

PR in the Time of Pandemic

Articulating Your Message Effectively during COVID-19



Nathan Brown

Senior Editor at PR Newswire

- 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

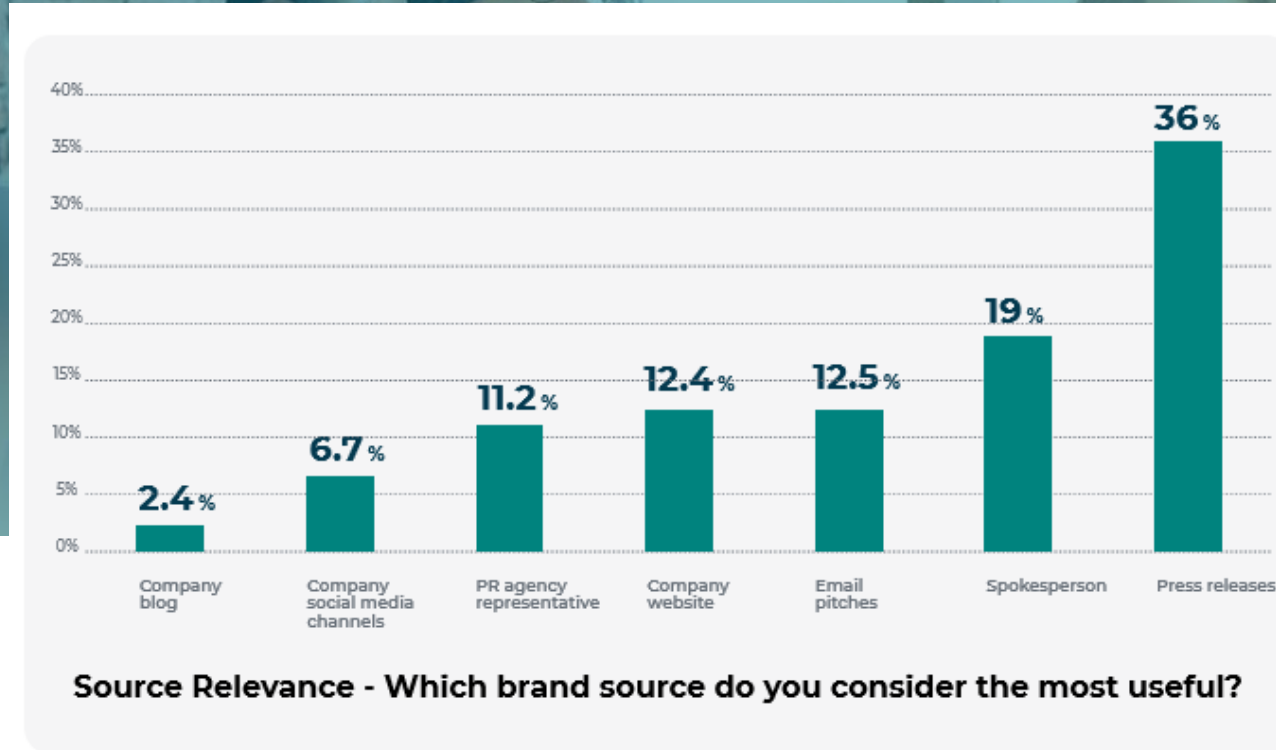
Why Press Releases Matter

During Times of Crisis or Concern



CSR

Help demonstrate the company's value for society



Help communicate with your targeted audience

Help establish a relationship with the media

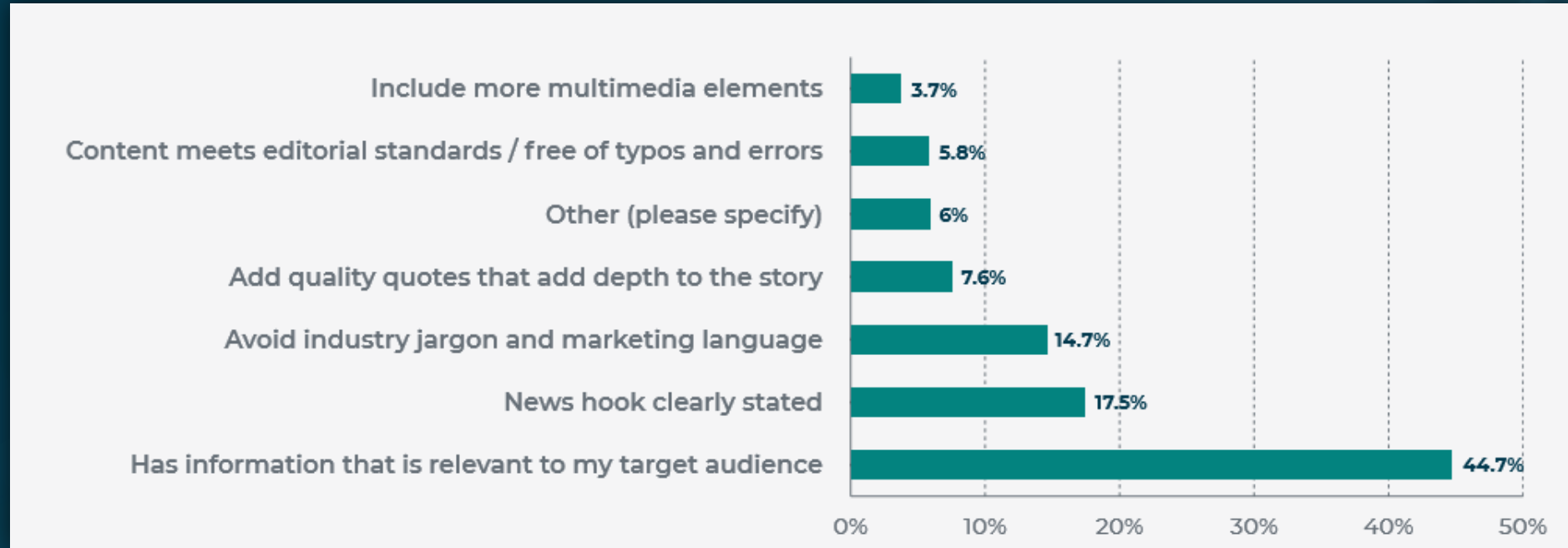


SEO

Help build SEO traffic and search visibility

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.

Newsjacking



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

Profiteering

What to Write

Plan Your Content



"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



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

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

”



Content Organization



Boilerplate

9

What to Write

Opening Paragraphs

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.

What to Write

Body Paragraphs

DoctorOnCall Partners Shopee Malaysia to Offer More COVID-19 Test Options to Shoppers English ▾

This will be followed by a session supported by Pfizer Malaysia to highlight the importance of immunization and how life-saving vaccines can prevent deadly diseases on 15 May 2020. The final session on 22 May 2020 will centre around a healthy *Ramadhan* and *Hari Raya Puasa* by CARiNG Pharmacy. The live streams will start at 10.30am on each respective day.

Ian Ho, Regional Managing Director, Shopee said, "DoctorOnCall's decision to expand its digital reach and offer more Malaysians the accessibility to healthcare services especially during this difficult time is commendable. At the same time, by leveraging our technology and marketing tools such as Shopee Live, DoctorOnCall is able to bring curated content to viewers at home, educating and creating awareness on the importance of hygiene as well as ideas on having a healthy *Ramadhan*. This is what people need right now."

Body Paragraphs:

- More **specific details** about the news in the 1st paragraph
- **Quote** attribution with full name and title: Demonstrates professionalism/relevance

What to Write

Example Body Paragraphs

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.

What to Write

Example Body Paragraphs with Quotes

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

For more information about the program, please visit
<https://developers.facebook.com/products/messenger/coronavirus>

About Falcon.io

Falcon.io offers an integrated SaaS platform for social media listening, engaging, publishing, advertising, analytics and benchmarking. The company enables its clients to explore the full potential of digital marketing by managing multiple customer touchpoints from one platform. Its client portfolio includes Carlsberg, Toyota, William Grant & Sons, momondo, Panasonic and Coca-Cola. For more information, please visit www.falcon.io.

About Cision

Cision Ltd. is a leading global provider of earned media software and services to public relations and marketing communications professionals. Cision's software allows users to identify key influencers, craft and distribute strategic content, and measure meaningful impact. Cision has over 4,800 employees with offices in 24 countries throughout the Americas, EMEA, and APAC. For more information about its award-winning products and services, including the Cision Communications Cloud®, visit www.cision.com and follow Cision on Twitter @Cision.

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How Important is the Call to Action/Boilerplate?

