

# Public Relations (PR) & Communication toolkit

**Building your business through  
effective communications**



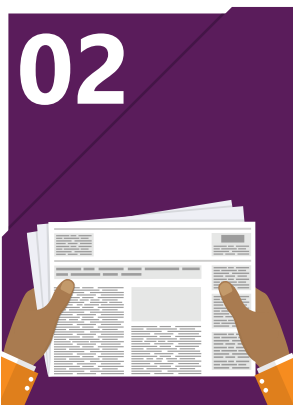
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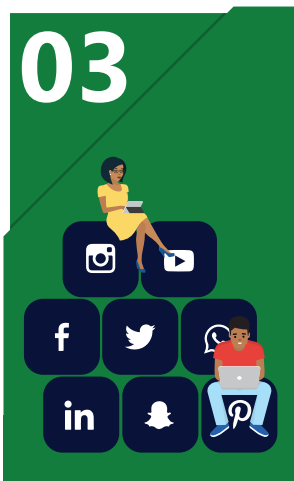
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“

If I was down to my last dollar, I'd spend it on public relations.

**-Bill Gates**



”



01

# The basics of PR

## Why do I need to do this?

Many start-ups have taken the lead of Bill Gates and have invested in PR which demonstrates the need for new businesses to get their message out there with a focus on cultivating a positive reputation to increase demand and generate leads.

Creating key messages will form the backbone of all your messaging and this needs to communicate the mission and values of your business in a compelling and memorable manner.

PR will also help you to manage your reputation and build good relationships with your customers and stakeholders, which will motivate them to take the actions you want.

## What is PR?

“Public Relations Management is the practice of deliberately managing the release and spread of information between an individual or an organization and the public.” Wikipedia.

Whilst one can understand the Wikipedia definition above, the example below illustrates it in a more humorous context:

If a young man tells his date how handsome, smart and successful he is – that’s advertising.  
If the young man tells his date she’s intelligent, looks lovely and is a great conversationalist, he’s saying the right things to the right person – that’s marketing.  
If someone else tells the young woman how handsome, smart and successful her date is – that’s PR!

## There are three different channels you can use when doing your PR:



### Owned

#### Property that you own and control

Company website, brochures, blog, Facebook page or internal newsletter.

#### What are the benefits

It allows you to create your own content with unique messaging, tone and style that cannot be altered. You can share this messaging wherever and whenever you want.

### Paid

#### Advertising

Newspaper, magazine, billboard, TV, radio, Facebook or Twitter adverts.

#### What are the benefits

It is a good way to promote your content, attract new followers and drive them to your owned channels. However, it is less valuable than earned media.

### Earned

#### Word-of-mouth advertising

When someone outside of your business shares stories about your brand e.g. Journalist articles, forums, social media shares.

#### Why it's good

This is the best kind of channel as it's a third-party endorsement of your brand that people are more likely to trust.

**Note: All three channels are important to your communications strategy. It is up to you how you evaluate these channels and decide where to allocate your resources.**

## What is an Elevator Pitch?

An elevator pitch is a short and compelling summary about you, or your business named from the time it takes to ride an elevator which is typically 30 seconds long. It is one of the most basic and important pieces of PR and is an essential tool to provide an overview of your business.

### Fundamental factors to include in your elevator pitch:

1. Introduce yourself and your company
2. Identify the problem
3. Describe your solution and unique selling point (USP)
4. Highlight who makes up your team
5. End off with a compelling call to action

### Tips for creating your elevator pitch:





## How do you give something the 'Why Should I Care' factor?

Make what you are saying relevant to the person you are talking to. They will care if you explain how your business will make their lives better.



### Instead of saying:

'I have created an app to automatically heat chicken coops.'



### Say

'My app helps poultry farmers increase their monthly income by reducing chicken mortality rates.'

"No longer should we think of language primarily as a mechanism of conveyance, instead, we should think of language as primarily a mechanism of influence." Robert Cialdini – Author of Pre-Suasion: A Revolutionary Way to Influence and Persuade.

## What are key messages?

- Key messages are the foundation of your communication strategy
- Key messages will form the backbone of all your communication materials
- Key messages influence your target market

