ACTIVATE B2B PR CAMPAIGN PLANNING 3.0

Your complete guide to creating compelling PR campaigns & content

ec-pr

The instinct to be distinct

CONTENTS

Just as your communication strategy defines your overall approach and messaging, orienting on external factors. Your PR campaign plan determines how you will deliver your messaging, where and when it is communicated, and who is responsible for delivering each element.

TIME TO ACTIVATE

This guide provides a step-by-step plan to activate your communication strategy with powerfully aligned, strategic, campaigns and content.

STEP ONE

Turning your messaging into brilliant ideas

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Turning your messaging into brilliant ideas

You know what you want to say at each stage of the buying cycle, and now you need to turn your messaging into ideas, which can be developed into campaigns and content. Our approach is to create a Brilliant Ideas Bank (BIB) which holds all your initial ‘seed’ ideas for development.

CREATE A BIB IN 4 EASY STEPS

1. Create a table for each persona.
2. In the first column you are going to jot down your seed idea.
3. In columns #2 to #5 you will indicate which message the seed ideas most closely support.
4. Each seed idea should be no more than a ‘headline’ to begin with. It is often helpful to frame it as a question.
5. For each message, consider the key phrases and write down as many questions about that phrase that a buyer might ask. Don’t assume your buyer has any in-depth level of knowledge and expertise.

Tip:
For each message, consider the “what, why, where, when and how” of each key phrase – these should inspire a multitude of ideas. The most valuable material will always be the ones that start with “How to” and provides practical advice.

“From every seed grows a beautiful flower”

The beauty of the BIB is that each seed idea has the potential to become a fully formed asset such as a blog, roundtable, webinar, report, speech, research project, media article, or LinkedIn post and all of them are strategically aligned.

This means that with every execution, you are reinforcing rather than diluting your messaging bringing you closer to your goal and positioning you as the go-to expert.

BIB EXAMPLE

For example, if my seed idea is, “the importance of brand awareness and trust to drive growth in tech scaleups,” my angles might include:

IDEA 1 How to build brand awareness that drives tech scale-up growth

IDEA 2 Why is B2B PR more cost-efficient than other marketing disciplines for tech scale-ups?

IDEA 3 How to earn trust in a crowded tech market, and why it matters: A Guide for Ambitious Scale-ups

IDEA 4 How to align PR & Marketing to maximise brand impact for tech scale-ups?

IDEA 5 How can you use thought leadership to drive awareness, memorability, and trust for your tech brand?

Seed idea/angle	Engagement	Solution criteria	Reinforcement	Value	Primary format	Lead party	Priority
Persona buying cycle progression (Marketing)							
Demystifying headless - a practical guide for retailers					White paper	EC-PR	Q1
The pros and cons of headless					Blog	Client	Q4
Headless v.s. omnichannel - what's the difference					SEO	Client	Q3
5 benefits of headless					Thought leadership	EC-PR	Q3
What does it mean to be omnichannel?					SEO	Client	Q2
What questions do retailers want answering?					Research survey	EC-PR	Q3
Amazon					Editorial case study	EC-PR	Q1
Tesla					Editorial case study	EC-PR	Q2

You can find a working example of a partially complete, anonymised BIB here.

STEP
TWO

Choosing your media channels

STEP TWO
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Choose your media channels

THE FOUR STAGES OF THE BUYING CYCLE:

1 AWARENESS	2 INTEREST
3 DESIRE	4 ACTION

Your target buyers will move through these stages at different speeds. You need to give them the opportunity and time to become familiar with your brand and consider your messaging - all at a speed that is right for them. This means your messaging needs to be ever-present - to build visibility and trust to fuel growth.