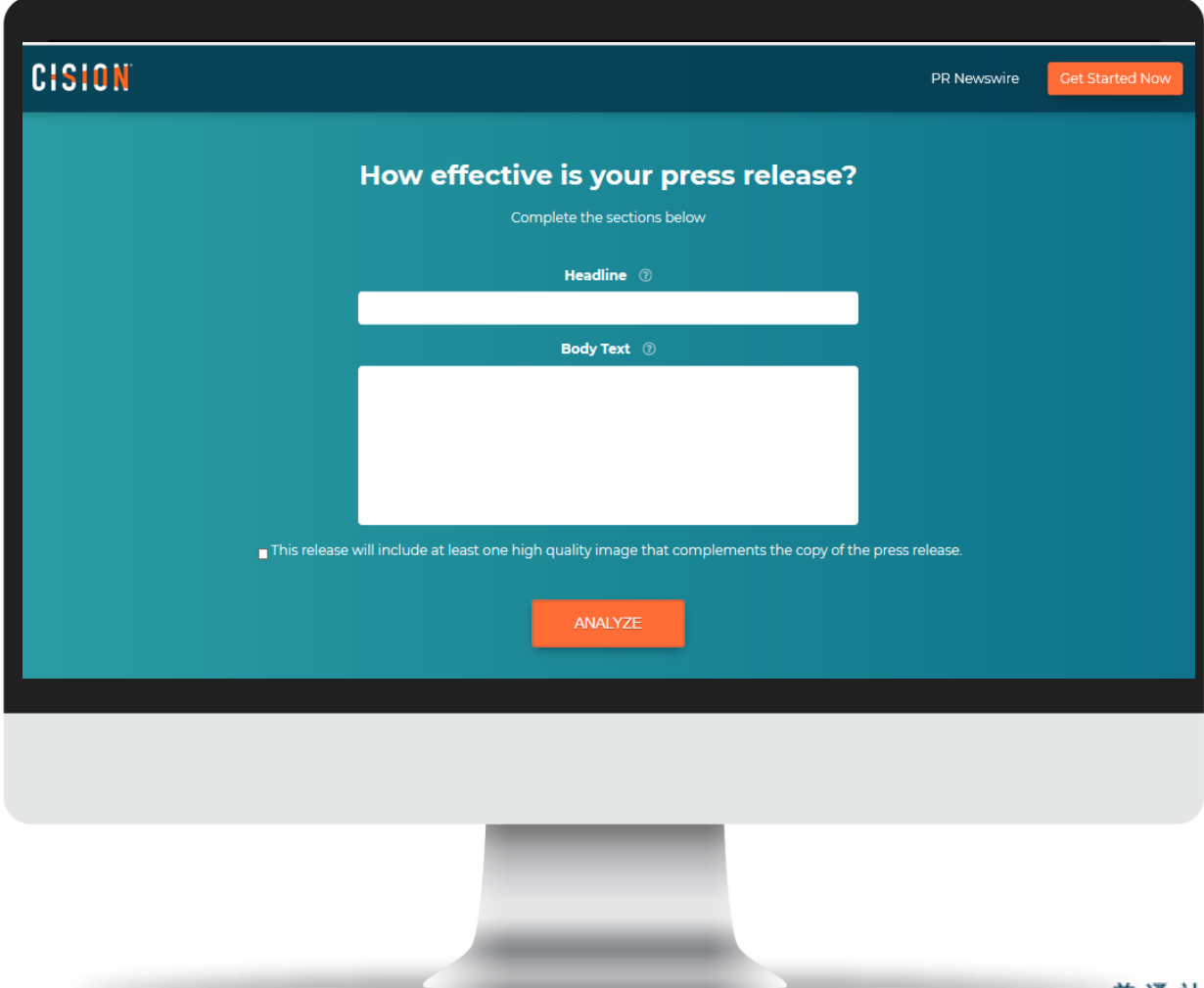
"28% of respondents deemed interviews the most trustworthy nonbrand source and 19% said spokespeople were the most useful brand source. Use people in your organization as experts in your field.

(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

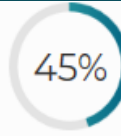
- Press Release Analyzer Tool allows you to input your release to determine its efficacy
- Input the release and get feedback on the content



The screenshot shows a web application interface for CISION's Press Release Analyzer. The header features the CISION logo on the left, 'PR Newswire' in the center, and a 'Get Started Now' button on the right. The main heading is 'How effective is your press release?' followed by the instruction 'Complete the sections below'. There are two input fields: 'Headline' with a question mark icon and 'Body Text' with a question mark icon. Below these fields is a note: '■ This release will include at least one high quality image that complements the copy of the press release.' At the bottom of the form is an orange 'ANALYZE' button.

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



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 organisations profile.

Quotations



Your text contains quotes, which is great.

