



The Best Practice Guide for Effective Blogger Outreach



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NOTE: If you want to know more about why this is so important, you should also read our ebook, "8 Reasons Why Blogger Relations are Essential to your PR Strategy".



Introduction

The objective of this ebook is to provide the definitive guide to implementing effective Blogger Outreach. For those of you who are familiar with “new media” communications this may just be a helpful refresher of some of the key points or a training document for less experienced members of the team. For those of you who are just beginning to dip your toes in the water of a new form of engagement, we aim to provide the essential material for doing it well.



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Why is this even necessary? Bloggers are people. Journalists are people. Why the need to do things differently? While many of the points in this book can be applied to journalists too - they appreciate quality content and a relationship always helps - bloggers are not constrained by traditional media rules. Generally, they blog on a personal basis. They do not have to answer to the businesses they work for, and they do not have to toe the political line of that business either.

The power of the Internet has had an immense impact on communications. Where previously a communications strategy could be controlled via a few key journalists, now the Web and Social Media mean that in a matter of minutes your news can reach millions of people with internet connections and search engines. As David Meerman Scott said as long ago as 2006 in his “New Rules of PR”, “The Web has changed the rules” - a story can reach its audience directly and its reach can be expanded exponentially by influencers (including bloggers) who pick up on it and write about it themselves.



Bloggers play a huge part in this ‘social sharing’. There are literally millions of bloggers out there with devoted audiences. You can read why they are influential in our ebook “8 Reasons Why Blogger Relations are Essential to your PR Strategy”, but the challenge is that they don’t play by the same rules as traditional journalists. Blogs are what we call “earned media”.

Earned Media

“Earned media” is exactly what it sounds like. You have to earn the right to get your stories featured. This takes more than just pitching a press release. It involves empathy, understanding, appreciation, knowledge, and a real connection. Of course relationships have always been important, even with traditional media journalists, but with bloggers the relationship is all-important. Blogger Outreach is not a “quick win”. It requires time and patience.

Content

Blogger Outreach is also about content - it’s about getting beyond a “sales pitch” by using material that is compelling, interesting, relevant, impactful, and entertaining. This content can now be delivered in a variety of interesting, creative ways that make it much more impactful than a standard press release.

Does this process even involve a “pitch” as such? The answer is probably not, or certainly not in the traditional sense of the word. We will cover what is called the “Social Media Press Release”, but generally, the mindset attached to this approach is very different.

There are a great many digital media communications experts who have published excellent material on blogger outreach. (Some are listed in the Resources section at the back of this ebook.) We do not purport to beat any of them. Far from it; we endorse and recommend their writings. What we are doing is attempting to create a document that gives you all of the key material in one place. Keep this handy, refer to it, and you will be on the right track.

This guide will help you to avoid some of the most common mistakes made when starting to develop relationships with bloggers. It will also provide best practice advice for planning, implementing, and evaluating your blogger outreach activity. Each section contains key take-aways and tips for you to apply in practice.



A few words from the Industry Experts



"Reaching out to bloggers is a core function of PR today: the BlogHer study shows that US women rank blogs as their number one trusted source of information. When you do blogger outreach correctly you can reach the influencers, the "Magic Middle" and the long tail. But to get the results you have to offer the right content to the right blogger at the right time."

↳ Sally Falkow, Social Media & Digital PR Strategist at Social Ally, @sallyfalkow



"Building a blogger outreach program isn't only a priority for agencies or PR pros. If your business or brand has news and/or products to share, maintaining an updated blogger database—as well as active relationships—should be a vital component of your outreach and information-sharing strategy."

↳ Shelly Kramer, CEO V3 Integrated Marketing, @ShellyKramer



"The communications industry is facing two major challenges at present: humanisation and relevancy. Those who have cracked blogger outreach understand the need to listen to bloggers, to pay attention to what interests them, and to understand what they care about rather than trying to sell in products and messages."

↳ Paul Sutton, Head of Social Communications at BOTTLE PR, @ThePaulSutton



"The expertise shared by a subject-specific blogger (a niche expert) is often much more compelling than a generalised report from a mainstream outlet. As Technorati says, 'blogs outpace other media for inspiration, product information and opinion and as a result generate more trust, recommendations and purchases'"

↳ Adam Vincenzini, Head of Digital, Paratus Communications, @adamvincenzini



"Building relationships with bloggers and other online influencers offers marketers an enormous opportunity, not only to create earned media impressions, but also to develop brand ambassadors - advocates who will shape the online conversations around your brand."

↳ Tonia Ries, Founder & Editor, The Realtime Report, @tonia_ries





"Content Marketing has taken off at an exponential rate between 2011-2012. While Brian Clark preached "engaging content" since the inception of the Internet, the majority of the market is just catching on. Blogger Outreach is crucial in how it leverages this engaging content."

The most successful blogger outreach focuses on building mutually beneficial relationships, spreading engaging content, and minimizing the noise in the era of content marketing. With the shifts in the Google algorithm, and the need for authentic links, Blogger Outreach creates partnerships that are pivotal to the success of any content marketing campaign."

↳ Kelsey Libert, Blogger Outreach Specialist, Blueglass, @kelseylibert



"Blogger relations is about relationships and specific targeting. Gone are the days of cold calling and so are the days of mass pitching. Wouldn't you rather know that if you pitch five bloggers in one day, four of them are going to run a story, rather than send 10,000 emails and maybe get one bite? Those odds seem pretty darn good to me."

↳ Gini Dietrich, CEO Arment Dietrich, Lead Author Spin Sucks, @ginidietrich



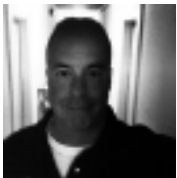
"Treat bloggers as a bona-fide media source in both your pitching and follow-ups. True, they may not have the name of a New York Times or CBS journalist or reporter. But they often are more visible, thanks to Google and search engine awareness - not to mention social reach - which means their story could potentially have a much wider audience. Doesn't that deserve some respect?"

