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Got PR?

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I am an avid amateur photographer so I'm drawn to powerful images. I focus this month on particular images that tell two vastly different stories.

It's hard to believe it's already been one year since the tragic oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The before and after pictures shown on the right suggest that some native habitats are already rebounding. Such resilience is proving elusive to residents and businesses in the areas most affected by the devastating oil slick, who continue to struggle to return to life as normal.

This clearly applies to BP, who has been largely under the radar since its leaking oil well was plugged months ago, but naturally is back under the microscope on the one-year anniversary of the oil rig explosion that started it all. The company continues to be its own worse enemy through its irresponsible actions. Makes me wonder if Charlie Sheen is advising them on policy decisions.

I balance that with a delightful "fish story" piece that illustrates the usefulness of the caption story, one of the best ways to gain publicity. These two stories reinforce the power of pictures because the camera doesn't lie and speaks volumes without words to engage us in so many ways.

My other stories are purely informative. Since so much attention is focused on driving web traffic to specific content, I thought including a detailed study on this topic by a content platform provider would be of interest.

And I (finally!) wrap-up my six-part series on the "5 Ws and the H." I urge you to review this material to put this concept to work for you. All *Got PR?* issues are archived on my website.

Happy Spring!

Gulf oil spill 1 year later: BP still doesn't get it

April 20, 2011 marks the one-year anniversary of the Deepwater Horizon oil rig explosion, which led to the largest offshore oil spill in U.S. history. The disaster also continues the story of perhaps the worst example of corporate PR/reputation management, authored by BP.

When the crisis began, the company began right away blaming everyone but itself for the conditions that led to the explosion, and then minimizing the extent of the damage caused by the oil leak. Then, on the exact anniversary date of the explosion, BP filed lawsuits against rig owner Transocean for at least \$40 billion in damages, accusing it of causing the deadly blowout. BP says every single safety system and device and well control procedure on the oil rig failed. BP is also is suing Cameron International, which provided a blowout preventer with a faulty design that led to extra risk. Both companies have filed counter claims against BP. No one seems to be asking why BP waited a whole year to take this legal action instead of taking this action right away.

Angry shareholders, artists, campaigners and people from communities affected by its oil spills converged on the company's annual meeting in London this month. BP spent some \$90 million on PR in the first three months of the spill, but now is saying nothing publicly. Instead, it has been running ads in the British press defending its handling of the situation and the \$13 billion it has spent in clean-up costs and aid to those affected.

The cash outlays will continue to gush just like the oil from the broken wellhead. My advice to BP is to stop the blame game and act like the good corporate citizen it wants us to believe it is. PR will work in its favor only if it takes that approach.



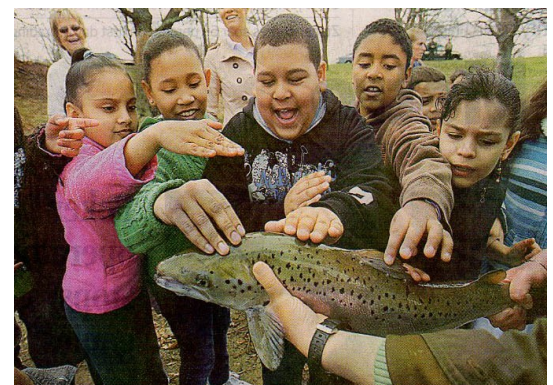
These photos show Cat Island, Louisiana, on April 8, 2011 (left) and on May 22, 2010, as the oil leak began to affect coastal areas. The island is home to hundreds of brown pelican nests as well other water birds. While this habitat seems to have recovered from the disaster, BP and Gulf area residents and businesses have not fared nearly as well, and may never fully recover.

We can learn a lot about PR from this 'fish story'

The old saying "a picture is worth a thousand words" rings true again with this caption story from the Boston Globe's April 15 edition. I love caption stories, and this one is a textbook example of proper PR planning and execution.

The caption under the 4-column photo read:

WILD TIME – State and city officials joined students for the annual fish stocking at Jamaica Pond. They released 1,150 state hatchery-raised trout and salmon in the pond, part of the annual effort to stock 500 Massachusetts waterways with fish produced at hatcheries operated by MassWildlife. Maria Mejia (left), Yoka Rodriguez, Joel Nunez, Carlos Baez Hernandez, and Idalis Alvarado from the John F. Kennedy Elementary School got up close and personal with a fish.

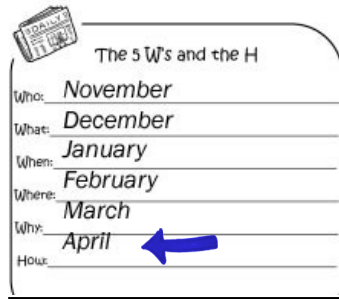


This publicity photo in the Boston Globe is the result of textbook media relations strategy and event planning on the part of state & city officials from Massachusetts and Boston plus local elementary schools.