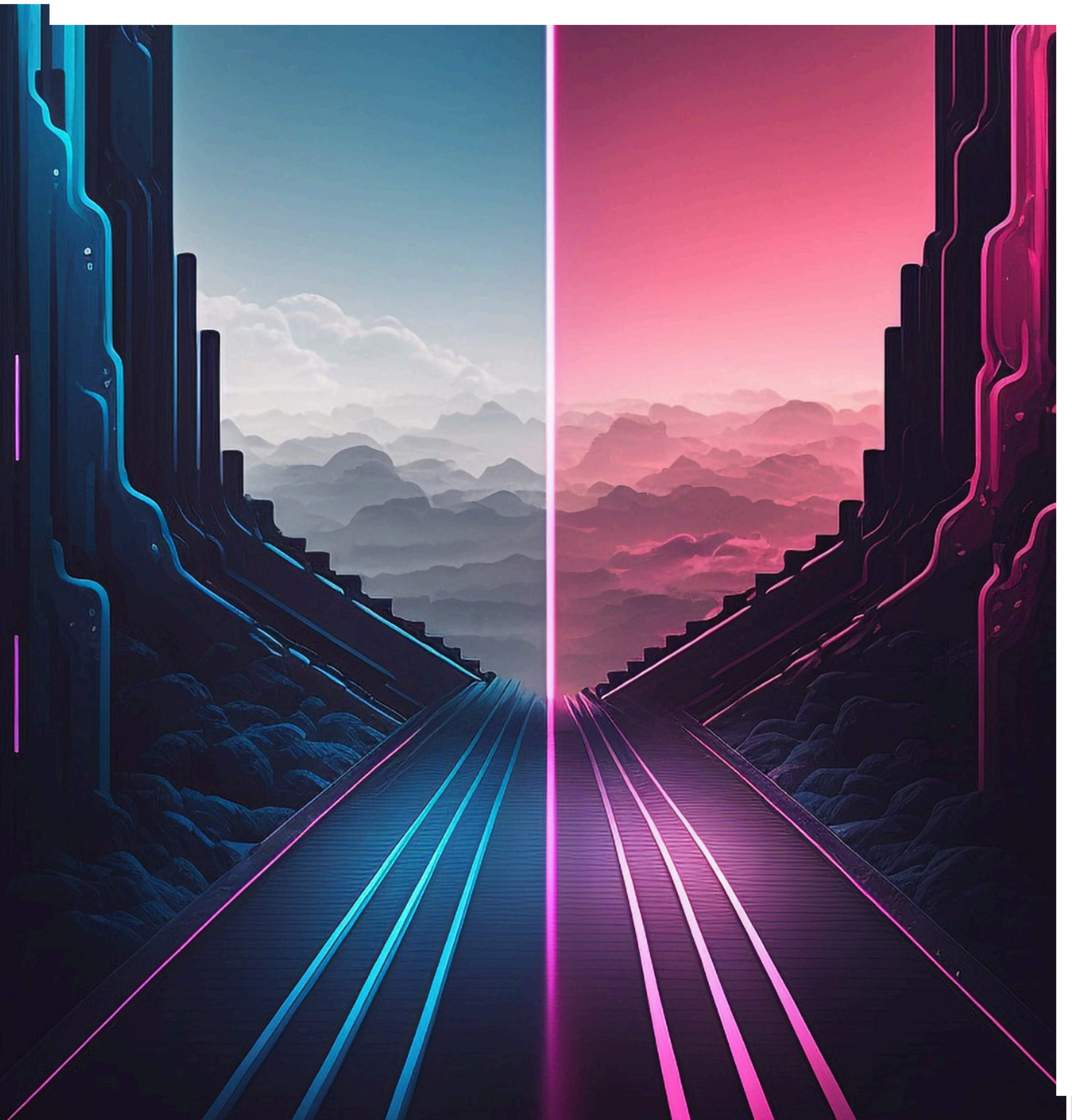
TWO TYPES OF MEDIA CHANNELS

Low Trust
High Trust

Engaging across a mix of both high and low trust channels will give brands more credibility.

Media over which you have complete control is called 'Low Trust.'
Content over which you have complete control is called a 'low trust' channel. This is because you have complete control over the content and claims you make can provoke the reaction, 'you would say that, wouldn't you!' This type of media includes, for example, your social posts, advertising and website content including your blog.

Media over which you have low control is called 'High Trust.'
Content over which you have low, or no control is called a 'high trust' channel because a third party is expressing an opinion based on their own experience or investigation of your company. Examples of this, include editorial coverage and testimonials.