**Note:** A key message is not a tagline or a slogan but rather a guideline to be used in conversation.

## Tips for creating your key messages:

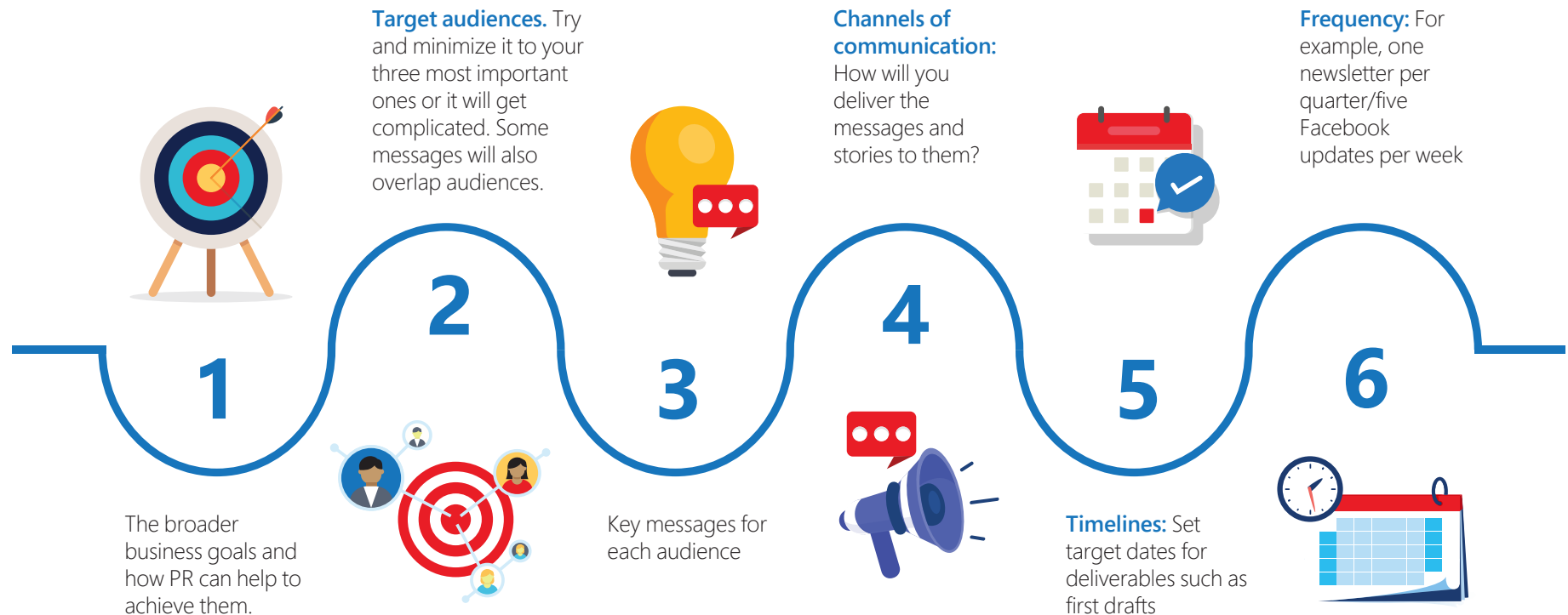
- Define your audience. What are you trying to say to them? What do they care about?
- Use simple words and cut the adjectives
- Revisit your organizational mission, strategies, goals and beliefs. If part of why you started a business is because you believe in creating employment, say so, and link it back to why creating employment is important
- Back up what you say with facts
- Show local relevance
- Test if it's memorable. Can you remember it? Can a friend remember it?
- Conduct a competitor analysis, you don't want your message too similar to competitor messaging



## How to create a basic communications plan

When approaching your PR strategy, there should be a clear roadmap in the form of a detailed plan or matrix. This will include timelines, deliverables, tactics and channels. Most importantly, you need to focus on your goal, and the plan should map to this objective. This keeps everyone on the same page and ensures that your efforts are consistently mapping to the same objective and reinforcing it.

### Key areas to consider:



Your communications objective should always be closely aligned with your business objectives. To assist you in creating your plan, click through to this blog <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/communications-plan>



# How to get news of your company published

## Why do I need to do this?

- Build critical voice and market share that will attract the attention of investors
- Inspire potential consumers to act
- Reach new markets and audiences to add more potential customers to your sales pipeline
- Build your business narrative
- Build your personal story to increase trust. People do not necessarily trust brands, they trust people

## What is your Business Narrative?

A business narrative is the story of your business. It provides context and continuity so that consumers and stakeholders always have a clear idea of where you came from, what you are doing and where you are going.

Everything you do, whether it is launching a new product or scaling to a new country, should be in harmony with the story of your business. This way, all your steps and strategies are seamless, tie in with your values and mission and make sense in the mind of your audience.



## Step 1 – Writing a Press Release

### What is a press release?

A press release is an official, formal, written statement that you send out to the media to announce something significant or newsworthy that you have done.

### What constitutes significant and newsworthy?

- Starting a new business
- Your company's launch
- Introducing a new product
- Receiving funding
- Receiving an award or winning a competition
- Sponsoring or participating in an event, seminar or workshop
- Forming a new strategic alliance or partnership
- Getting a new, significant customer
- Scaling or expanding your business
- Celebrating an anniversary

### What goes into a press release?

- A Title and Sub-heading
- Quotes
- Company contact details/social media handles
- Your key message should include: "Who", "What", "Why", "Where"
- A call to action

## What is a Call to Action?

A call to action tells the reader what action to take after reading your content. This can include visiting a website, donating to a cause, reading more, watching a video, or signing up for a program.