(Fish Story, cont.)

Part 6: 5 Ws and the H: what businesses can learn from this journalism primer

Here's the final installment of this series I introduced in November about how businesses can improve their market positioning by following the time-honored process journalists use to write a news story. They always start with the "5 Ws and the H": who, what, when, where, why and how.



Taken from journalism, the "5 Ws and the H" are the necessary components that the lead paragraph of a news story should contain. Apply these same ingredients to create a profile of your business that defines your USP (unique selling proposition).

This month I conclude with your "how" attributes. After "who," "how" is the most important element in your story. "What" seems like it would rank either first or second in your branding strategy, since that's the basic nature of your business. But as you've read in this series, your "what" can NEVER be your critical differentiator, it's merely your line of business and is shared by other firms. Until you've clearly defined your "who," your "what" doesn't really matter anyhow.

Let me give you some examples

of the power of "how." In the field of intellectual property, it's almost impossible to copyright *what* you do – only *how* you do it. If your "what" could not be copied, there would be no competition. It's your "how" that counts. There are many tablet computers, but none can beat "how" Apple's

iPad works and does what it does.

Since your "how" is your real competitive edge, you want to brand that special know-how as effectively as you can. I always look for ways my clients can use their "how" to define the market in their own image. That means making their "how" synonymous with the state of the art or best practices in their field; e.g., the de facto standard. This can be done by inference or by creating a new category of measurable performance or value in your industry...the odious paradigm shift.

An example of inference is Intel's incredibly durable and successful "Intel Inside" branding. Obviously other microprocessors do *what* Intel's chips do, but Intel has been able to create and sustain the perception that some *how* its products work better, so those

bearing the "Intel Inside" logo are, by inference, superior.

One company that has created a whole new industry category is VMware, the clear leader in the virtual computing market and widely considered the firm that created that type of IT infrastructure. Being first is never a bad thing!

PR is a natural vehicle to leverage your "what" to help define the market in your own image to in turn build a market-leading – and industry defining – business. News releases, product reviews, case histories, white papers, speaking venues, public demonstrations, are all good examples. Advertising, web/email marketing, events, webcasts, podcasts, social media are also effective. Just make your "what" work for **you!**

"Fish Story" (cont.)

The caption shows good execution because it covers the "5 Ws & the H" and starts with a short boldfaced mini-headline that grabs attention. The photo is well composed and has the two most effective ingredients of any media-friendly photo: kids and animals. In most cases, either one will do, but having both makes this caption story unstoppable.

Of course, this placement didn't just happen. It was planned carefully by the Mass. Department of Energy and Environmental Affairs, which issued a news release about the event on April 14. The Globe and other major media outlets probably were alerted in advance and the right state and city officials were on hand to make it a true news event. Students from three Boston elementary schools assisted in releasing the fish, the extra touch that ensured news appeal of the occasion.

So this placement had everything going for it: 1). Great timing: the arrival of spring. 2) Tradition, this is an annual event; and 3) Novelty, good fishing right in Boston, and who knew the state farmed that many fish?

Use these ingredients for your next caption story and you'll improve your chances for coverage. Of course, having a cute kid or an animal (or both) in your photo won't hurt!

Study Examines how people find content on the web

In the first quarter of 2011, web content optimization firm Outbrain analyzed its expansive data to help inform conversations around content discovery.

They looked at traffic patterns from 100 million sessions across more than 100 premium publishers currently using its platform to see how readers are accessing content, where they're finding it and how they're engaging with that content. A session is defined as a series of page views within a publisher site with no more than 30 minutes between one page view and the next.

Since Outbrain tracks traffic to content pages (articles and videos), it saw that approximately 33% of the overall sessions into such pages start from an external site. The remaining 67% of content sessions begin internally, from type-in traffic, bookmarks, clicks from the publisher's home page, other in-site links or are from unknown sources. For the purposes of its study, Outbrain evaluated only the third of sessions that begin offsite in order to focus on how people discover content from outside sources. Key findings (see diagram):

- While search still rules in terms of

Breakdown of Known External Traffic Sources



Source: Outbrain Content Discovery and Engagement Report, Q1 2011

Web content optimization firm Outbrain's snapshot of where people go to find web content.

- directing traffic to content, (41% of external referrers), social is gaining at 11%.
- Of the six content verticals examined, stories in the news, entertainment and lifestyle categories are the most likely to receive traffic from social sources.
- Traffic coming from social media sources has the highest tendency to bounce
- Readers who go from one content site to another (e.g., USA Today to The Daily Beast) are most likely to be engaged in what they're reading, presumably because they are already consuming content.
- Facebook delivers a more diverse audience than Twitter.