↳ Danny Brown, Award-winning marketer and blogger, VP Jugnoo Inc, @dannybrown



"Content has never been more important and some of the best creators of brilliant content are bloggers. Building relationships with bloggers is essential, however it's one of the hardest tasks facing marketers and communicators today - sadly so many are carrying out painfully bad outreach attempts. The advice in this ebook will help you to make the most of potentially rewarding blogger relationships."

↳ Mike McGrail, Digital & Social Media Strategist, The BIG Partnership, @mike_mcgrail



"This is the book I should have written every day for the last six years!"

↳ Chris Abraham, President, Social Ally, @chrisabraham



"People approach me about my blog and my audience. The people that do it well really stand out and most times I am happy to help them. This book can help you stand out in front a blogger that you want to reach out to."

↳ Adrian Swinscoe, Managing Consultant, RARE Business, @AdrianSwinscoe



Section 1 Preparation

1.1 Objectives

1.2 Research

1.3 The Relationship

1.4 Promotion

1.5 The Offer



1.1 Objectives

Define Your Business Objectives

Don't skip this bit. It applies to any form of marketing or public relations activity - and it is absolutely critical. Before diving into the detail of preparing, organising, and implementing a blogger outreach programme, make sure that you first understand what you are trying to achieve.

This should be done in a sufficient level of detail and it should go beyond simple outputs to try to establish what your desired business outcomes are.



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The first step in achieving this is to define who your target audience is. Who are they, what are they interested in, and where do they 'hang out'? By doing this you can build a map of your target market(s) and work out the best way to approach them. Of course, where possible, you can then extend this to define detailed buyer personas which help to frame the format for your messages to them.

In terms of blogger outreach, this exercise enables you to define your keyword strategy. This will be the key to your blogger research. For



Define Your Business Objectives

example, if your business objective is to sell more model trains, your target audience may be both “parents with sons” and “rail enthusiasts”. The blogs that these two groups read are likely to be very different - so your research may be as diverse as both “hands-on parents” and “train enthusiasts”.

Once you have worked out who you are targeting and where they are, you should plan out what you aim to achieve in as much detail as possible. This is likely to vary considerably depending on whether you are just looking for increased brand/product awareness, an increase in web traffic, greater sales, or something completely different. Ideally, basic ‘output’ objectives such as greater engagement or audience reach should be translated to business ‘outcomes’ such as more subscribers, higher sales revenue or a reduction in costs.

This work helps to set the scene for the blogger outreach approach. It should also help to put the programme into context in relation to previous campaigns and will enable it to be objectively measured against success criteria. Remember to follow the SMART principles when defining objectives - they should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely.

Take-aways

Setting meaningful business-related objectives is essential at the outset of any campaign.

Understand what you are trying to achieve - where you want to get to - so that you can get on the right track.

Tips

Once you have defined what you want to achieve (Sell more? Move into new markets? Launch a new product?), define your target audience in as much detail as possible.

Remember that you may have different audiences in entirely different social sets.

Translate your audiences into the keywords and phrases that will help you to find them.

Try to define objectives that are business outcomes (higher sales, lower costs), not just social media outputs (higher brand visibility/engagement).

Make your objectives SMART.

Tools

Google Insights for Search - to rank search terms and see their relative importance, including geographically.

Google Keyword Tool - comparing keywords, suggesting more and getting traffic data for them.

AMEC Valid Metrics Framework - A framework and template to set up proper campaign measurement.



1.2 Research

Research the blogs you want to contact

Once you have defined the audience(s) that you want to target, you then need to identify the blogs where they hang out. And there will be blogs where they hang out.

One of the most common (and, bloggers would argue, worst) mistakes PR execs make when contacting bloggers is making contact without having done adequate research. Maybe you have done a quick keyword search on Technorati and scanned the content of the blogs on its results page, but this is not enough information to decide if this blogger is the right fit for your brand. If you haven't done your research it will be evident to the blogger reading your proposal and your email will swiftly end up in the trash.



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An important step to consider is to understand which blogs are likely to have the most impact on your target audience. The largest, A-list, market-leading blogs have the biggest reach, but are they the ones that will best resonate with your audience? And are they likely to feature you anyway? Brian Solis describes this well in his book "The Art and Science of Blogger Relations" as the need to find the voices in the "Magic Middle" of the attention curve. He defines this as "the bloggers who have from 20 to 1,000 other people linking to them. It is this group that enables PR people to reach The Long Tail, and its effects on the bottom line are measurable".



Research the blogs you want to contact

Essentially, what Brian Solis is saying is that if you have a relatively niche brand or product (e.g. niche technology), then your target audience is likely to be found concentrated in a smaller blog (e.g. niche technology blog) than in a mainstream global technology blog (e.g. mashable.com).

Listed in the Summary of Tools section on page 32 are a number of the free or affordable tools to help you identify and rank your blogger targets. You should explore this thoroughly and then rank them based on their potential level of influence. Factors to consider include:

How relevant is their blog to your campaign subject matter?

How engaged is that audience with the blog in general?

What is the size of the potential audience that is likely to see your story?

How often does the blogger publish new posts?



Research the blogs you want to contact

The planning and research stage of your activity is crucial and it's important to learn as much as you can about the blog, its content, its owner, and the kind of audience it attracts. The more you know the easier it will be to write a tailored proposal that is specific to a blog. This shows the blogger that you have a depth of understanding and are taking them seriously.



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Read, learn, and understand what each blogger talks about.

Understand not only the subject matter, but their sentiments in relation to it, their general approach, the angles they take and their motivations. Every blogger needs good content, but they may be interested in other things, too - Chapter 1.4 covers the variety of things you could offer them.

Take-aways

You must find bloggers who write material relevant to your subject so that your interests are aligned.

Listen, read, and learn before you make contact.

Remember the "Magic Middle" bloggers.

Tips

Search the blog for prior posts on your subject matter - not just the most recent posts - and refer to them.

Use the simple tools to research the bloggers to target.