## Do's and Don'ts of writing a press release



### Do's

- Keep it short and sweet – condense into the most important, newsworthy points
- Use hyperlinks to your website and social media pages - make it as convenient as possible to get more information about you
- Utilize SEO – the web is used as most people's primary source of news including journalists so using keywords will also create more opportunities for search engines to send you qualified leads
- Have it proofread again and again by someone else before posting!



### Don'ts

- Do not send it out on a Friday or before a public holiday as it will receive less attention
- Do not pitch to everyone at the same time as it becomes less newsworthy if everyone is covering it
- Do not pitch to the wrong audience – make sure you have identified the right person who will find the content interesting and relevant
- Do not forget to include your brand's personality and provide context within your industry at large



## Step 2 – Pitching your Press Release

### Who do I pitch it to?

Once you have your press release ready, it is up to you to research your media and find out who writes about the topics that are relevant to your news. Do not just send out a mass mail to every journalist out there! It is also a good idea to start forming relationships with key media personalities.

### Researching your media

- Go online and search for online publications
- Ask your customers to fill out a survey on which publications they read (you want to publish news where your customers are)
- Identify relevant publications (e.g. technology, healthcare, education)

### Creating a strong media contact list

- Building a media list is essential to get press coverage
- Do some research on the media (what they cover, primary medium, audience size etc.)
- By identifying your audience, you can create a list of publications / journalists that they would engage with
- Refine the above by compiling a list of contact details (email addresses, phone numbers and social media handles) of editors and journalists from your chosen publications
- Keep this list as a working document and update regularly

**Note: Building good media relationships with journalists, bloggers and influencers takes time and you need to be focused on not wasting journalists' time and only sharing relevant stories.**

## How do I pitch my news?



### On Email:

- Send your press release to a journalist
- Accompany your press release with an introductory email, addressing the journalist by name, introducing yourself and stating the purpose of your email, directing their attention to the press release below

**Note:** Always send your emails out individually. Never copy another person or journalist into your email.



### For Phone:

- Call the journalist
- Address them by name, introduce yourself and let them know what the purpose of your call is.
- Always send a follow-up email to the journalist after the call, so that you can clarify any details or remind them to take action.

**Note:** Take note of media deadlines when pitching your news. Some media publish news every day, some every Friday, or some every month.



### For Social Media:

- Use your social media platforms to support the release
- Tailor your message and images according to the requirements of each platform
- Use relevant hashtags to further boost the posts

**Note:** Take note of what file types can be uploaded onto the various platforms.



## Building relationships with media and influencers

### Why should I do this?

- Journalists get hundreds of emails and press releases a day. If they know who you are, and know that you provide them with good content, they will open your email
- Only send relevant/quality content e.g. once a month send them an interesting update about your business, or even better, an industry trend you have spotted that they can use to create a good story
- If you are on Twitter you can also engage with influencers on the platform
- Positive client feedback is key, and communicating this to your influencers is even better



## **Step 3 – Follow ups**

### **How will I know if a journalist has published my news?**

- Search online by typing in the name of the journalist, publication, and title of your press release.
- You will see your news in their publication on the same day / week / month

**NB: Take note of deadlines and publishing schedules in your media list**

## **Step 4 – Preparing for interviews**

### **What do I prepare if a journalist contacts me for an interview?**

- Once you have sent out your press release, a journalist might be interested in interviewing you for more information.
- Interviews can take place over email, over the phone, television and radio.

### **No matter the format, ensure the following:**

- Know your topic and the issues surrounding it back to front as journalists often like to branch out and talk about challenges and opportunities in your industry at large
- Draft some practice questions (some easy and some challenging) that you can rehearse answering
- Sometimes a journalist will send through a list of questions, but sometimes they will not so you will have to preempt possible questions
- It is up to you to feel prepared
- Research previous interviews that the journalist has done as this will give you a good sense of what to expect
- It's important to include your key messages in your interview so practice scenarios where you can bring them in naturally

## Key tips for the interview

### Interviews via email:

- Answer in as much relevant detail as possible
- Use a clear, easy to read font and simple colour
- Respond in a timely manner. Remember that journalists have deadlines to meet!

### Interviews via telephone:

- Set up a time that is convenient for both you and the journalist
- Take the interview in a quiet room and speak clearly
- Ensure you have good signal and volume
- Do not be afraid to pause between questions if you need time to think
- If you are having the interview over Skype, Zoom, Teams or any other virtual platform, test the connection before you start as a broken line will be frustrating for both of you
- Answer your phone at the time you promised

### Interviews for radio:

- Provide biography: Send your bio and other information to your interviewer in advance. This will ensure that the host has a clear understanding of you and your business
- Cheat sheet: Prepare a cheat sheet of key points for your interview. This will help you to deliver your message and avoid getting side-tracked
- Visual gestures: Smile and use hand gestures during the interview. This energy will be translated into your voice and make you sound more natural
- Avoid jargon: Use simple language that your audience will easily understand. Jargon will only complicate your message and leave listeners feeling detached, Avoid using three-letter acronyms as people outside the industry might not know what they mean.



