

As personal media continues to grow and more individuals post their own content online, the practice of public relations and definition of the media is expanding. Individual voices can be more influential than ever today, and present real opportunities and challenges for public relations professionals to revise our thinking. It's not a world we can afford to ignore, as bloggers and their ideas have the capacity to travel as far as any traditional media source. One of the more frequent questions clients are asking is how to get bloggers to talk about products, services or ideas. It can be a tricky question to answer, because bloggers vary so widely in what they write about and how open they are to PR-style pitches. The rules for conducting "blogger relations" can be very different to media relations. So how do we at Ogilvy PR approach it? Here are some basic guidelines we follow when approaching bloggers:



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1 | Before you pitch them, read their blog. This may seem like a no-brainer, but it's the most common mistake made by PR people. Bloggers respond to a pitch that clearly relates to the topic they write about. Nothing frustrates them more than ignorance about their blog. If you haven't read at least five posts from a blog, don't bother pitching to it. Knowing the blogger's subject matter and tendencies goes a long way to ensuring your message is relevant for them.

2 | Two words: trackbacks and comments. These are the two most visible signs of success for a blogger. Who is commenting on your posts, and who is linking back to your posts. Every blogger wants to increase both of these. How does your pitch help them to achieve one or both of these things? If you can answer that question, and answer it for them in their pitch, you'll vastly improve your chances of success.

3 | Bloggers are experts. Journalists by their nature have to be flexible within their industry. Tech writers know servers, storage, software development and VOIP, but this knowledge is only specialized in a few areas which are not necessarily the ones you care about. Bloggers by contrast, are often experts in their niche area, especially when the "niche" refers to their personal opinion. They are experts who have high radars for bullsh*t, and are the influencers that others turn to for advice. Treat them like experts, and you will win.

4 | It's not always about their readers. Many bloggers are writing for themselves, and their blogs serve as an online manifest of their personality and thoughts. While many blogs have huge readerships, ultimately most bloggers are writing because they have a genuine passion for the subjects they write about. Therefore, bloggers won't write about something "newsworthy" if it doesn't personally interest them. And unlike journalists, they don't have to.

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5 | Giving them free stuff is ok. While many journalists are honor and ethics bound to turn down any free offers from PR professionals and companies, bloggers are not. This is not to say that trying to buy your way into getting bloggers to cover your story will work. It won't. But don't be afraid to give bloggers your product and let them try it for themselves. Free stuff is ok, as long as you are willing to give up control of what they might say about it.

6 | Know who else is talking about you. Bloggers are usually in communities with others who talk about the same things. As a result, they are likely to know if someone else in their world has talked about you and what they have said. Bloggers thrive on originality and their personal reputation within a community. If the vibe online about your product or service is negative, they will know about it, so you better know before you approach them.

7 | Don't throw away your traditional media relations playbook. Some of the PR 101 lessons still apply to bloggers. Your story has to be newsworthy. You have to answer the questions of why the blogger should care about it (has to be relevant). You have to have an angle. It has to be well written, short, and prioritized with your most important message up front. Bloggers are short on time, love a good story with good visuals, want to increase their readership – and most importantly, love to feel that they have the exclusive scoop. Sound familiar?

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