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Building and maintaining media relations

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In my opinion good media relations are among the most valuable investments regarding the communications and Public Relations operations within an organisation. This means, that all the work you put up in building and maintaining media relations, is worth all the efforts. It can mean the difference between success or failure.

Although a reporter never would admit that he or she is easily influenced, the fact is that you would get better press in an emergency case if you have a positive personal relation to the reporter. So, in my opinion there is nothing more important, in building and maintaining media relations, than the face-to-face-contact.

My experience of good personal relations to reporters is also that you're not only getting better press in emergency cases. You are more successful in getting published when you have something positive to say, too.

Honesty and openness are two key-words in this context. I have never tried to manipulate and delude a reporter, since that definitely would ruin the relationship. I always try to be as straight forward as possible and underline what I can say and what I can't. That instead of presenting some forced lies.

For me, it is also very important to create some kind of mid-field ground, where the reporter and I can meet unprejudiced. Sense of humour and distance, both to yourself and your organisation, are two main characteristics that are unvaluable in order to create a good personal relationship with a reporter. But, I'm very accurate in emphasizing when I enter my role as a company representative. All in order to be regarded as correct, yet obliging.

To be quick when it comes to returning calls is another vital component that gives the reporter a feeling that he or she is important enough to be contacted as soon as possible. This serviceminded attitude is of course good for the relationship.

Besides the more personal relation it's important to have a business-like relation, where you show a great deal of respect for the mission and skill of the reporter, in hope for the same treatment in return. For instance, I try to always accept the news valuation that the reporter has made. If you reject that, you're interfering with the reporters job. Instead, I try to make the best out of it. Sometimes I have to ask to get back to him or her, in order to have some time to think how to respond to the idea of the story and how to make the best out of it for the sake of the company.

This business-like relation can easily be established by paying the editorial office visits for the purpose of studying. Even in this case you hopefully get a visit in return... A visit that gives you the opportunity to give a great deal of background information, valuable to the reporter in the future.

Furthermore it's a good idea to establish a tradition with annual press lunches, for example at christmas-time. The main purpose with these gatherings is to create a good mood and working climate between the two parties. Although, the reporters often expects to have som kind of information at the same time and I usually describe company figures for the past year at the time; all in all during maybe ten minutes.

In spite of the importance of face-to-face-contacts I finally would like to stress the use one can have of a good site at the Internet. Medias are more and more keen on gathering information from the webb. A well-structured site for journalists is a must, especially for your own works sake. It's important to always be able to refer to something that you present at your site. My aim is to create a site that is the reporters next best friend...

That is also contributing to the personal relation - though in a computerised way...