

Are we relying on media lists at the expense of the relationship?

There was a time when the bulk of a PR professional's time was spent on building and nurturing media relationships.

 By [Janine Lloyd](#) 20 Sep 2013

Back in the day, we didn't have the luxury of the Internet, social media and e-mail. Our work relied on the time we took to understand the media and to get to know what they were looking for and what they did not want.

I wonder if we still make the same effort today. The media channels we are trying to reach have exploded. There are editors, journalists, producers and researchers from traditional media, but we also need to keep abreast of online editors, bloggers, influencers, freelancers and celebrities. Is it a case of too many to reach with too little time, or have we become so reliant on technology that it's become far easier to blast off an email versus picking up the phone or making a visit?

Media list companies provide a vital service to agencies and companies, but are we using the media list to send a blanket release, or are we using it to keep abreast of media changes? I ask this question because we are finding that the new journalists we approach are surprised by us taking the time to get to know them beyond the digital world. It is a given for any PR company that any PR company would be building strong relationships with the media, yet it would seem that this is not the case.

In addition, as agencies bring junior staff into the team, they are thrown into the deep end by being given a media list and told to pitch a press release. This is not how PR is done.

We need to be tailoring our pitches beyond just a press release based on what the media is seeking and we can only do that if we understand them, what they are writing about and what tickles their fancy. We need to be on their radar so that when they're looking for a story, a quote or input, they can approach you and ask for it. We need to know their calendars and editorial schedules and this can only be done if they have a trusted relationship with us.

How to build better media relationships:

- *Listen more than you speak*

We all want to tell the media about our clients or company in the hope of getting something published, but the rule of really good relationship building is to listen and do so with interest and focus.

- *Ask and you shall receive*

Don't be afraid to ask the media what they think. By getting their valued feedback, you are able to learn what is wrong with the way you approach or pitch to them.

- *Keep in touch*

Set up a system for yourself to keep in touch with the media you meet and interact with. There is nothing worse than making a great contact but only calling them once a year when you need the person. This means remembering their birthday, or the fact they are planning an overseas trip, and connecting with them at these times.

- *Keep a record*

There's no need to memorise every meeting, rather keep notes in your contact database or in Outlook which highlights the discussion you had with the media. Jot down their likes and dislikes, their thoughts and your discussions.

- *Give freely*

Even if you have no story to sell, provide your ideas, connections or any information that would be relevant to what they are seeking. There might be nothing in it for you, but you will be providing value to them.

- *Get to know their individual needs*

Find out more about their world and what they are focusing on in their immediate space. They will know you're approaching them for coverage, but building the relationship begins with what they need and their objectives, not yours.

- *Let them get to know you*

Let them see who you really are by being real. This builds trust and respect.

- *Be personal in your interaction*

Send e-mails of appreciation or comment on something great they wrote or aired and why you think so. Send physical holiday cards or a small present and don't only rely on digital for communicating. Meet them face-to-face at social events in which you share a common interest.

ABOUT JANINE LLOYD

Janine Lloyd has been in the PR and marketing communications industry for 25 years, and now heads up Greater Than Johannesburg as managing director. In her career she has advised over 50 local and global businesses on PR and communications, as well as profiling for CEOs, executives and leaders. Janine is also a regular conference speaker on crises communications, reputation management and digital strategy, and is a qualified life, business and executive coach. [View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>