Then rank them according to their authority, relevance, reach and engagement.

Use an RSS feed reader to keep tabs on the most important bloggers.

Tools



Full List of 20+ Research Tools



1.3 The Relationship

Blogs are called “earned media” for a reason!

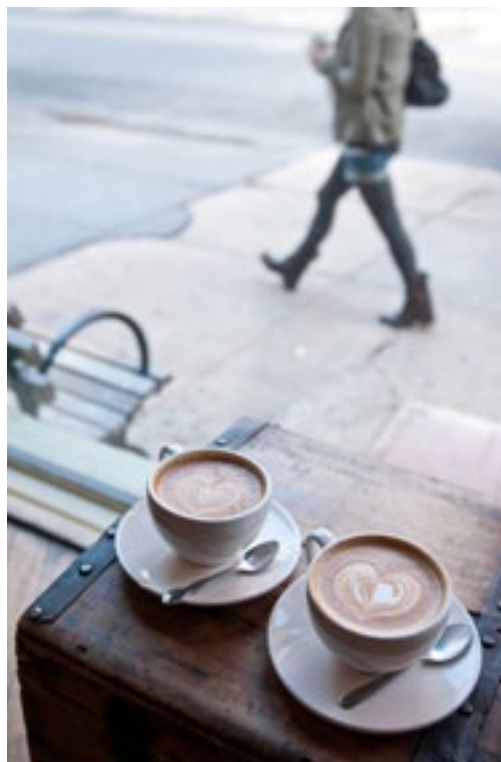
You have to work at developing a relationship with the blogger and becoming part of their online community.

You need to become a blogger’s friend, create empathy with them and not treat them like a faceless third party advertising channel. This involves an up-front investment to establish the relationship.

Your objective is for your targeted blogger to become the brand advocate for your brand or product. This only comes about through building a strong relationship - it is a matter of trust. To establish trust you need to be authentic, honest, and engaging.



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Blogs are called “earned media” for a reason!

This can be achieved in many ways, both online and offline. You should investigate all of the places that the blogger is present online and find ways to engage appropriately. Bloggers are, by definition, digital natives - so they are likely to be active in other social media channels. Find out which ones and get involved - commenting, sharing, tweeting, etc. If it is possible to meet them in person - either individually or as a group - make the effort. Even better if you can do this by organising something relevant and interesting for a group of them to get together.



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Some bloggers may start from a negative position when dealing with public relations professionals as they consider them to always have a commercial agenda. This is unavoidable, so it's important to be up-front, transparent and honest.

Take-aways

Trust and respect in the relationship are everything.

Bloggers are “earned media” - you have to earn their support.

To build a brand advocate requires time and patience.

Tips

Always be honest, transparent, and trustworthy.

Know what you are talking about and why it is of interest to the blogger.

Be personal and show some personality.

Don't bombard them with emails.

Work out how a blogger likes to be contacted - it might be on social media, not email.

If they are local to you, offer to take them out for a drink.

Follow them on Twitter.

Comment intelligently on their other posts.

Put yourself in their shoes to appreciate the blogger outreach relationship from their perspective.



1.4 Promotion

Positive reinforcement helps

Once you have begun to establish a relationship with a blogger, you can enhance that by helping to promote them. Ultimately, bloggers want to increase the readership of their blogs, so help them do that.

By helping a blogger to grow their blog you are also acting in a collaborative manner with them.

Done well, this is a “win-win”. This partnership approach can create a virtuous circle as their growth can amplify and extend your message.

You can use all of the different social media tools to help you - your own blog or website, Twitter, Facebook, Google+, etc. Tell your employees and other business colleagues about them and mention them in any speaking engagements.

Take-aways

- Bloggers want to grow their audience.
- Your interesting, relevant content can do that.
- A “win-win” approach creates a virtuous circle.

Tips

- Subscribe to the blog.
- Mention the blogger on your own website or blog.
- Link to them - both hyperlink and other social media channels.
- Follow them on Twitter and retweet their best tweets.
- Suggest involving them in other more interactive ways - e.g. interviews or videos.

Tools

- Google Reader: for curating the posts from blogs.



1.5 The Offer

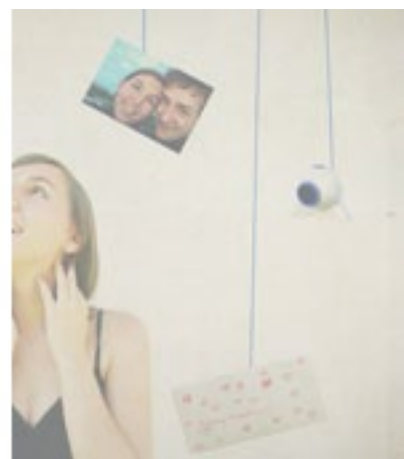
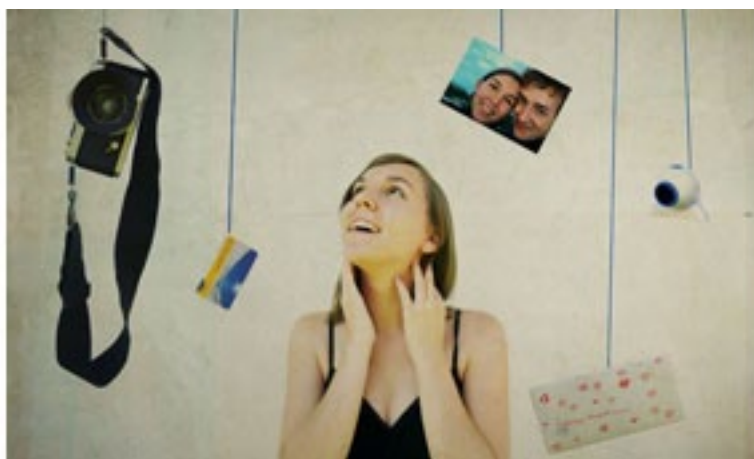
What can you offer a blogger?

