

When Is the Best Time to Distribute Firm News?

As public relations professionals, we are in constant contact with editors, reporters and producers, whether connecting them with sources to comment about breaking news and industry trends or pitching stories about high-profile executives and industry leaders. We are keenly aware of deadlines and the importance of only sharing information that is relevant to an audience and a beat. We often counsel clients about the best way to approach the media, the right time to announce news and when to post on social media.

This has been especially important in the recent months, when media coverage has revolved around the pandemic and presidential election. We have walked a fine line of providing relevant news while understanding the ever-changing nature of the issues affecting our country.

But just when we thought we had seen it all, nothing was quite as jarring as the attack earlier this month on the U.S. Capitol. As a crisis erupted and the events of that day unfolded before our eyes, our country stopped. The breadth and impact of that day was impossible to fully understand in the moment. We were all glued to news coverage locally, nationally and even internationally, and understood nothing was as important as this historic moment.

We advised clients to stand down because during a crisis, an aggressive media strategy can seem tone-deaf if it has nothing to do with the situation at hand. We put the media pitches about industry trends we had prepared and the new hire announcements and promotions we had planned to share that day on hold. The incident at the Capitol illustrates how timing is important.

Here are other thoughts on timing.

Know the Deadlines of Targeted Media Outlets

Pitch a story when a reporter is on deadline, and you can lose a potential placement, as well as upset the journalist. It's all about when you get that pitch into the newsroom. If you send a pitch during a really busy news time, it might get lost in the shuffle. Journalists are overwhelmed by their current 24/7 workload, juggling multiple streams of communication and, just like everyone else, are on edge during these historic times. Knowing when to share relevant information will radically increase the chances of garnering interest in your story.

Generally speaking, it is best to send a media release on a Tuesday or Wednesday morning. On these days, journalists are more likely to be at their desks, sifting through their story ideas and prioritizing coverage. By sending your pitch in the morning, you give the journalist more time to consider the topic, get back in touch and write an article.



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Make Yourself Available

It may seem obvious, but many forget that when you engage the media, you must ensure that they can contact you if they want to pursue the story. It's not enough to send out a media release and cross your fingers, hoping for coverage. You have to be prepared to answer a journalist's questions, provide additional comment, and make yourself or your firm leadership available for an interview. A journalist whose response goes unanswered is a journalist who won't respond to you again.

This Also Goes for Social Media

Is there anything worse than creating a social media post and graphic only to have no one "like," comment on or share it? You spent time making sure the image was esthetically pleasing, the text aligned with the key messaging, the font was crisp and easy to read, the colors matched the brand, and the content was relevant. Why didn't it resonate with your audience? Perhaps this apparent failure had nothing to do with the post, but rather the timing of when it was posted. The best time to post on LinkedIn, for instance, is toward the middle of the week, between Tuesday and Thursday, and during times that correspond with the morning and evening commute as well as the lunch hour.

As 2021 continues to unfold, we need to prepare for more disruptive news, given the current political climate. The inauguration may have generated a great deal of euphoria, but the problems haven't gone away. As we learned during the Capitol riot, timing is everything.

Do you have questions about how to time your firm communications to generate the greatest impact? Contact me, Lisa Altman, at laltman@jaffepr.com.