

# MEDIA TRAINING GUIDEBOOK

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Journalist Relations • Pitching • Messaging  
Spokesperson Prep • Crisis Management • Influencer Relations  
Social Media • Measuring Media Efforts

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**PRNews**

**MEDIA  
TRAINING  
GUIDEBOOK**

Published by PR News Press • [prnewsonline.com](http://prnewsonline.com)

**Vol. 6**

## Foreword



Dear reader,

When it comes to the media, some people long for simpler times. In the popular imagination, there was an era when “the media” was a roving band of nosy journalists in fedoras who would jot down information on a steno pad and then rush off to tap on their typewriters—or, if the news was really urgent, call their editors from the nearest payphone.

Today, “the media” is a kid who posts videos of himself playing video games to **YouTube**. It’s a college student who **Instagrams** her nights out. It’s a snarky smartmouth who makes trenchant observations about the whisky industry on **Reddit**. Yes, it’s also *The New York Times*, but the impact of your brand’s exposure is no longer measured in column inches, but by how many people see it and how they feel about it. It’s easy to understand why you might long for times when it was easier to wrap your head around exactly whom you were trying to get in touch with, reach out and call it a day.

But unless you work for **Apple** or **Google**, it would be wiser to see today’s multifaceted media landscape as an opportunity to win coverage in places that didn’t exist until recently. In this PR News Media Training Guidebook, you’ll find key ways to establish relationships that could yield valuable exposure, even within more traditional media outlets; for instance, as Melissa Biernacinski of **Imagine Communications** points out, “most business researchers eventually are promoted to business reporters.”

Beyond getting your foot in the door with influencers, we’ve gathered authors from various backgrounds—in-house, agency, nonprofit, ex-reporter—to address the evergreen topics of getting your messaging on point and preparing members of leadership for on-camera interviews. As Kraig Kann, CCO of the **LPGA** and former lead anchor at **Golf Channel**, says, your spokesperson is akin to somebody on a stage in the living room, trying to get the attention of an audience making dinner in the kitchen. Our contributors delve into how to get them to come into the next room and spend some time listening, even amid the din of distractions. Just 24% of brands’ spokespeople receive media training yearly, according to a **Nasdaq/PR News** poll; imagine how much more effective they could be at winning over that audience.

It all comes down to telling the right story in the right way, even when things go wrong and the brand is under fire. There are many different paths to that goal—with obstacles along the way in each one—and it’s our aim to get you there. We hope the lessons in this PR News Guidebook will help you achieve success.

Sincerely,

Ian Wright  
Managing Editor, Guidebooks, PR News

# PRNews

ISSN 1540-8033



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# The Press Release Is Not Dead: Catapult Your Releases to the Next Level on Social

By Mayra Ruiz-McPherson

**1**906. That was the year the first press release was distributed by American publicity expert Ivy Ledbetter Lee, who believed it might be in the best interest of his clients to replace the biased publicity handouts of the day with “statements of fact” that could be “relied upon to be truthful.”

More than 100 years later, the press release continues to be a PR staple, but its format and distribution have evolved in recent years in large part due to the now-ubiquitous nature of internet publishing, the rise of online wire distribution services and the onset of social media.

## ‘Back in 2006...’

That’s how **SHIFT Communications** references the date it “pioneered the first social media press release.”<sup>1</sup>

Since then, the idea of a social media press release took off, with many industry influencers and publications clamoring to highlight the trend.