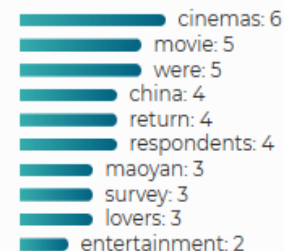
Images



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:



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

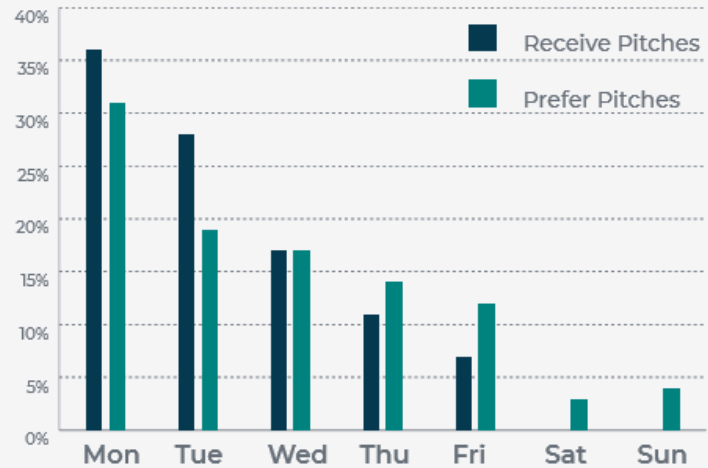
Avoid touchy subjects, demeaning or patronizing wording, and over-generalization of populations

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

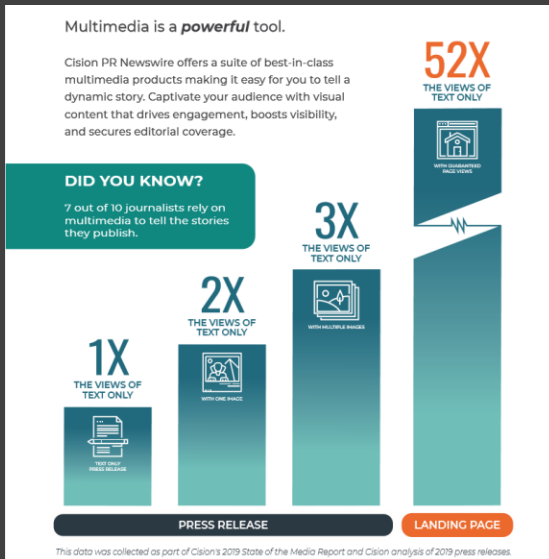


** Respondents noted all days that applied.*

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

- ▶ 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?

How to Present Your News: Utilize Multimedia to Drive the Point Home



Commercials



Export Portal is here to support small businesses.



How Toshiba Uses Structural Health Monitoring to Combat Aging Population and Aging Infrastructure

Trip.com Group donates 3 million surgical masks to COVID-19 efforts

Trip.com Group
2020-04-09 08:00 · 1697

Share: [f](#) [t](#) [in](#) [+](#) [d](#)

SHANGHAI, April 9, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- 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.



Trip.com Group sends donations of surgical supplies to dozens of countries across the globe (Pictured: supplies bound for Indonesia, Malaysia, Croatia, Vietnam).

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 next step for the travel industry."

Overview

TOTAL PICKUP

243

TOTAL POTENTIAL AUDIENCE

100M

Exact Match

243 postings

Exact Match

100M visitors

yahoo! finance

Search for news, symbols or companies

Coronavirus Watchlists My Portfolio Screeners Markets News Personal Finance Videos Industries Tech

Dow Futures 23,641.00 +67.00 (+0.28%)	Nasdaq Futures 9,105.50 +27.25 (+0.30%)	Russell 2000 Futures 1,268.00 +1.50 (+0.12%)	Crude Oil 25.60 -0.18 (-0.70%)	Gold 1,707.80 +1.00 (+0.06%)	Silver 15.72 +0.01 (+0.07%)
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Former Security Guard Turns \$15k Into \$7 Million **Raging Bull**