## Interviews for television:

- Preparation is key – know your subject matter and what you want to say to deliver a clear and concise message
- Look the part- show up professionally and remain calm and relaxed
- Be enthusiastic – Do not ramble or speak too fast but be slightly more animated than you would be in general
- Do not look at the camera – hold eye contact with the journalist/interviewer and remain engaged, unless the interviewer is off-camera and just asking the questions. In that case, focus on the camera and maintain eye contact with it.

## What do I do if I get a difficult question that I cannot answer?

- Not a problem. Simply divert to something you can say by saying: “I can’t answer that for you, but what I can tell you is that XX”
- Never just say “no comment.” This opens you up for speculation.



## Step 5 – Giving your content legs

### What else should I do with my press release?

- Whether your news got good coverage in the media or not, always consider re-purposing your news and sharing it on your own channels (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.).
- Use it to create a blog post or turn it into a demo on YouTube. This way, you can tailor your message to different audiences and make your news last longer

### For example:

- If you have a press release around a new mobile app, create a YouTube video that demonstrates it to your customers
- Or write a blog post detailing the process of how you went about researching and developing your app
- Beneficiary stories are also very effective, where you use testimonials to show how your product has helped another business or person greatly improve their operations

**Note: If you feel a video is the most effective way to share your news, consider sending the video to journalists instead of a press release. You may also want to do a search for your product online and see what competitors you're up against.**

- **Are they on more media outlets than you?**
- **Do they have more Twitter followers?**
- **These questions can guide you on where you need to focus your efforts**

### **Set measurement targets upfront**

Agree to your measurement targets upfront so you have something to work towards.

For example:

- I will get one article published about my business every three months
- I will build relationships with at least three journalists in that time
- I aim to double my Facebook followers in the next six months and increase engagements by 10%

Setting targets help, but don't make them unrealistic. For example, if you have already gained 1 000 Facebook followers within three months without doing any real work or advertising, it is probably fair to say you will at least gain between 2 000 – 3 000 in the next three-month cycle if you double your efforts.

A lot of public relations and storytelling is about building affinity, trust and loyalty around your brand, which is not immediately tangible or necessarily quantifiable in monetary terms. But it is the constant repetition of your messages that will keep you and your business top of mind and talked about. And remember, investors probably don't want to invest in a business that is not mentioned anywhere.



## External links:

### How to get news of your company published

[How to get Press Coverage](#) →

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#### Tips:

#### An excellent press release:

[How to Write a Press Release](#) →

[15 Rookie Press Release Mistakes \(And How Pros Avoid Them\)](#) →

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### Great Thought Leadership

[12 Rules for Creating Great Thought Leadership and Content Marketing](#) →



# How to use social media as an effective business tool

## Why do I need to do this?

- Build your visibility and credibility
- Tell your brand's story with effective visual content
- Improve your SEO
- Network with new markets and audiences
- Have valuable conversations with your customers and get their feedback
- Research industry trends and competitor activity

## What is SEO?

SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization. It is the process of making your website appear at the top, or on the first page, of search results when someone types in a query online so that you are easily visible.

This process is done using organic / unpaid tactics, such as:

- Publishing good quality content on a regular basis (blogs, social media posts etc.)
- Using the correct keywords and terms in your copy (i.e. the words people are searching for)
- Linking to other sites and have them link back to you
- Note down all the publications that have sections relevant to you (e.g. technology, healthcare, education)

## Step 1 – Creating and maintaining a blog

### Why do I need a blog?

#### Controlled content

Journalists often tweak your press release or take out / add in certain pieces of information. A blog gives you full control over your content, allowing you to post what you want, when you want, and where you want.

#### Good for SEO

A blog allows you to create fresh and good quality content on a regular basis, which is good SEO practice and will help keep your website on the first page of search results.

#### Thought leadership

A blog gives you a platform to not only share your news about your service or product, but also offer commentary or insights on relevant issues or events. This will build your status as a thought leader in your industry and invite engagement from your customers.