When most people think of making press releases more social, a handful of routine tasks and social media-inspired to-do’s come to mind, including:

- adding links to a

brand’s social media channels above or below press release content

- incorporating third-party shareable widgets
  - (a) within actual press release content (such as **ClickToTweet**) or
  - (b) around press release content (such as with **AddThis** or **ShareThis**)
- posting press release headlines and links to a brand’s social channels

## Is the Press Release Format Dated?







As the press release nears 110 years of age, it’s easy to see how its 1906 origins are somewhat at odds with today’s social media-infused climate, where sharing an interesting

Social Media Release Trends Over the Past 8 Years  
2006 - 2014





## SOCIAL MEDIA PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE, VERSION 1.0

<b>CONTACT INFORMATION:</b>	<b>Client contact</b> Phone #/skype Email IM address Web site	<b>Spokesperson</b> Phone #/skype Email IM address Blog/relevant post	<b>Agency contact</b> Phone #/skype Email IM address Web site
<b>NEWS RELEASE HEADLINE</b> Subhead			
<b>CORE NEWS FACTS</b> ▪ Bullet-points preferable			
	<b>LINK &amp; RSS FEED TO PURPOSE-BUILT DEL.ICIO.US PAGE</b> The purpose-built del.icio.us page offers hyperlinks (and PR annotation in "notes" fields) to relevant historical, trend, market, product & competitive content sources, providing context as-needed, and, on-going updates.		
<b>PHOTO</b> e.g., product picture, exec headshot, etc.	<b>MP3 FILE OR PODCAST LINK</b> e.g., sound bytes by various stakeholders	<b>GRAPHIC</b> e.g., product schematic; market size graphs; logos	<b>VIDEO</b> e.g., brief product demo by in-house expert
<b>MORE MULTIMEDIA AVAILABLE BY REQUEST</b> e.g., "download white paper"			
<b>PRE-APPROVED QUOTES FROM CORPORATE EXECUTIVES, ANALYSTS, CUSTOMERS AND/OR PARTNERS</b> Recommendation: no more than 2 quotes per contact. The PR agency should have additional quotes at-the-ready, "upon request," for journalists who desire exclusive content. This provides opportunity for Agency to add further value to interested media.			
<b>LINKS TO RELEVANT COVERAGE TO-DATE (OPTIONAL)</b> This empowers journalist to "take a different angle," etc. These links would also be cross-posted to the custom del.icio.us site.			
<b>BOILERPLATE STATEMENTS</b>			
	<b>RSS FEED TO CLIENT'S NEWS RELEASES</b>		
<b>"ADD TO DEL.ICIO.US"</b> Allows readers to use the release as a standalone portal to this news			
	<b>TECHNORATI TAGS/"DIGG THIS"</b>		

narrative in the form of brand storytelling outpaces the demand for corporate fact telling and reporting.

Moreover, in a 2014 **Frac.tl** study of more than 500 leading digital publishers to find out what they want, and don't want, from content creators and outreachers,<sup>ii</sup> press releases were dubbed “a thing of the past.”

Frac.tl marketing VP and partner Kelsey Libert says “Press releases, badges and widgets all came in at under 5%” when compared to the 43 most common winning ways to create content on the web.<sup>iii</sup>

### Why Press Releases Resulted in Such a Low Score

Libert cites Frac.tl study findings indicating that publishers:

- want to collaborate with content creation
- seek exclusive research
- prefer data visualization
- prefer informative articles rather than a standard press release
- like content with unusual angles, trending topics, interesting data and actionable advice

In general, the format of a press release fails to lend itself well to addressing these publisher needs. For example, the mass distribution of press releases across the web contradicts a publisher's desire to work with exclusive content.

### How Communicators Can Modernize Press Releases

If the press release has any hope of staying relevant or becoming more current in a climate where hashtags, emojis, brief captions and quick status updates reign as the mass

form of communication and news sharing, then some changes in the way press releases are administered should be needed.

Communicators and outreachers seeking to further align their press releases closer with the tenets of social media must think beyond formats, links and widgets. Anyone aiming to milk all the social media goodness from a press release should begin by asking this one critical question:

---

**“How can I extend the core narrative embodied in my press release across social channels beyond its newsworthy date?”**

---

To better align press release writing and content with social media outreach possibilities, one should follow these steps:

1. First, focus on the actual story being shared within the release.
2. Next, work from that core narrative outward with relevant sub-story angles and social tie-ins.