According to Technorati 2011 Report on the Blogosphere, 14% of bloggers earn a salary from blogging; however, these are predominantly corporate and full-time professional bloggers. The vast majority of bloggers are unlikely to get paid for their blogging efforts.

So what are their motivations? The Technorati report lists the following as the top reasons:

- **To share my expertise and experience with others**
- **In order to speak my mind on areas of interest**
- **To become more involved with my passion areas**

Some of the best and most influential bloggers may also get paid via advertising on their blog or for speaking engagements, but it is clear that the majority are blogging for their own satisfaction. This creates an interesting dynamic: bloggers don't want to be pressured and they feel they can say pretty much anything they want. This reinforces the importance of being honest and trustworthy. It also impacts on what should be offered to them.



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What can you offer a blogger?

First and foremost, this comes down to content. Providing a blogger with quality content that is relevant, informative, educational, and even entertaining is what helps them to produce great content to grow their audience.

They should not be compromised with lavish gifts that would have to be disclosed, but there is an opportunity to use relatively small goodies to interest them and bring a subject to life, e.g. the provision of videos, books, pictures, prizes, event invites, etc. Opportunities to get early access to private betas for products, discount codes, or competitions to make available to their audience are also possible. You can of course also offer to help them in more intangible ways such as giving them exposure through your own social media channels.

Brand endorsements are possible, but they should always be disclosed and are frowned upon by most bloggers as they go against the principles of “earned media”.



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Nicki Varkevisser flickr.com/clickflashphotos



misterQM / photocase.com

Having said all of the above, the growth of blogging has led to a small but increasing trend of instances where certain bloggers do feel they need to be compensated. It is not the norm, but where an outreach campaign requires a blogger to do a significant amount of work (either in research, community activism, or some other way) then some more tangible form of compensation may be appropriate. If this is a



What can you offer a blogger?

possibility, then be open in raising it with the bloggers in question and be clear about your expectations. Remember that bloggers are legally required to disclose if they are being compensated (via the Federal Trade Commission in the States, Consumer Protection Regulations in the UK, and others elsewhere).

In addition, when a blogger writes about your story and receives compensation, it is deemed a “sponsored post”. The further implication is that any hyper-links to your site from the blog must be classified as ‘no-follow’ links (i.e. they are not counted by search engines when calculating Page Rank and your Google search ranking). This is not a legal requirement, but is an established rule laid down by Google. And if the all-powerful Google becomes aware of persistent breaking of its rules, it is likely to demote your site in its search results or even remove it altogether.

Most importantly if you promise anything to the blogger make sure it's a promise you can keep. If you renege on your side of the bargain they aren't likely to write about you in a good light, which could lead to negative publicity.

Take-aways

Bloggers are “earned media” and cannot be “bought”.

Most bloggers do it purely for their own satisfaction.

Bringing your brand or product to life with small “goodies” is acceptable.

Always keep your commitments.

Tips

Don't push your brand/product at a blogger.

Quality, relevant content is still the number one priority.

Try to find an angle that makes your proposal interesting.

Small gifts and review items are fine - videos, books etc - as long as they are relevant to the product.

Exclusive content is also a plus - invites to events, interviews, viewing of products, product launches etc.

As are things to share with their audience - competitions, discount codes etc.

Be creative!

Should compensation be used, this should be disclosed and links should be ‘no-follow’.

Section 2 Engagement

2.1 The Approach

2.2 Making it Easy for the Blogger

2.3 Content is King

2.4 Optimise



2.1 The Approach

Master the approach. Make it personal.

The second major faux pas of blogger outreach is failing to personalise the correspondence and proposal you send to a blogger. (The first, mentioned above, is not reading someone's blog before contacting them. Both are outreach Kryptonite.) An impersonal mail-merged email that doesn't use their name and/or contains a generic press release will result in destination: 'trash' folder. You need to show that you value and respect your chosen bloggers and their audience by adding a personal touch and bit of personality to your proposals.

If you've done your research right you should know enough about the blogger and their interests to write an appealing and personal introductory email. Most blogs will also have contact details on the site that state their preferred method of communication. Try to find their preferred channel - it may be Twitter or Facebook, not email. It's more acceptable to try an informal or unconventional approach than it would be with a journalist, so be creative.



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benicce / photocase.com



Master the approach. Make it personal.

Remember that as flattering as your approach may be, the blogger will still put the interests of their blog first. They need to ensure that the content remains compelling, so your proposal must meet their needs too. Place yourself in the blogger's shoes and ask yourself, 'will this add value to the blog?' If the answer is no, try a different approach.

And of course, the approach can only be made when the relationship has already been established, as discussed in Chapter 1.2. If you are working towards a specific deadline like a product launch, plan ahead. Make sure you allow time to build that relationship, and give the bloggers sufficient time to test and review a product and create their own content. Bloggers often write on a part-time basis, and often after work or outside of working hours, so you may have to wait for a response. State your expectations up front so that a blogger can tell you immediately if they can meet them or not.

Take-aways

- The approach must be personal.
- The relationship must already have been established.
- The communication channel must be considered.

Tips

- Find out what a blogger's preferred communication method is and use it - it may well not be email.
- Be realistic about your timescales and plan ahead.
- Don't expect too much, especially if it is your first approach to a blogger.
- Don't be pushy.
- Think "win-win".



2.2 Making it Easy for the Blogger

Make it as easy as possible for the blogger to write.

It takes a lot of information sourcing to write a good blog post, so bloggers want to receive quality, relevant content. If it comes in an easy-to-publish form, it is much more likely to get traction.

Remember that bloggers are not journalists. And they don't just publish press releases. They write stories with angles, views, and opinions, so a bland, mass-targeted press release is simply not going to cut it. You cannot tell a blogger what their own opinions are, but you can help them by making the story interesting and informative in a way that will resonate with their audience. Bloggers want to publish a story, not a sales pitch!

In the digital age you can also use other resources to bring your story to life - images, videos, audio clips, etc. The more creativity and diversity that you can give to a blogger, the more they will have to work with in maximising the impact of your story - which is what the blogger wants to do for you, too.