### How do I set up a blog?

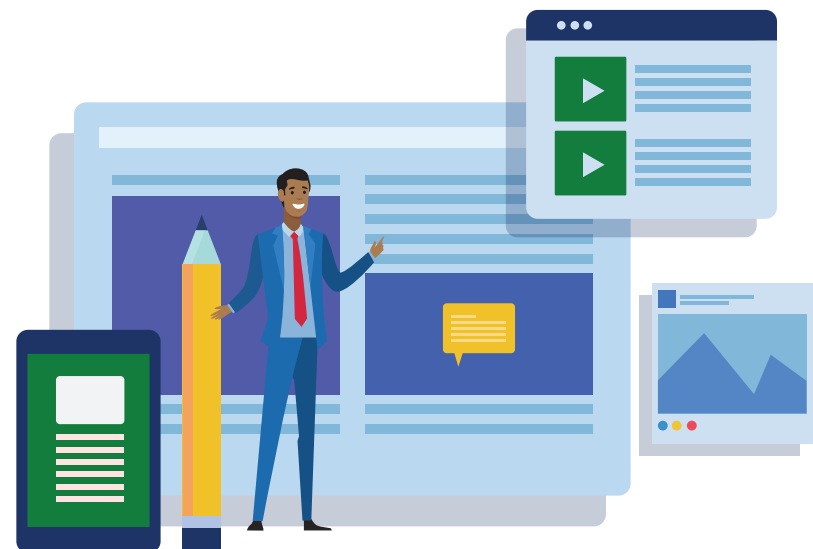
There are two kinds of blogs:

- A written blog
- A video blog / vlog

Link your blog to your website to maximize your SEO.

### How often do I update my blog?

For good SEO practice, at least 2 – 3 times a month.





## What kind of content should I put into my blog?

Blogs should be more informal and conversational than press releases. Get creative and let the personality of your brand shine through. Instead of sharing news about a new product in a press-release format, tell the story of how you came up with and developed the idea. Share your journey with your customers. Remember to use lots of pictures.

## What is a beneficiary story?

Beneficiary stories tell stories of how your product or service is making a significant impact in someone else's life. Instead of you talking about your company, you're getting someone else to do it for you. These are effective marketing tools because they act as testimonials, which potential customers are more likely to listen to and trust when considering buying from you.

## Step 2 - Using Twitter as a business tool

### Why should I use Twitter?

#### For my business:

- Marketing in real-time
- Engaging with your customers in real-time
- Staying up to date with industry trends
- Researching competitor activity and behavior
- Improving your SEO
- Interacting with clients

#### For myself:

- Giving a credible and trusted face to your company (people like doing business with people)
- Building your personal brand



## What should I be tweeting about?

### For my business:

- Live tweets from events that you host or attend
- Industry trends and updates relevant to your business or industry
- Your blog posts and articles
- Non-promotional content still related to your brand interests
- Activity and updates around your business
- Products and specials

### Note:

- **Keep self-promotional tweets to a minimum. While it is good to share updates, every tweet should add value to your followers**
- **Think before you tweet. Never make jokes or comments around an issue or event that could offend and cause controversy**

Never tweet crude, offensive, rude or demeaning content. Although it is your personal account and you are entitled to freedom of speech, remember that customers and investors will look at your account and your content could depend on whether they do business with you.

### Some tips for tweeting:

- Keep your tweets around 110 – 120 characters in length, so that it is easier for other people to retweet it and add a comment
- If your tweet starts with an @ sign (i.e. when you are tweeting somebody in specific), remember to put a full stop in front of it if you want other people to see it on their timeline

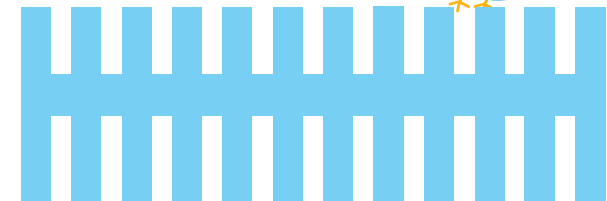
**.@Neo – if you want other people to see it**

**@Neo – if you only want Neo to see it. The tweet will only be visible to other people if they click on 'Tweets and Replies' on your page**

- If you want it to be 100% private, send a Direct Message
- If you are including a long URL, use a URL shortener. These tools are free and available online such as bitly

### For myself:

- Topics that interest you
- Live tweets from trainings you host or attend
- Personal anecdotes and entertaining content



## What are hashtags?

Hashtags (#) are used on Twitter to mark and find messages on a certain topic, so that you can create and connect conversations  
Using a hashtag

- When you use a hashtag, you make it easier for people who are interested in a topic to find and engage with you
- You can search for hashtags in Twitter to find out what other people are saying about a product, event, issue or competitor
- Examples: **#AfricaDay #Entrepreneurtips #ThrowBackThursday**

### Note:

- **Never hashtag random words, such as #technology. Rather hashtag a specific name, event or phrase that you know people would talk about**
- **Only use a maximum of two hashtags per tweet**

### How can I use hashtags effectively?

- Build yourself up as a thought leader or expert in your field by starting and facilitating conversations that interest you
- There are websites that calculate the best hashtags for you based on an algorithm and historical data visit <http://best-hashtags.com/>