### Table 1.1

Let's reference Table 1.1, “Core Narrative on the Day of the Release,” to see how these two steps come together.

Table 1.1 outlines content details gleaned directly from a December 22, 2015 **WebMD** press release listed on **PRNewswire**<sup>iv</sup> [see next page], which will be repeatedly referenced as our primary release example throughout this article.

As you review Table 1.1, keep in mind that the WebMD press release already was issued.

Note: Suggestions and sample ideas listed in Tables 1.2 and 1.3 are mine and were not provided by WebMD.

## WebMD Predicts Cold and Flu Symptoms to Peak Early in the New Year

WebMD Cold and Flu Map data shows Atlantic, Southeast, and Midwest to experience highest levels of cold and flu symptoms

NEW YORK, Dec. 22, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- WebMD (NASDAQ: WBMD), the leading source of health information, predicts the 2015-2016 cold and flu season will peak during the first week of the New Year, with the Atlantic, Southeast, and Midwest regions set to experience the highest levels of cold and flu symptoms in the country. According to the WebMD Cold and Flu Map, top cities expected to ring in the New Year with the highest levels of cold and flu symptoms include Richmond/Norfolk, VA; Knoxville, TN; Louisville, KY; Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX; and Nashville, TN.

Visit the WebMD Cold & Flu Map: <http://symptoms.webmd.com/cold-and-flu-map-tool/>

Visit the WebMD Cold, Flu, and Cough Health Center: <http://www.webmd.com/cold-and-flu/>

Sponsored by RB, a leading consumer health and hygiene company, the WebMD Cold and Flu interactive map uses a combination of geo-location data and information compiled from over 4 million monthly visits to WebMD's Symptom Checker to display a real-time analysis of the spread of cold and flu. The WebMD Cold and Flu data, updated weekly, has proven to be highly predictive of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) prevalence data, having a 0.99 correlation with the CDC Cold and Flu Report. The proprietary models WebMD uses to track symptoms can predict cold and flu trends up to 6 weeks in advance. Users of the map can track cold and flu symptoms broadly across the entire country, narrower by state, or as pinpointed at the county level.

### Top 20 U.S. Cities Likely to Experience Highest Rates of Cold and Flu Symptoms Early in the New Year

- |                                   |                               |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Richmond/Norfolk, VA           | 11. Indianapolis, IN          |
| 2. Knoxville, TN                  | 12. Phoenix/Tucson, AZ        |
| 3. Louisville, KY                 | 13. Cincinnati/Dayton, OH     |
| 4. Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX           | 14. Birmingham/Montgomery, AL |
| 5. Nashville, TN                  | 15. Atlanta, GA               |
| 6. Charlotte, N.C.                | 16. Austin, TX                |
| 7. Baltimore, MD/Washington, D.C. | 17. St. Louis, MO             |
| 8. Roanoke, VA                    | 18. Columbus, OH              |
| 9. Charleston, S.C.               | 19. Grand Rapids, MI          |
| 10. Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN      | 20. Omaha, NE                 |

The WebMD Cold and Flu Map data continues to show increasing rates of symptoms, trending toward a high level of activity early in the New Year, with unseasonably warm temperatures having an ongoing impact on cold and flu trends.

"People are exposed to cold and flu germs on a daily basis," says Michael Smith, MD, chief medical editor of WebMD. "By being aware of symptom severity in their geographic area, consumers can make smart choices about preventative measures to protect themselves or their families and stay healthy during this cold and flu season."

#### About WebMD

WebMD Health Corp. (NASDAQ: WBMD) is the leading provider of health information services, serving consumers, physicians, healthcare professionals, employers, and health plans through our public and private online portals, mobile platforms and health-focused publications.