Making a blogger's life easy will endear you to them. Keep it brief, get to the point, ask a question early (if there is one), and provide a summary. Try to make bloggers aware of all the content they'll need to write a blog post. If there is a press release that is going to the mainstream press, provide a link to it. Successful bloggers can be very busy, so make it easy for them to blog about you.

Take-aways

- Give a blogger everything they need to write their post.
- And that does not mean a bland press release!
- Keep it short and make it easy to read.
- Include other forms of multimedia.

Tips

- Less is more - keep it tight.
- Clarity is essential.
- An angle is helpful.
- Use plain text or HTML format, not a pdf, unless it's supplementary information.
- Provide clear key information, such as prices of products or stockists.
- Supply appropriate images at a suitable size and resolution.
- If you are presenting data, consider converting it into an infographic.
- Provide links to websites with more information they can include in the post.
- Other multimedia like video or audio clips are good.
- Add any widgets or banner ads that the blogger can include on their site.

Tools

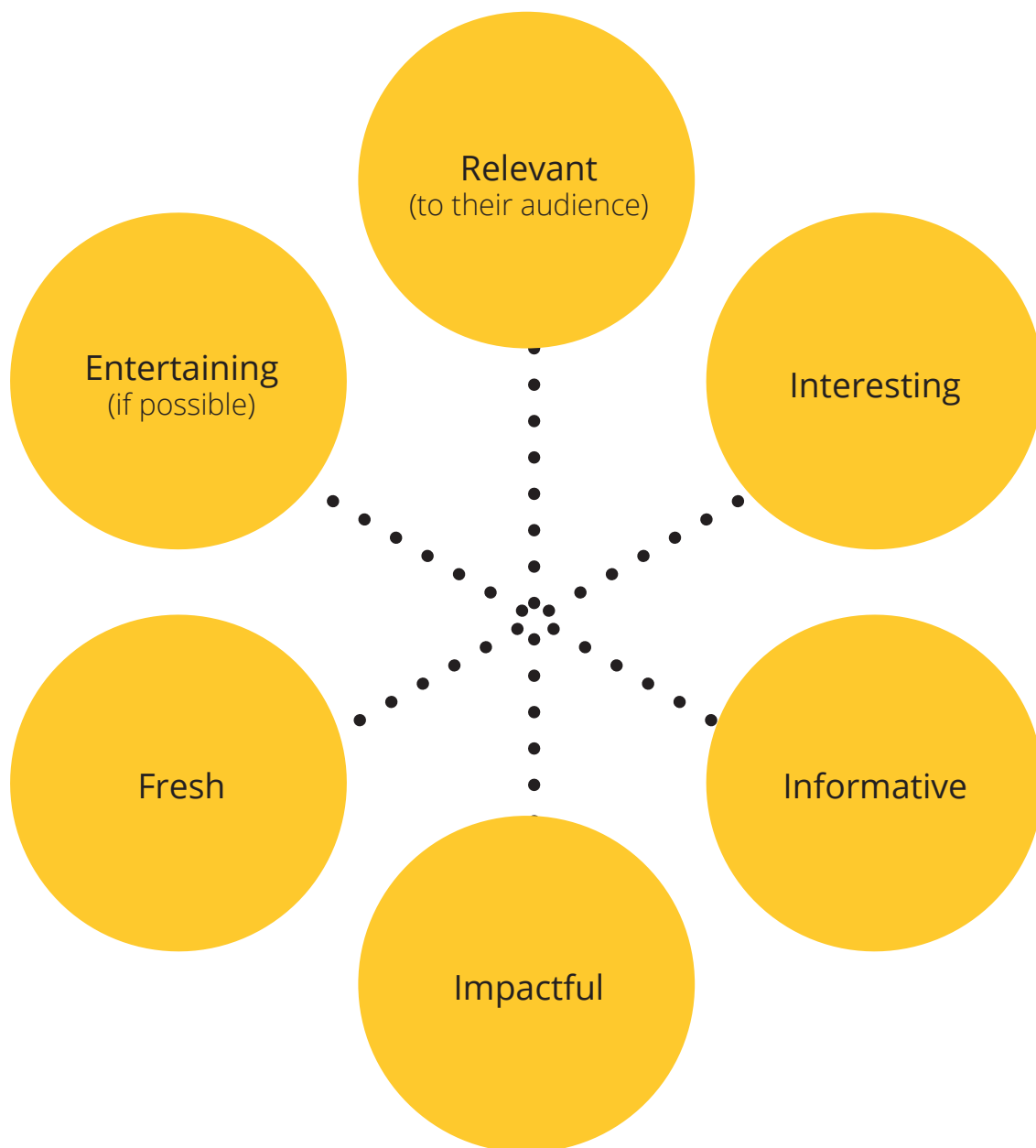
- Wisestamp: for creating an impactful and optimised email signature.



2.3 Content is King

Quality. Quality. Quality. (Not quantity)

At the end of the day bloggers will like gifts, but content rules.
Your outreach story must be:



It is also critical that the principles of inbound marketing are applied. In simple terms, this means that direct selling is a no-no - the art is in engaging an audience with great storytelling to get them interested in what you are saying, not forcing a sales pitch down their throats. Bloggers will run a mile from this.



Quality. Quality. Quality. (Not quantity)

Achieving this relies first on proper research (Chapter 1.2) to find the right bloggers. Today's consumers are more informed than ever before. A blogger's audience is likely to be familiar with the tools of the Web, and social media in particular. This means that they are likely to be highly aware of any current developments, issues, and so on, surrounding your particular market. You must be up-to-date with all of this so that you are one step ahead of your audience.



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You also need to have something to say. Try to really focus on the point of your story, making sure the key messages are impactful and interesting. Of course, as ever, this must be in the context of your target audience. For instance, a company profile of your business may be interesting to you, but it is unlikely to be so interesting to your target audience - unless the real point of the story lies within.