**Note: Before you create a hashtag, search to see if it already exists**



## Step 3 - Getting your brand on Facebook

### Why should I post on Facebook?

- Marketing in real-time
- Engaging with your customers in real-time
- Staying up to date with industry trends
- Researching competitor activity and behavior
- Improving your SEO
- Interacting with clients

#### Note:

- **Put a Call to Action in every post. Social media is about engaging in two-way conversations, ask them to comment, share or visit a website to read more about you**
- **For increased engagement and visibility, keep your posts as visual as possible by using high-quality pictures but be aware of copyright rules and regulations**
- **Regularly check Facebook's terms and policies (they change frequently) and make sure your page complies with them**

### What should I post on Facebook?

- Campaigns and competitions
- User-generated content (testimonials, fan photos and stories)
- Polls and questions
- Industry trends and updates relevant to you
- Your blog posts and articles
- Non-promotional, humorous content still related to your brand interests (at least once per week)
- Activity and updates around your business
- Products and specials

## Step 4 - Getting your brand on LinkedIn

### What should I post on LinkedIn?

- Campaigns and competitions
- User-generated content (testimonials, fan photos and stories)
- Polls and questions
- Industry trends and updates relevant to you
- Your blog posts and articles
- Non-promotional, humorous content still related to your brand interests (at least once per week)
- Activity and updates around your business
- Products and specials

## Do I have to use both?

No, but it is better. Facebook is a more informal platform, where you can talk to your followers and market with the occasional fun, humorous and visual pieces of content. It is a great platform for shaping your brand's personality and managing your customer service. LinkedIn offers a more formal platform, where you can share the overview, values and mission of your company, your products, your articles and your recommendations from customers. Having both a Facebook and LinkedIn profile also enhances your SEO.

## Step 5 - Considering other social media platforms

### Should I be on all the social media platforms available?

Only be on the platforms that make sense to your brand, for example an accounting firm, for example, would not have much to post on Instagram but would perfectly suit a clothing brand. It also depends on what platforms are used in your country, so use those where you will reach the highest number of potential customers. Social media management is a full-time job so only commit to as much as you can manage and update with relevant and quality content.

### Additional social media platforms include:

#### Instagram

Instagram is a social media platform which allows its users to share visual content in the form of photos or video. This powerful content sharing app is one of the best platforms to raise brand awareness as it is a highly engaging platform. One is able to create a free Business Profile in which you'll be provided with insights on your posts and followers.

#### Pinterest

Pinterest is unique. Because it's grounded in the future, we get an earlier indication of where consumers are headed and can help brands better predict what's to come for their category. Every marketer could use that insight. And although Facebook remains larger, Pinterest now has comparatively more users than Twitter and Snapchat and continues to grow.



## TikTok

TikTok is a free to use platform for making and sharing short looping videos. This easy to use platform has all sorts of tools at your disposal from special effects to soundtracks. Although the platform hasn't been utilized for generating traffic or leads for brands yet, it has great opportunities as it is a highly engaging platform used specifically for brand awareness as it is a fantastic showcasing opportunity and for out of the box thinking.

**As an example, The United Nations' IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) is using TikTok to spread awareness of their cause taking an approach that embraces informative posts and motivational videos that optimistically encourage viewers to change the world.**





# External resources

Using social media effectively



## Twitter

### Articles

[Twitter Business Insights](#) →

[How to use Twitter to grow your Business, Traffic and Sales](#) →

[Twitter for Business: Everything you need to know](#) →

### Video

[Twitter Marketing: The Complete guide for Business](#) →



## Facebook

### Articles

[Businesses will be able to sell to customers through Shops, potentially posing a challenge to commerce rivals such as Amazon](#)  
[How to use Twitter to grow your Business, Traffic and Sales](#) →

[How to Promote your Small Business on Facebook](#) →

[How to Use Facebook for Business: 25 Facebook Marketing Tips and Tricks](#) →

### Video

[How to Use Facebook for Business](#) →



## LinkedIn

### Articles

[Get started with LinkedIn Ads](#)  
[How to use Twitter to grow your Business, Traffic and Sales](#) →

[15 LinkedIn Marketing Hacks to Grow Your Business](#) →

[5 Essential LinkedIn Strategies for Small Business](#) →

### Video

[LinkedIn for Business: The Ultimate Marketing Guide](#) →



# External resources

Using social media effectively



## Instagram

### Articles

[Stand out with Instagram](#)  
[How to use Twitter to grow your Business, Traffic and Sales](#) →

[How to use Instagram for Business: A Practical 6-Step guide](#) →

[The Ultimate Guide to Instagram for Business](#) →

### Video

[Instagram for Business – Ultimate Beginner's Guide](#) →



## TikTok

### Articles

[How brands are using TikTok](#) →

[How to use TikTok to Promote Your Business](#) →

[TikTok for Business: How You Can Use This New Social Network](#) →

### Video

[TikTok for Business](#) →





04

# How to tell good business stories

The power of a story is in the storytelling so how do we use this to our advantage? David JP Phillips shares his neurological findings on storytelling in his TEDxTalk, "The magical science of storytelling" →