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*Example press release*

<p><b>-- CORE NARRATIVE ON DAY OF PRESS RELEASE --</b></p> <p>Use this worksheet to outline the main story angle and related sub-story points, of your press release to help inspire and organize social content possibilities.</p>						
<p><b>(A1) Intended Press Release LIVE Date</b> December 22, 2015</p>						
<p><b>(A2) Press Release's Story Angles &amp; Goals</b></p> <p><u>Story Angles</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• highlights data gleaned from WebMD's Cold and Flu Interactive Map</li> <li>• spotlights cities throughout USA most affected by this year's cold and flu season</li> </ul> <p><u>Goals</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• drive traffic/awareness to WebMD's Cold and Flu Interactive Map and Cough Health Center</li> <li>• underscore WebMD's position as a leading source of health information</li> </ul>						
<p><b>(A3) Press Release Headlines</b></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;"><b>Headline</b></td> <td>WebMD Predicts Cold and Flu Symptoms to Peak Early in the New Year</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Subheadline</b></td> <td>WebMD Cold and Flu Map data shows Atlantic, Southeast, and Midwest to experience highest levels of cold and flu symptoms</td> </tr> </table>			<b>Headline</b>	WebMD Predicts Cold and Flu Symptoms to Peak Early in the New Year	<b>Subheadline</b>	WebMD Cold and Flu Map data shows Atlantic, Southeast, and Midwest to experience highest levels of cold and flu symptoms
<b>Headline</b>	WebMD Predicts Cold and Flu Symptoms to Peak Early in the New Year					
<b>Subheadline</b>	WebMD Cold and Flu Map data shows Atlantic, Southeast, and Midwest to experience highest levels of cold and flu symptoms					
<p><b>(A4.1) Release highlight 1</b></p> <p>The 2015-2016 cold and flu season will peak during the first week of the New Year</p> <p><b>(A4.2) Visual content opportunity for social sharing</b></p> <p>Create charts comparing past 2014-2015 (and possibly 2013-2014) cold and flu season peaks with 2015-2016's data.</p>	<p><b>(A5.1) Release highlight 2</b></p> <p>The Atlantic, Southeast, and Midwest regions set to experience the highest levels of cold and flu symptoms in the country.</p> <p><b>(A5.2) Visual content opportunity for social sharing</b></p> <p>An image of a USA map showcasing these three areas with their levels of cold/flu symptoms; use color coding to emphasize which of the three has the worst levels.</p>	<p><b>(A6.1) Release highlight 3</b></p> <p>Top cities expected to ring in the New Year with the highest levels of cold and flu symptoms include Richmond/Norfolk, VA; Knoxville, TN; Louisville, KY; Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX; and Nashville, TN.</p> <p><b>(A6.2) Visual content opportunity for social sharing</b></p> <p>Infographic spotlighting these top cities with a cold/flu theme</p>				

*Table 1.1*

### Social Sharing Windows Beyond Release Dates



Ideally, you would use Table 1.1 to help you organize social content possibilities from your core narrative well before your release is published on the web.

After you've broken out visual content ideas derived from the press release's core narrative, your focus can shift to extending social media goodness beyond your release's newsworthy date.

#### Social Media Sharing Opportunities Before and After a Release Launch Date

With your press release's core narrative and related details defined, you can then incorporate social media sharing possibilities working your way outward beyond your release's

intended publish date.

Content marketers and PR pros don't usually consider the 30 days before ("pre") and 90 days after ("post") as prime slots for sharing release-related content. Instead, they opt to post:

- links to the release on social channels the same day as the release.
- an "in case you missed it" (ICYMI) social content angle a few days later
- links to the release multiple times over a 24-72 hour window immediately after a release has launched

All of the above are fine. Yet, if we're talk-

## 5 Simple Steps to Boost Your Release Content On Social

- 1 Acknowledge**  
 Recognize your social PR efforts could be improved beyond formats, links and widgets. 
- 2 The Core Narrative**  
 To extract social media goodness from your releases, first define the various story highlights inspired by your core narrative. 
- 3 Beyond Release Date**  
 Use social media to extend your release's core narrative pre- and post-press release launch dates. 
- 4 Get More Visual**  
 Identify strong visual elements for social sharing inspired by press release headlines and story angles. 
- 5 Don't Forget Hashtags**  
 Associate at least one primary hashtag with release content to amplify social PR efforts. 