Take-aways

- Quality content is the foundation of your relationship with a blogger.

Tips

- Tell a good story.
- Never sell.
- Check all of the relevant bloggers in the same space for similar stories or things that might conflict with your own story.
- Make sure you have something fresh and newsworthy to talk about.



2.4 Optimise

Social Media is your friend - use it.

Blogs are part of the social media ecosystem - so, by definition, bloggers are social media advocates. You can use this to your advantage by optimising your story for social media sharing.

It is a good idea to include and highlight several key facts and statistics. These are more easily quotable or shareable and can also add credence to your story - definitive evidence by way of statistics can be more compelling than the perceived 'spin' that is attached to verbose descriptions.

Where, previously, a press release was a static document presented to a number of media operators without alteration, outreach to a blogger can be achieved in a variety of forms. It should then also include the necessary elements for other social media sharing, such as 'tweetable' headlines of 140 characters or less.



sally2001 / photocase.com

In addition to social media optimisation, the story should be highly optimised for Web search - SEO. It should be keyword optimised for SEO purposes and have hyperlinks already embedded. You can use the keyword research tools in Chapter 1.1. Put your most important links near the beginning and don't overload your story with links.

Social Media is your friend - use it.

In recent years, some practitioners have redesigned original press releases to create what is known as a Social Media Press Release (SMPR). This is essentially a template that combines all the necessary digital sharing, linking and connecting devices to optimise the document for social media. The Resources section contains links to examples of these templates. However, there is a danger in being overly prescriptive with such a template. You do not want to be creating a standardised document that loses the personal touch - see Chapter 2.1 - so use them with care.



sally2001 / photocase.com

Take-aways

- Optimise for search using keywords and hyperlinks.
- Optimise for social media by using easily shareable content.
- Use Social Media Press Releases with caution.

Tips

- Use a keyword optimisation tool (see the Tools section).
- Include specific, clear hyperlinks from your key relevant phrases to predetermined landing pages.
- Be clear to a blogger if you are looking for a link to a specific landing page.
- Present several definitive facts or statistics.
- Give a blogger several easily-tweetable headlines for the story.

Tools

- Pitchengine : creating and publishing social media optimised pitches
- Pressitt: for creating online SMPRs
- bitly: for shortening hyperlinks

Section 3 Ongoing

3.1 When your Story is Featured

3.2 Tracking and Measuring

3.3 Keep up the Relationship



3.1 When your Story is Featured

When the post is published

Try to ensure that the blogger lets you know when your story is going to be live so you can track it - see Chapter 3.2 - and keep an eye on the comments. You should be monitoring these and responding along with the blogger. Let the readers know who you work for, but respond to posts in your own name rather than anonymously as your brand. The process for this should be discussed and agreed in advance with your client. It is even better if the response comes directly from the brand owner, as long as it remains personal.

Remember social media is all about people and conversation. All comments should be seen as a good thing even if they may be negative in nature. Engage, show empathy and understanding, and you can project a positive image.

In the period of days immediately following the post being published, you should actively promote it through your own social media channels, encouraging people to comment on it and share it.

Even if a blogger does not feature your story, you should still follow-up with them. Be polite and courteous. Ask for feedback. They may well have just had too much on their plate but might feature you next time around.

Take-aways

- Promote the publication of the story via social media channels.
- Track levels of engagement with the story.
- Respond and engage with the conversation.

Tips

- Ask the blogger to contact you as soon as they are publishing your story.
- Immediately thank the blogger and give them constructive feedback (hopefully positive!).
- Always follow-up with a blogger in a polite and courteous manner.
- Tweet about the story being published, including a link to it.
- Share the link and awareness of it in other Social Media channels - Facebook, etc.



Chapter 3.2 Tracking and Measuring

Measure what Matters

Evaluation of the success of your outreach campaign is one of the most challenging yet critical aspects of it. Too frequently it is not properly addressed, but it is not as difficult as you might think.

Challenges include the variety of metrics to consider, and the cost and complexity involved in tracking them. If you are fortunate enough to have clients who can afford an “enterprise” solution, then it is likely that much of this is taken care of by one of the larger players in global marketing analytics. There is clearly a cost associated with this.



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So what's the answer for the large majority of smaller agencies and businesses? There are a variety of low-cost or free tools that can help (see below), but first, it's worth defining what can and should be measured.

As outlined in Chapter 1.1, you need to set clear objectives at the start of the campaign and then the ability to track the impact of the campaign at a number of levels.



Measure what Matters

Firstly, you should consider the 'outputs' of the campaign:

- **How many of the targeted bloggers wrote about your story;**
- **How many other bloggers or news sites picked up on it and wrote about it;**
- **What was the size of the potential audience who might have seen your story (note: remember it is the relevant audience that matters); and**
- **How many people have engaged with your story (through a combination of comments, shares, likes, etc.)**

Secondly, you should try to determine the impact on your 'business outcomes'. This derives from whatever objectives were set at the outset of the campaign, but tracking could include:

- **How much web traffic hit your landing pages from the blogs;**
- **How many conversions resulted from that traffic (e.g. videos watched, whitepapers downloaded); and ultimately,**
- **How much online sales occurred from that traffic.**

Google Analytics is your friend in this process and the other Tools listed in this book do mean that you can demonstrate the value of your campaign without great investments in time or cost. Many tools only extend to "monitoring" of the level of coverage, but it is possible to delve deeper than this.

Take-aways

Tracking and measurement might appear challenging, but they are essential.

Simple measures of value can be derived relatively easily using some free and low-cost tools.

Tips

Always set objectives for the campaign at the outset.

Determine a measurement strategy to apply as soon as it goes live.

Keep it simple but try to get tangible metrics beyond basic 'monitoring'.

Set up an automated measurement system prior to the campaign going live.

Have a weekly report or meeting to track progress.

