



*Powerful Healthcare Marketing Communications Solutions*

## **Just Say No . . . To The Unnecessary Press Release**

There is a widespread, but unacknowledged epidemic sweeping the country. It's called Press Release Addiction or PRA. Those suffering from PRA usually display the following symptoms:

- \* An overwhelming compulsion to distribute a press release -- no matter how newsworthy it is.
  
- \* Little understanding of how the media consumes information.
  
- \* An expectation that every press release will receive significant media coverage.

Fortunately, there are two cures for individuals and organizations suffering from PRA: knowledge and restraint.

### **The First Rx For PRA: Knowledge**

The keys to successfully interacting with the media are understanding their environment, needs and how they use information.

**The Environment:** Media work in a high-pressure environment. They are responsible for quickly developing well-researched and well-written

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419 Lafayette Street, 3rd Fl  
New York, NY 10003  
**Ph:** 212.501.6101  
**F:** 866.895.7220  
info@envisionsolutionsnow.com  
[www.envisionsolutionsnow.com](http://www.envisionsolutionsnow.com)

articles. In addition, they must contend with countless e-mails and phone calls from their sources, editors and people seeking publicity.

**The Media's Needs:** Giving the media with what they need is the best way to capture their attention and goodwill. Provide them with relevant information and resources (e.g., spokespersons, reference information) that will help them do their job. Bombarding them with irrelevant press releases and follow-up phone calls only annoys them.

**How the Media Uses Information:** Recognize that the media use information in a variety of ways -- even when it is useful. Sometimes a reporter will include information about your product or service in a story quickly. Other times, they may decide to use the information in a future story to provide readers with context or alternatives. Remember, coverage is valuable . . . whenever it appears.

Think about the environment, requirements and habits of the media when deciding whether to distribute a news release. It will help you to increase the odds that your information will be used.

### **The Second Rx For PRA: Restraint**

Before sending out a press release, ask yourself a simple question: Why will anyone care about this information? This question is important, because reporters ask it everyday. The fact is if a reporter concludes that their readers won't care about your information, they won't use it.

Some reasons reporters may ignore a press release include:

- \* The information is not newsworthy (e.g., not enough people will be affected by the news or it is not local).
- \* The information is not relevant to the reporter (i.e., the reporter does not cover the topic or industry your release focuses on).
  
- \* The information is not material (e.g., it is not of enough import to significantly influence the organization's profits or revenues).

Before putting together a press release, think about whether it would be better to deliver information to your stakeholders another way. For example, sending an e-mail to a carefully selected group of constituents with the news may be just as effective.

Establishing good relationships with the media is critical.

Understanding the media's needs and providing them with high-value information will earn journalists' good will and attention. Be sure that the press releases you distribute are relevant and newsworthy to increase the odds that media will cover your product or service.