<p align="center"><b>-- PRE-PRESS RELEASE: SOCIAL NARRATIVE IDEAS --</b></p> <p align="center">Pre-story release teasers/hints for social sharing BEFORE you send out your release. Think of these as mini-content appetizers to be served before a press release launch.</p> <p align="center">Space content sharing out just enough to keep traction without overdoing it. Be sure to work with your social media manager to refine and implement your ideas in concert with other planned or scheduled content.</p>				
Days before release date	Hint, teaser, clue angle	Visual Idea, Concept or Imagery	Links to	Exists Y / N
30 days (Nov 22-ish)	Cold and flu season are here! Are you planning to get a flu shot this season?	Photo of crumpled tissues on a table, next to a cup of steaming hot tea	Post on Twitter; use Twitter poll to engage community (set up poll for "yes" or "no" answers)	<b>N</b> Photo and blog post need to be created
15 days (Dec 7)	<b>Factoid angle:</b> "The predominance of H3N2 viruses this season has caused a significant burden of serious disease in older people." —CDC	Stylize this quote, pair up with our hashtag(s)	no link	<b>N</b> Photo needs to be created
7 days (Dec 15)	<b>Quick tip angle:</b> "Flu season is upon us. Boost your immune system by drinking plenty of water."	Let's create at least 2-3 variations of this; perhaps 1 photo of adult female drinking water... 1 photo of adult male drinking water... and we can alternate imagery as needed	no link	<b>N</b> Photo(s) needs to be created
3 days (Dec 19)	<b>Tweet for Twitter:</b> To help stop spread of #flu: Avoid close contact w people who are sick. Stay home when sick. Cover mouth/nose w a tissue when you cough/sneeze.	No image, text only	no link	n/a
2 days (Dec 20)	<b>Share third party content:</b> Can being cold make you get a cold? via @berkeleywell	Reference image from @berkeleywell post <a href="http://www.berkeleywellness.com/sites/default/files/field/image/400-04842180c-Masterfile-jackethead_field_img_hero_988_380.jpg">http://www.berkeleywellness.com/sites/default/files/field/image/400-04842180c-Masterfile-jackethead_field_img_hero_988_380.jpg</a>	<a href="http://www.berkeleywellness.com/self-care/preventive-care/article/can-being-cold-make-you-get-cold">http://www.berkeleywellness.com/self-care/preventive-care/article/can-being-cold-make-you-get-cold</a>	n/a
1 day (Dec 21)	<b>Post a question to generate interest and engagement:</b> "What top USA cities are expected to ring in the new year with the highest levels of cold and flu symptoms? We'll reveal the top 20 cities tomorrow! Stay tuned."	Perhaps a map of the USA with a question mark on it	n/a	<b>N</b> Photo(s) needs to be created

Table 1.2

ing about extending, elevating, heightening and catapulting your social PR to new levels—which we are—then these tasks merely are starting points.

### Tables 1.2 & 1.3

Let's now reference Table 1.2: Pre-Press Release: Social Narrative Ideas and Table 1.3: Post-Press Release: Continuing Narratives with Social to help you see how one can maxi-

mize social sharing possibilities in support of release content.

For continuity, the WebMD press release example continues to be referenced.

### Important Things to Keep in Mind

- The tempo or frequency of what you share or how much you share is up to you. If it's not possible to post something on all the days as suggested above, that's