Going Green **The AIC**

HOME **SEARCH**

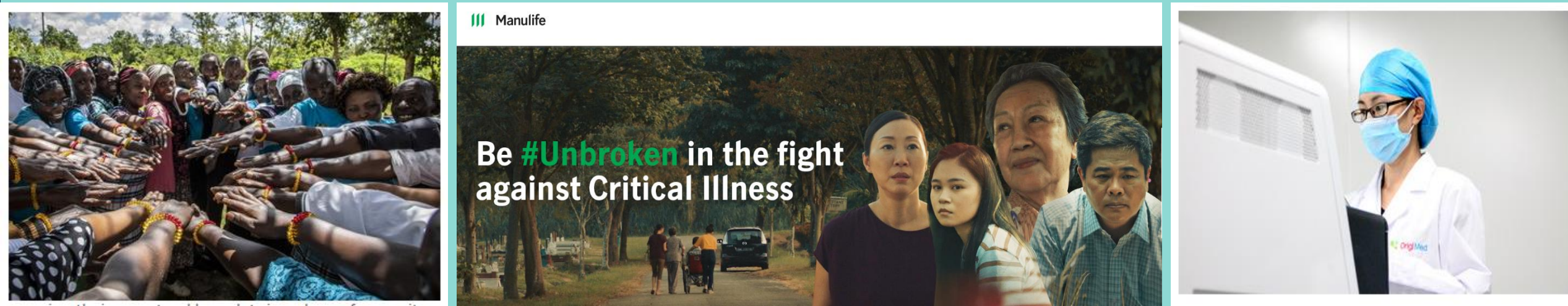
The New York Times

BUSINESS | TECH | ECON | MEDIA | MONEY | DEALBOOK

Trip.com Group donates 3 million surgical masks to COVID-19 efforts

How to Present Your News

Example Multimedia Assets



What to Remember:

Key Take-aways 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

CISION

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](#).

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO COMMUNICATE?

Living through a global pandemic is stressful, now more than ever it's crucial to let your customers know what you're doing to help them, not add to their stress. Let them know of any increased safety and cleanliness measures you're taking in whatever way makes the most sense for your brand.



BE CONCISE

People are receiving a lot of brand communications right now, so be sure you get right to the heart of what you have to share and give them resources to follow up on.



SPEAK TO WHAT YOU KNOW

There is a lot of misinformation out there; help the community by contributing valid, informative and expert information. Stick to your brand's area of expertise and don't try to give out any health advice if that isn't something you are qualified to do.



TARGET YOUR PITCHES

Journalists are tasked with keeping the public informed through uncharted territory. Do your research and be sure to target the right influencers with your news.



BE EMPATHETIC.

Remember that this is a stressful time for everyone and let that inform the way you shape your communications. Be patient with customers who have a lot of questions.



BE AVAILABLE

Consumers are used to nearly 24/7 access to brands via social media; be sure you have comprehensive social listening and monitoring set up to capture any and all queries directed at your brand so you can be responsive in line with your policies.



LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Communicate what you as a company are doing to minimize the impact of the situation with your own employees. Be transparent and direct.



SHARE POSITIVITY

Feel-good stories are especially appreciated in trying times. If it feels appropriate, share positive or inspiring stories that give your audience hope and reassurance.



STAY INFORMED

Keep up with the latest news yourself so you can let it shape your comms as necessary.



There's a fine line between being helpful to your customers and audience and attempting to capitalize off of a scary situation. With thoughtful communications your brand can be seen as a trusted source of information for your industry in trying times.



CRISIS COMMS CHECKLIST

CISION

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.

Recognize the forming crisis and get ready for action

- Grab that Crisis Comms Playbook
- Gather any and all available information, both internally and externally

Utilize your media monitoring

- Ensure your searches are ready to go and add in any keywords that pertain to the crisis
- Compare the share of voice of the crisis with your benchmarked coverage
- Check social media monitoring for reach and engagement around the crisis

Alert the team and provide information

- Make sure the chain of command and communication is clear
- Decide if your team needs to pause any scheduled social media posts, client emails, content, etc.

Develop your messaging

- Know the relevant internal, leadership, customer, and media talking points
- Establish a spokesperson and a source of truth where you can direct traffic to (e.g., a blog post)

Prepare your deliverables (as necessary)

- Prepare a press release
- Prepare social media posts
- Prepare for a press conference

Review with your legal team/stakeholders

- Report relevant information to executives and decision makers
- Consult with legal team/executives before sending out any external communications

Deliver the deliverables

- Send out press releases and social media posts (if applicable)
- Ensure your spokesperson has a clear voice throughout your deliverables

Monitor for additional coverage and responses

- Look closely at the social conversation
- Check for spikes in media coverage
- Respond when and where appropriate

Reassess the situation

- If the crisis is contained, breathe a sigh of relief
- If not, consider reaching out to some journalists and/or influencers- who are advocates of your brand- to help mitigate the crisis

Perform a postmortem

- Analyze where you handled the crisis effectively and where there was room for improvement
- Update your crisis comms plan for future events

Q&A

Thank You!