Tools

Google alerts : Email alerts for mentions of keywords

Trackur : Social media monitoring

Viralheat : Social media monitoring

Tweetbeep : Email alerts for mentions on Twitter

Inkybee : Measuring reach, engagement and traffic

AMEC Valid Metrics Framework : A framework and template to set up proper campaign measurement.



Chapter 3.3 Keep up the Relationship

Don't let the relationship die

Once the content has been published and the evaluation has been done, it is important to keep in touch with the blogger. You've worked hard up to this point to develop a relationship with this blogger and that shouldn't be thrown away once a campaign is over.



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One of the key outcomes of Blogger Outreach is the creation of brand ambassadors: if you can continue to develop the relationship and offer content after the campaign, they'll continue to reinforce your messages and influence their readership.

This creates a virtuous circle of positive reinforcement of your brand or product messages with your target audience.

Take-aways

- Blogger outreach is not a one-off event.
- The potential ongoing impact of creating a brand ambassador is huge.

Tips

- Always thank the bloggers.
- Continue to correspond with them in a courteous, empathetic manner.
- Don't bombard them. Don't push sales pitches at them.
- Make them feel special - give them exclusives, advance news of events or other inside information.
- Treat them as a valued partner, not a faceless PR tool.
- Take them out for lunch!



Summary of Tools

What follows is a list of tools that are helpful at various stages of the blogger outreach process. This is by no means an exhaustive list and is aimed at those looking to achieve results on a relatively limited budget - free or very affordable.

Research - Blog discovery



Google blog search

<http://www.google.com/blogsearch>

The search engine specific to blog posts.



Technorati

<http://technorati.com/blogs/directory/>

One of the first blog directories to exist with 1.3 million blogs.



Blog-rank

<http://www.invesp.com/blog-rank>

A smaller blog directory based around specific categories.



Blog-catalog

<http://www.blogcatalog.com/category>

Another US category-based blog directory.



Blogdash

<http://www.blogdash.com/>

A directory of 100,000 bloggers.



Outreachr

<http://www.outreachr.com/>

Blog discovery for specific campaigns.



BuzzStream

<http://www.buzzstream.com/>

Find and manage influencers (\$49pcm).



Alltop

<http://alltop.com/>

Topic-based search for recent blog posts.



Social Mention

<http://www.socialmention.com/>

Blog post and other social media search engine.



Blekko

<https://blekko.com/>

Search engine restricted to blogs by using "/blogs".

Research - Twitter



followerwonk

<http://followerwonk.com/>

Keyword search across any Twitter profile data.



wefollow

<http://wefollow.com/>

A Twitter search using tags.

Research - "Influence" ranking



Alexa

<http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo>

Sample based site traffic ranking.



Seomoz

<http://www.opensiteexplorer.org/>

Site links and 'authority' data.



Seoquake

<http://www.seoquake.com/>

SEO parameters plus ability to scrape blog URLs.



Semrush

<http://www.semrush.com/>

An estimator of Google search traffic or a site.



Feedcompare

<http://www.feedcompare.com/>

Sources the number of "FeedBurner" subscribers.



Klout

<http://klout.com/>

An 'influence' ranking based on Twitter and other social network data.



Peer Index

<http://www.peerindex.com/>

A ranking similar to Klout, based on "social capital".



Kred

<http://kred.com/>

An influence ranking based on activity across Twitter and Facebook

Keyword identification & optimisation



Google Insights for Search
<http://www.google.com/insights/search/>
Ranking search terms, including geographically.



Google Keyword Tool
<http://goo.gl/pwpY7>
Comparing search keywords, suggesting more and getting traffic data for them.

Tracking & measurement



Google alerts
<http://www.google.com/alerts>
Email alerts for mentions of keywords.



Trackur
<http://www.trackur.com/>
Social media monitoring (\$18pcm).



Viralheat
<http://www.viralheat.com/>
Social media monitoring (\$49pcm).



Tweetbeep
<http://tweetbeep.com/>
Email alerts for mentions on Twitter.



AMEC Valid Metrics
<http://goo.gl/JwGuV>
A framework and template for full campaign measurement"

Other



Google Reader

<http://www.google.com/reader/>

To curate posts from blogs in one place.



Wisestamp

<http://www.wisestamp.com/main>

To create an impactful and optimised email signature.



Pitch Engine

<http://pitchengine.com/>

To create and publish social media optimised pitches.



bitly

<https://bitly.com/>

To shorten hyperlinks.



Pressitt

<http://pressitt.com/>

To create online SMPRs.



And remember Inkybee!

<http://www.inkybee.com/>

- To discover and research relevant bloggers to target;
- To manage the outreach process; and
- To measure and report the results of your outreach

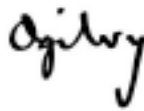


Resources

Blogger outreach is a subject that is addressed by many other industry experts in social media, public relations and inbound marketing. The following list covers a number of the more recent commentaries as well as some specific resources in particular areas:



Brian Solis: The art and science of blogger relations
<http://www.briansolis.com/2009/05/art-and-science-of-blogger-relations/>



Ogilvy PR: Code of Ethics
<http://blog.ogilvypr.com/wp-content/uploads/blogger-outreach-code-of-ethics.pdf>



10 ways to build strong relationships with reporters and bloggers
<http://www.prdaily.com/Main/Articles/8ef20b7b-bb1d-4e98-b79e-b1955d6b6ba6.aspx>



Inc.com: How to pitch - 6 things you must know
<http://www.inc.com/jeff-haden/how-to-pitch-6-things-you-must-know.html>



Dave Fleet, VP Digital at Edelman: Blogger Relations - Getting the Insiders Onside
<http://davefleet.com/2012/01/insiders-onside-presentation-dx3/>



Lee Odden, TopRank Online Marketing Blog: Blogger Relations - push or pull?
<http://www.toprankblog.com/2012/02/blogger-relations-push-or-pull/art-and-science-of-blogger-relations/>



Guy Kawasaki: The art of sucking up
<http://blog.guykawasaki.com/2008/03/the-art-of-suck.html>



