or your CEO was interviewed on a podcast or online radio show, use free web analytics tools like Compete or Alexa to determine the reach of those sites. Similarly, if your CEO was interviewed on a traditional radio show, find out what the listenership is typically like for that particular show.

**Evaluate Your Reach in Social Media:** How many Twitter followers do you have? How many Facebook fans have you accumulated? Check out your Facebook Page's Insights to determine if you're effectively engaging your fans.

**Net Promoter Score:** Net Promoter is a management tool that can be used to gauge the loyalty of a company's customer relationships. Has your score increased since you've been dedicating more time and effort to customer relations?

**Analyze Your Website's Sources:** Use Google Analytics to help analyze how people are finding you online. Did your site visitors find a press release of yours on a portal site that linked back to your website? Are you generating traffic from social media sites like Facebook or Twitter?

**Count Your Award Wins:** How many awards have you won? Have any of your award wins resulted in media coverage or talent acquisition?

**Evaluate Your Speaking Engagements:** How many speaking engagements have you secured? What was the size of the audience to which you presented?

**Ask Your Customers How They Found You:** While it might be difficult to determine otherwise, consider asking customers or prospects how they initially found out about you to determine if your PR efforts are actually working to attract prospects and, ultimately, customers.

**Compare Results Before and After Specific Initiatives:** Maybe you launched a Facebook Fan Page or corporate Twitter account recently. Do you notice any difference in your business' reputation or public perception since you started devoting more time to specific PR efforts?

**Conclusion:**

It may look as though it is just too hard to develop and implement a Social Media Strategy. But just make a start – get a company Facebook page; make some posts (blogs) and link them to your website. Make a few simple videos and upload them on YouTube. Add a link to your website. It is all free and you will be a step ahead of your competitors that put it in the 'too hard' basket.

Good luck with your Social Media endeavours!