PR in the Time of Pandemic
Articulating Your Message Effectively during COVID-19
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• With 8 years of experience in the writing and editing field, he has utilized his understanding to train clients on the art of impression through press releases in training seminars, blog posts, and counseling.

• He has worked as an editor, writing coach, and writer in the non-fiction publishing industry in the U.S., as well as an English speaking, grammar, and writing teacher in the Czech Republic, Japan, and China.
Topics to Cover

01 Why Press Releases Matter
   Even during COVID-19

02 What to Write
   Know Your Audience & Plan Your Content

03 Where / When to Send Your News
   Avoiding Errors of International Miscommunication

04 How to Present Your News
   Multimedia Assets and Their Impact on Your COVID-19 Stories

05 What to Remember
   Key Take-aways for International PR during Times of Crisis
Why Press Releases Matter During Times of Crisis or Concern

Source Relevance - Which brand source do you consider the most useful?

- Company itself: 2.4%
- Company social media channels: 6.7%
- PR agency representative: 11.2%
- Company website: 12.4%
- Email pitches: 12.5%
- Spokesperson: 19%
- Press releases: 36%

CSR
Help demonstrate the company’s value for society

SEO
Help build SEO traffic and search visibility

Help communicate with your targeted audience
Help establish a relationship with the media
What to Write
Know Your Audience

Cision’s “2020 State of the Media” Report
What about these examples related to COVID-19?

Dentist Recommends Boiling Family Toothbrushes COVID-19/ Corona Virus Help.

Dentistry Recommends Homemade Power Shake to Lower Stress and Boost Your Immune System to Prevent Disease and Heal Today

Newsjacking

Profiteering
What to Write
Plan Your Content

Common Topics during COVID-19

- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
- Company response to the pandemic
- CEO letters/points of view
- Technical/medical support
- Surveys/research
- Post-Pandemic Work Resumption

“What directly tell me in one or two sentences why this is important for the public to know about - not just why it's important for the company or client.”

~2020 State of the Media Survey Respondent
DISCUSSION: Is this a good topic?

“A company wants to send out a release saying that they are offering free face masks to Chinese speakers in the US.”
What to Write

Content Organization

Opening Paragraph – “Why”

Details

Quotes

Call to Action

Boilerplate

Eye-tracking by Nielsen Norman Group (2017)
sendQuick Provides Free Access to its Software to Curb Rise in Cyber-Attacks during COVID-19

SINGAPORE, May 4, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- sendQuick, a TalariaX Pte Ltd brand, today announced Free 3 months access to sendQuick ConeXa to help companies protect their data and employees from potential cyberattacks as they begin working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Opening Paragraph:

- Should be a condensed version of the release: If a reader stops here, they'll know the full story
- 5W Questions: What is happening? Who is involved? Where is it happening? When is it happening? Why does it matter?
- Readers should be able to see how this information is important to them (not the company) right away
Case Study

BEIJING, May 7, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- Phoenix Tree Holdings Limited ("Danke" or the "Company") (NYSE: DNK), one of the largest co-living platforms in China with the fastest growth, has launched a series of new measures this month to provide its tenants with safe rental apartments and services during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

JAKARTA, Indonesia, May 7, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- Building on the commitment to reinforce the global frontline fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, Yili Group, the No.1 dairy company in Asia, worked with PT Green Asia Food Indonesia to send personal protective equipment (PPE) to Indonesia as part of the relief effort to support local communities. The medical supplies, including 100,000 surgical masks, 2,000 protective suits and 2,000 pairs of goggles, were delivered to the Executive Office of the President of Republic of Indonesia during the ceremony held on May 5.
Body Paragraphs:

- More **specific details** about the news in the 1st paragraph
- **Quote** attribution with full name and title: Demonstrates professionalism/relevance
As the coronavirus pandemic continues to disrupt the lives of millions in Asia Pacific, this has resulted in medical resources being stretched, and families being more susceptible to hunger and food insecurity. To help address some of these issues, Herbalife Nutrition’s contribution will go into providing the necessary medical and nutrition supplies in partnership with local non-profit organisations in the region. These include:

- Provision of medical supplies such as protective gear and test kits to hospitals;
- Provision of nutrition products such as Herbalife Nutrition Formula 1 Shake and Protein Bar to healthcare workers who are working round the clock to care for the influx of COVID-19 patients;
- Provision of personal hygiene products such as face masks, hand sanitizers, hand soap and mouthwash to needy children through Herbalife Nutrition Foundation’s Casa Herbalife Program;
- Provision of cash funds to support relief efforts through local organisations such as the Vietnam Fatherland Front Central Committee.
Randy Tan, Founder and CEO, said "This is an exceptional time for the global economy. As the COVID-19 situation evolves, we want to stay nimble and support our clients through their challenges. I hope RDP’s fee relief measures help our hotel clients in some way to sustain their businesses. Our account managers have been in touch with clients to find out how they can, perhaps, adapt their strategies to make use of other RDP solutions. Let's keep our chins up. With resilience and commitment, we look forward to better days ahead."

Quotes:
• Need to be relevant to the news; don't use them to sneak in information about the company
• Needs to do double-work: Provide a voice for the company while also providing more details
Call to Action / Boilerplate

Call to Action
- Tells the reader how to follow up

Boilerplate
- Lists past accomplishments
- Explains main areas of expertise
- Details geographic footprint
- Includes company website

Contact
- Name, title/position, contact points (email or phone)
- Choose a contact who can speak English fluently on the phone
"28% of respondents deemed interviews the most trustworthy nonbrand source and 19% said spokespeople were the most useful brand source. Use people in your organization as experts in your field.

(Hint: depending on the topic at hand, this isn’t always going to be the CEO.)"

-- Cision’s “2020 State of the Media” Report
Key Tool: Press Release Analyzer Tool

- Press Release Analyzer Tool allows you to input your release to determine its efficacy
- Input the release and get feedback on the content
Release Analyzer Tool

- **Heading and Body**
  Provides pointers on length

- **Contact**
  Explains the importance of giving readers the option to follow up

- **Quotations and Images**
  Reminds you of how to further optimize your release for more coverage

- **Keywords**
  Points out instances of over-use for terminology. Remember, variety is a good thing

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45%

Your press release requires some minor optimisation. Please review our comments and recommendations below and adjust accordingly. The news is a little too short. 250 words is recommended.

**Heading**

- **✓**
  Your heading is 89 characters, which is the optimum length.

**Body**

- **✓**
  Your press release contains 242 words. We recommend a length of about 250 words.

**Contact**

- **✗**
  You haven't included any contacts. We recommend including two contacts with phone numbers and email addresses to extend your organisation's profile.

**Quotations**

- **✓**
  Your text contains quotes, which is great.

**Images**

- **✗**
  You have not stated that you will include an image. We recommend that you do so, because journalists rarely run stories without them.

**Keywords**

The most commonly used words are:

- cinemas: 6
- movie: 5
- were: 5
- china: 4
- return: 4
- respondents: 4
- mayan: 3
- survey: 3
- lovers: 3
- entertainment: 2
Where to Send Your (COVID-19) News
Avoiding Errors of International Miscommunication

Match content to distribution circuits
Be sure the reader knows why you’ve sent this news to their region

Provide accessible content
If possible, translate in the local language. Don’t rely on “English Only” distribution in regions where English is not the dominant language

Research the distribution region
Avoid touchy subjects, demeaning or patronizing wording, and over-generalization of populations

Stay out of other people’s fights
Avoid taking sides in political issues or disputes between other companies. Your focus should only be on what you’re doing for the readers
When to Send Your News
Timeliness of Content

Does the content reflect a larger conversation being had in the media in the current moment?