<b>-- POST-PRESS RELEASE: CONTINUING NARRATIVES W/SOCIAL --</b>				
Press release-related story angles AFTER your release date. These keep up story awareness, continue to drive relevant traffic and extend the social goodness of your release's content well beyond the publish date. Be sure to work with your social media manager to incorporate these content angles when planning weekly or monthly content.				
Days after release date	Angle	Links to	Visual Idea, Concept or Imagery	Exists Y / N
1 day	Spotlight least impacted cities	Press release on WebMD	Infographic showcasing the last 3 of the 20 cities least impacted by cold and flu symptoms	N Need graphic design help
2 days	n/a			
3 days	Reference an interesting quote from the re-search findings	Cold/flu map	"People are exposed to cold and flu germs on a daily basis." —Michael Smith, MD, chief medical editor of WebMD	N Need graphic design help
7 days	Plug WebMD's interactive cold/flu map	Cold/flu map	See how our WebMD Symptom Checker users are reporting cold and flu symptoms in your area.	Y No additional support needed
15 days	Share an interesting "factoid" related to cold/flu	Press release on WebMD	Did you know: Unseasonably warm temperatures are having an ongoing impact on cold and flu trends	Y No additional support needed
30 days	Reference an interesting quote from the research findings	Cold/flu map	"By being aware of symptom severity in their geographic area, consumers can make smart choices about preventative measures to protect themselves or their families and stay healthy during this cold and flu season." —Michael Smith, MD, chief medical editor of WebMD	N Need graphic design help
60 days	Plug WebMD's interactive cold/flu map	Cold/flu map	Are cold and flu symptoms in your area moderate? Severe? Find out w our cold & flu map.	Y No additional support needed
90 days	Plug WebMD's interactive cold/flu map	Cold/flu map	Help your friends & family find the cold & flu levels in their area	Y No additional support needed
6 months	In some cases, it may make sense to continue extending your press release content across social beyond the post 90-day period.			
9 months				
12 months				

Table 1.3

fine. The 30-day pre-release window should be flexible; the dates you cite or list can be specific dates or broader date ranges. The idea is to get you thinking about social content angles in support of your release well before a press release's launch date.

- Table 1.2 is intended to help you brainstorm and document or draft some initial ideas. Be sure you collaborate with your social media team or partner

to more formally finalize your suggested social content outside of this initial framework.

Important Things to Keep in Mind

- As with sample ideas suggested in Table 1.2, use table 1.3 to help you map out social sharing opportunities for release-related content. This is intended for drafting concepts and organizing broad social content possibilities beyond a release's launch date.

-- HASHTAGS RELATED TO RELEASE CONTENT --		
Identify your primary hashtag, related conversations and social media influencers who will find your news or press release content focus to be of interest.		
Press Release Title: WebMD Predicts Cold and Flu Symptoms to Peak Early in the New Year		
Primary	Angle	Links to
#coldflumap	1. #FluSeason	@FluGov
	2. #Flu or #TheFlu	@AttentiveCareNY
	3. #ColdandFluSeason	@ChiroJam

*Table 1.4*

### One More Social Media Detail: the Hashtag

It surprises me how often companies fail to associate their news items with a specific hashtag.

In the case of the WebMD cold and flu seasonal trends press release, it would have been a conversation-extending opportunity had WebMD paired information about its interactive, real-time cold and flu trends map with a relevant hashtag such as #coldflumap.

To help you map out which hashtags may be the most relevant for your press release content, use Table 1.4: Hashtags Related to Release Content to compile your hashtag research and findings.

Researching hashtags related to your press release topic can often reveal:

- ideas for new connections
- ways to insert your relevant content into targeted conversation threads
- inspiration for how to best extend your release content across social

If you're interested in elevating the social media aspects of your PR, then each release moving forward should be associated with at least one primary hashtag.

Additional hashtag and influencer research are optional to-dos but highly worthwhile if

the goal is to extend your core narrative with like-minded content advocates across the social sphere.

### Ready, Set, Post!

Communicators committed to using social platforms to catapult

their press releases to the next level can use the practical information and guidance shared here to stretch the shelf life of release-related content beyond launch dates.

To propel your social PR to new heights, just follow these five simple steps.

Remember, social PR is about augmenting your existing outreach effort with social media-specific strategies. Take the time to assess unique opportunities offered by way of social and collaborate closely with social media team members to maximize your social PR's true potential. **PRN**

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