Spin Sucks: 3 steps to a successful program:
<http://spinsucks.com/social-media/blogger-outreach-three-steps-to-a-successful-program/>



Shonali Burke: the anatomy of a perfect pitch
<http://www.waxinglyrical.com/2012/03/07/the-anatomy-of-the-perfect-pitch/>



Heather Whaling, prTini: 7 tips to improve pitches:
<http://prtini.com/how-to-pitch-blogger/>



Shelly Kramer: working with 'mom bloggers':
<http://www.v3im.com/2012/04/mom-bloggers-and-brands-what-they-want-what-you-need/>



Tots 100 guide to 'sponsored posts' and 'no-follow' links:
<http://www.tots100.co.uk/2012/04/14/a-simple-guide-to-follow-and-no-follow-for-bloggers/>



Blueglass; 35+ Tips and Tools to Help You Find the RIGHT Contact Info

<http://www.blueglass.com/blog/mastering-blogger-outreach-35-tips-and-tools-to-help-you-find-the-right-contact-info/>



The Clear and Continuing Need for Blogger Outreach Specialists at PR Agencies

<http://dannybrown.me/2012/02/19/blogger-outreach-pr-agencies/>



Digital PR Tip - Blogger Outreach

<http://social-ally.com/Digital-PR-Resources/Digital-PR-Tip-Blogger-Outreach.aspx>

Social Media Press Releases (SMPRs)



Template from Shift Communications

<http://www.shiftcomm.com/downloads/smprtemplate.pdf>



Copyblogger tips

<http://www.copyblogger.com/social-media-press-release/>



Chris Abraham's detailed explanation

<http://chrisabraham.com/2011/12/09/how-to-make-awesome-social-media-news-releases/>

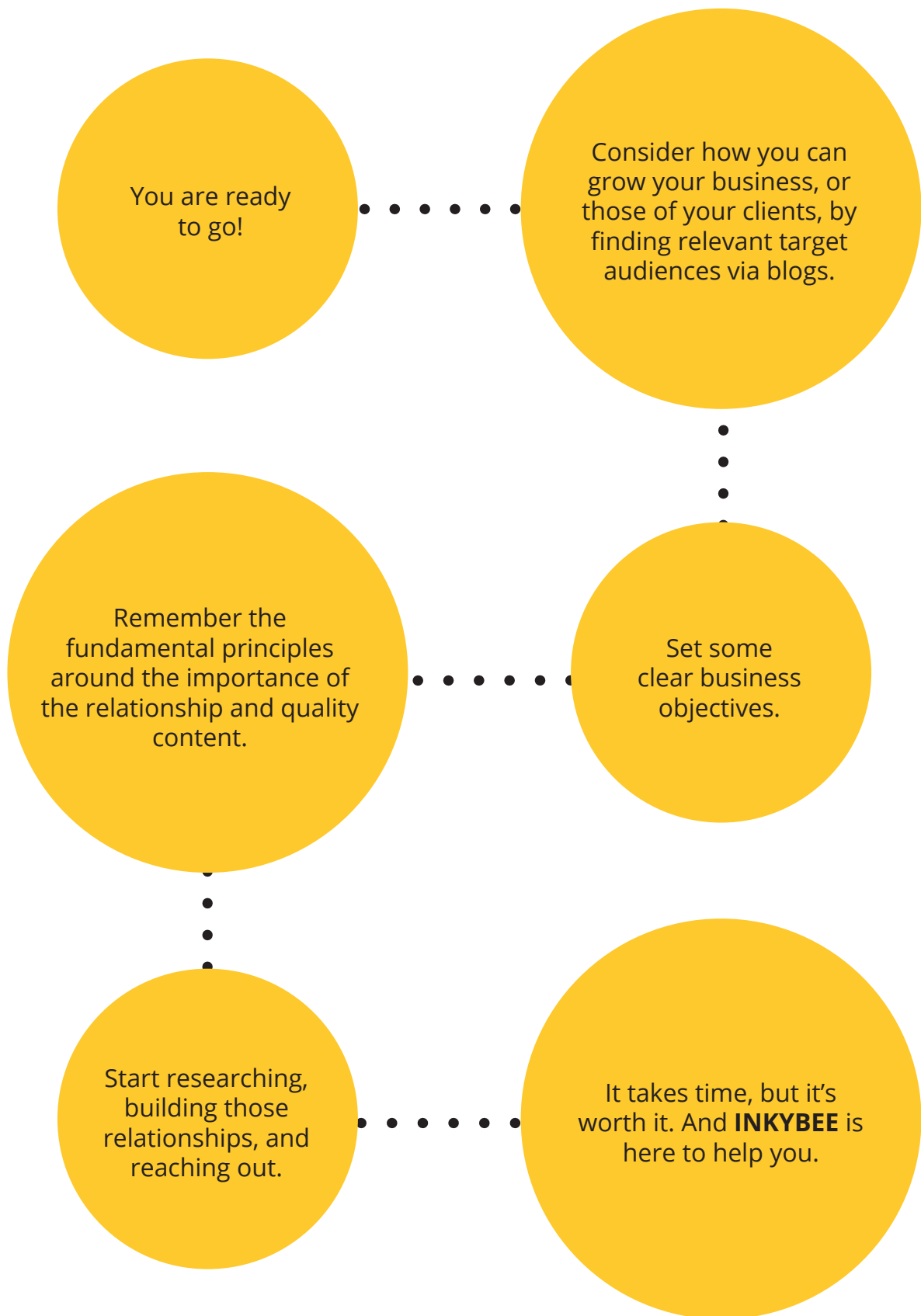


Social Media News Release Steps

http://news.press-feed.com/images/Social_Media_News_Release_v3.pdf



Next Steps



Good Luck!





Inkybee helps you research the blogs you need to target then measure and report on the results of your outreach efforts.

www.inkybee.com

Inkybee is a Forth Metrics Product



web: www.forthmetrics.com

blog: blog.forthmetrics.com

twitter: [@forthmetrics](https://twitter.com/forthmetrics)

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