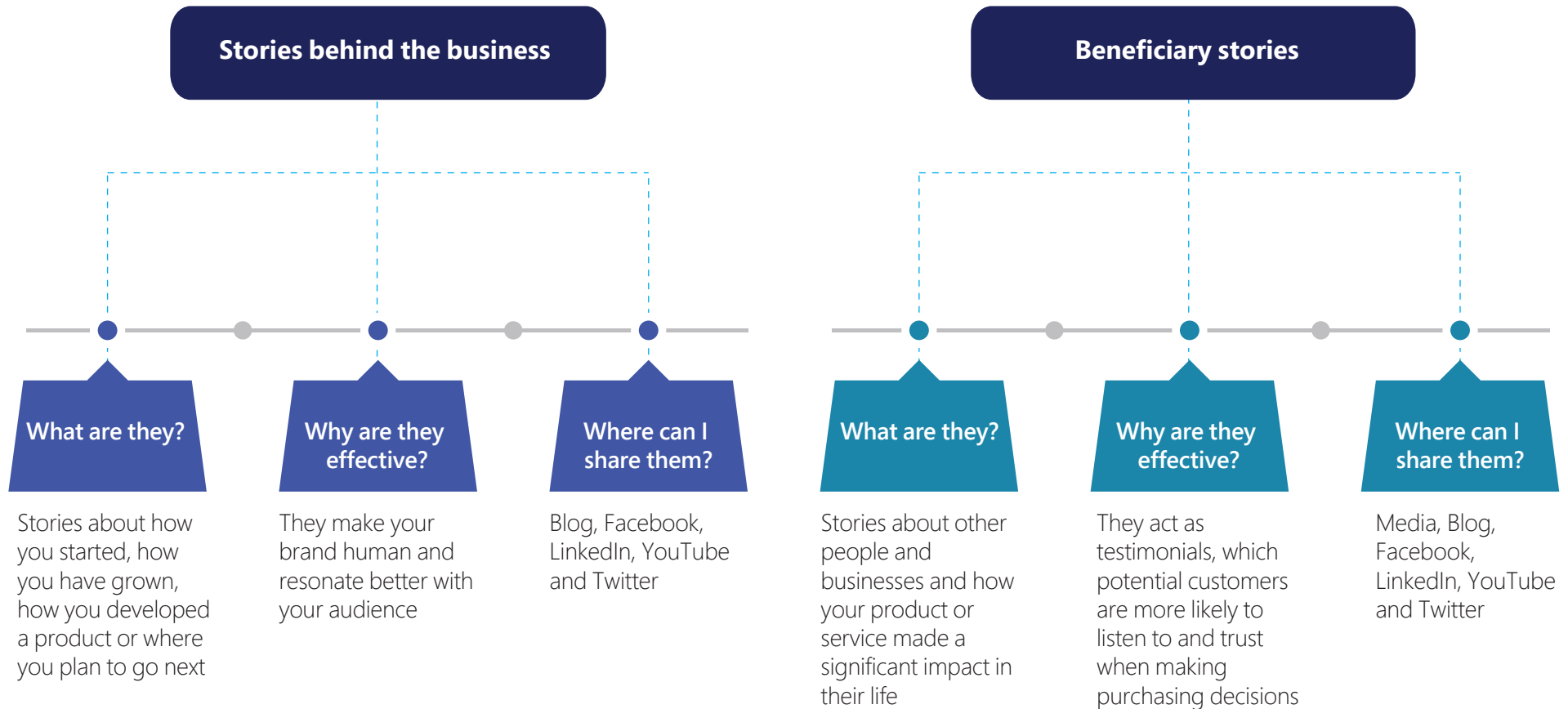
## Why do I need to do this?

- Make your brand memorable
- Breathe life into complex issues, terms, data and statistics
- Create lasting emotional connections that will motivate your stakeholders and customers to act
- Increase word-of-mouth advertising