Does the news provide necessary information that will benefit readers in the current moment?

Are there any other stories that might distract from your story?

What day of the week do you prefer to receive pitches vs days you do receive pitches?

* Respondents noted all days that applied
How to Present Your News: Utilize Multimedia to Drive the Point Home
Trip.com Group donates 3 million surgical masks to COVID-19 efforts

SHANGHAI, April 9, 2020—Trip.com Group, a worldwide leading online travel services provider, has to date donated a total of 3 million surgical masks worldwide to COVID-19 efforts as part of its global initiative announced on 18 March 2020.

Further to the initial round of donations, the initiative has since expanded to provide relief to over 25 countries including Spain, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Hungary, Croatia, and Chile, among others.

Leading the initiative, Trip.com Group Chairman James Liang says that the company hopes that the donations will provide relief worldwide, and encourage countries to work together to secure a victory for humanity.

"Many ways, to join one journey. Many origins, to reach one destiny. Many friends, to form one family. Many endeavors, to win one victory," said Trip.com Group Chairman James Liang. "It is crucial at this moment in the global fight against the epidemic that all countries come together and support each other, to secure a victory for humanity."

"Going forward, we’ll take this challenge in our stride, and lead the travel industry to flourish once again," said Jane Sun, CEO of Trip.com Group. "Let’s continue to work together, to beat this challenge, and towards an exciting new step for the travel industry."
How to Present Your News

Example Multimedia Assets

Be #Unbroken in the fight against Critical Illness
What to Remember:
Key Takeaways for International PR during Times of Crisis or Concern

- **Tone**: Avoid calling yourself #1. Instead, focus on the qualities that set you apart from others.

- **No Newsjacking**: Take out anything unrelated to your news (Even if that means not connecting to COVID-19).

- **No Profiteering**: Using COVID-19 to sell your products leaves a bad taste in the mouth of the readers.

- **No Bad-Mouthing**: Do not say bad things about your competitors, other groups, or politicians.
More Resources

Best Practices for Brand Communications in Times of Uncertainty

Due to the rapidly shifting news cycle and growing concerns about COVID-19, we at Cision want to support your communication efforts during these times of uncertainty. Here are some best practices for brand communications in difficult times.

If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to us on Twitter @Cision.

CRISIS COMMS CHECKLIST

A crisis can happen fast, and you need to be ready when it does. This 10-step checklist is designed to guide you through a crisis as it happens. Use it alongside your organization's crisis comms plan to make sure your team doesn't miss a beat.

1. Recognize the forming crisis and get ready for action
   - Grab your Crisis Comms Playbook
   - Gather any and all available information, both internally and externally.

2. Utilize your media monitoring
   - Ensure your crisis communications play to your strengths.
   - Engage key influencers and thought leaders.

3. Alert the team and provide information
   - Make sure the chain of command and communication is clear.

4. Develop your messaging
   - Frame the relevant internal, leadership, customer, and media messaging.

5. Prepare your deliverables (as necessary)
   - Prepare a press release.

6. Ensure your spokespersons have a clear message.
   - Ensure your spokespersons have a clear message.

7. Perform a postmortem
   - Analyze where you handled the crisis effectively and where there was room for improvement.

8. Review with your legal team/stakeholders
   - Ensure all relevant parties are aware of the situation.

9. Communicate the key takeaways from your plan.
   - Deliver the deliverables.

10. Monitor for additional coverage and responses
    - Monitor for additional coverage and responses.

11. Reassess the situation
    - If the crisis is contained, focus on rebuilding.

12. Stay informed
    - Keep up with the latest news and share updates with your audience.

13. Stay positive
    - Remember to stay positive and keep your audience informed.

14. Remember to stay calm and focused.
    - Remember to stay calm and focused.

There's a fine line between being helpful to your customers and audience and attempting to capitalize on a crisis. With thoughtful communications, your brand can be seen as a trusted source of information for your industry in trying times.
Thank You!