



## IVY'S TOP 10 EXECUTIVE PR BLUNDERS

### 10. Speaking in trade lingo.

Many executives are in the habit – often unconscious – of peppering their speech with industry and company jargon. This is commonly expressed through acronyms, nicknames, technical terminology and abbreviations. All of these can dim journalists' (and the public's) feeling for and understanding of your business, and are often a turnoff to those you want to most impress.

### 9. Avoiding the press.

Some executives prefer staying out of the limelight, while others are intimidated by contact with the press. By leaving interviews and announcements to other members of your team – or worse, to your business competitors – you miss the opportunity to demonstrate yours and your company's expertise and leadership or to establish trust with important target audiences and stakeholders.

### 8. Assuming that reporters are familiar with your company's reputation (or your own).

Journalists move quickly from one story and deadline to the next. Unlike years ago when most journalists were assigned to a single beat and had subject area longevity and expertise, nowadays journalists move rapidly among topics, locations and news organizations. Some will follow a company or an executive's career over time and others will research right before an interview. Whatever the possibility, you won't likely know what background information the journalist has before you meet, so be sure that you use the interview to provide the most important historical information and current facts that are relevant to the story.

### 7. Hoping no one will notice.

Has your company experienced major service failures, significant employee turnover or product defects? If you care what the public thinks, then you need to devise a communications strategy to address problematic incidents when they happen. It is rare that a company can afford to remain silent when something goes wrong. The result is handing off how the media portrays your company to your customers, employees and investors. You risk losing customers, let alone public and shareholder confidence and relationships.

### 6. Speaking in platitudes.

Many executives ooze with pride when discussing their companies, but give journalists little proof that their claims are real. Real-world examples – backed up by data highlights – that demonstrate your company's progress and accomplishments are an essential aspect of any communications with the news media for building trust and generating positive coverage.



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## **5. Waiting to invest in PR until a major event or crisis.**

Industry leaders and market share are not built overnight. Companies that limit damage and come out best after a crisis have are those with an ADVANCE crisis communications strategy along with expert public relations counsel advising them on their approach and plan. You'll want to assemble an arsenal of tools to position for competitive advantage – or even survival. The news media is a crucial resource for educating stakeholders about your perspective of what really happened, while providing important 3rd party credibility. The worst time to start establishing relationships with the press and educating them about your company is during a crisis.

## **4. Treating a reporter as if their publication is not important.**

The Wall Street Journal and New York Times limit how often they cover most companies. Sure, Fortune 100 corporations with a lot of analyst coverage may get a lot of “ink”. However, there are many media outlets – from broadcast and print to online – that all contribute to building your business reputation, as well as your own. If you ignore smaller outlets whose viewers, listeners and readers are your customers, prospects and investors, they may report negatively about you. Treating these reporters with any less respect when responding to their interview requests, or ignoring them as potential news targets, can result in negative coverage at worst, or limit the valuable opportunity to build your case of support in the marketplace.

## **3. Boasting about innovations before they are real.**

While it may be tempting to share exciting plans and negotiations-in-progress, executives and their companies may look foolish if they tell a reporter about business actions that are not conclusive. Some are surprised when yesterday's brainstorm appears in ink as a promise not kept. Others have prospective partners and investors upset for their breach of confidentiality or misrepresentation of a situation. Putting your best foot forward with a reporter includes being honest about the state of the business, its products and relationships.

## **2. Showing up unprepared for an interview.**

Because they are experts in the subject matter, many executives think they are ready to speak with the press on a moment's notice. Even with plenty of advance notice, some do not think they need to devote time to prepare for the meeting. The result of these faulty assumptions is that many executives are not ready for the topic at hand, nor armed with fresh proof points, solid examples and data. The executive may ramble without delivering a cohesive message or even give a strong marketing pitch for the company that the reporter will find non-responsive or not newsworthy. These scenarios do not result in positive media coverage that builds the company or executive's reputation.

## **1. Sharing exuberant financial projections that aren't consistent with official company targets.**

You don't want to be the CEO who asks your PR advisor “where'd they get that information?” only to be reminded that it came straight from you. The desire to pump-up performance or the company's competitive positioning frequently backfire, leaving your team – from finance, sales and marketing to customer service and operations – to clean up your mess.