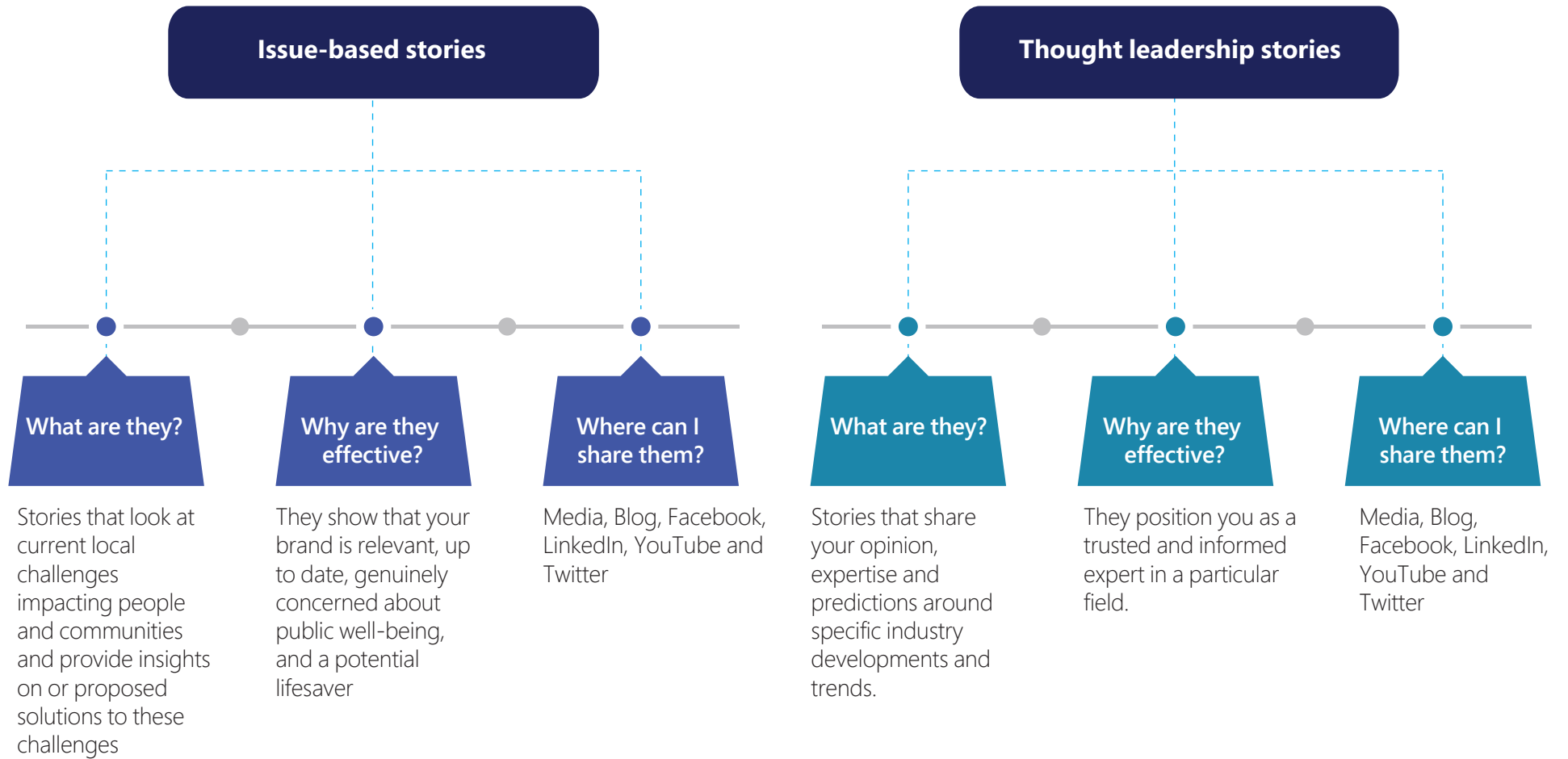


## Step 1 – Finding the right stories to tell

### What types of stories can my business tell?



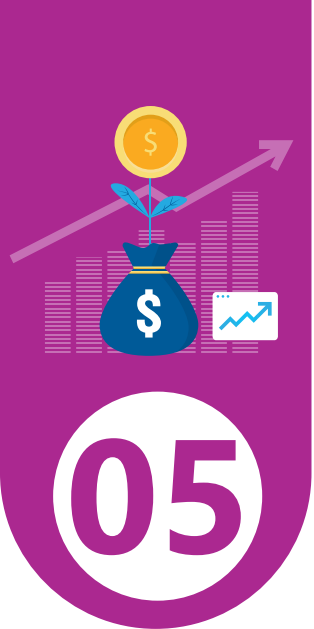
## What types of stories can my business tell?



## Step 2 – Writing an effective story

### What makes a good story?





# Measuring my ROI

## How do I measure the ROI of my PR?

Considering your budgets are tight; you need to know exactly what you are getting for your time and money.

The best way to measure your ROI is to always ask your customers: 'How did you hear about us?' This way you will know what channel is working best. Did they hear about you from an article on a blog? Was it through a Facebook advert? Was it through a Google advert?

Furthermore, do they have a good grasp of your business and what you do from the information they absorbed. Asking these questions will give you an indication whether you are using the right messaging on the right platform.





# Conclusion

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## **Why should I use PR in my marketing?**

This question comes up time and again. Truth is, there is no exact way to quantify public relations. Any weird and wacky formulas used by PR professionals in the 1980s have long since been sacked!

PR is, however one of the most cost-effective ways of marketing your business. It builds brand awareness, which draws in new customers, entices investors, and attracts employees and is therefore highly beneficial to business growth.





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