In B2B, the key marketing communication channels, which you should be harnessing include, in alphabetical order:

1. Editorial (professional trade press)
2. Events
3. LinkedIn
4. Professional membership organisation engagement

There is a great deal of overlap between them. For example, a membership organisation may have an event promoted, reported on, and discussed, on both LinkedIn and trade media.

The key is to be involved and engaged in all four channels,

because they represent a mix of high and low-trust media, making your comms more credible.

As you developed your target buyer profiles, you will have investigated and documented the specific events and media your target buyer engages with for professional insight and guidance. This is where you need to focus your energy and activity.

We all have different information consumption preferences. This will vary by our time pressures, device we are using, how stressed we are, whether we are actively or passively ‘scrolling’ and where we are consuming the media. Variety is therefore critical.

THE HIGH TRUST LOW TRUST MODEL

Within the high trust and low trust channels, you have four main types of media:

1. **Paid**
2. **Earned**
3. **Shared**
4. **Owned**

1 Paid

This is what you say about yourself.

- Customer reviews
- Private sharing
- Social forums
- Organic social
- Lead generation

Low Trust / High Control

2 Earned

This is what others say about you.

- Media relations
- Influencer relations
- Investor relations
- Analyst relations
- Link building
- Word of mouth

High Trust / Low Control

3 Shared

This is what others say about you.
(Behind your back :))

- Customer reviews
- Private sharing
- Social forums
- Organic social
- Lead generation

High Trust / Low Control

4 Owned

This is what you say about yourself.

- Website
- Brochures
- Company social
- Content marketing
- Employee & customer stories

Low Trust / High Control

STEP THREE

Understanding your place within the media landscape

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Understand your place in the media landscape

4 WAYS B2B PUBLICATIONS CAN POSITIVELY IMPACT PR

B2B publications, both print and online, represent a 'high trust' channel and the business case for media coverage is well documented:

- It gives your organisation credibility.
- It validates what you are saying so that your prospects trust you.
- It raises awareness of your organisation amongst your target audience.
- It also provides you with a reach that you could not achieve via any other marketing tool without significant investment.

REMEMBER

You are competing for journalists' attention all the time.
They can block and blacklist you if you are not relevant or interesting. You get one opportunity to make the right impression. To secure press coverage you need to give journalists what they want:

- **News (opinion, announcements)**
- **Issues not products**
- **Evidence (whitepapers, case studies, reports, surveys)**

MEASURING PROGRESS

To measure your progress, you need to create a benchmark.
You do this by evaluating how you are performing on key messages against your main competitors, in your most influential publications. You can then focus on message inclusion over time and clearly demonstrate an increased share of voice on topics that matter to you and your target buyer.

YOU NEED TO KNOW:

1. Which of your top 5-10 target publications have covered your key messages over the last six months?
2. Which of your key competitors were included in these reports or articles?
3. What angle or argument were your competitors promoting and whether this overlaps with your key messaging?

Tip:
Be realistic. As a tech B2B business with ambitious intentions, you are probably bootstrapped or have restricted budgets. In order for communication to have an impact, you need to be consistent, current and ever-present. Select only the number of channels that you are confident you can fully embrace with passion and commitment.

By answering these 3 questions you will better understand how to go about creating a benchmark.

This analysis will give you a benchmark score of how you are performing on key messages against your competition. Repeating this exercise at intervals will help you to determine how you are shifting the needle.

STEP FOUR

Training your spokespeople

STEP FOUR

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Choose your spokespeople

You need your subject matter experts to deliver a good interview. This means answering the question, delivering interesting insight and weaving in key messages while also being engaging.

To evaluate whether your subject matter experts could be a suitable spokesperson you can conduct this 'quick and dirty' exercise.

Invite the nominated expert to an internal meeting to talk about a given area of their expertise for 12 minutes. You want to know the: what, why, where, when and how of a particular issue as well as what your company or brand can do to resolve or improve the situation. This is a total of six questions.

When they arrive at the meeting tell them:

- You are going to record it, so you have a reference and can focus on playing the role of interviewer/active listener.
- You would like them to answer the questions as if they were an average 14-year-old to keep any complex subject matter accessible. This is a good way of seeing whether they can adapt their storytelling to a defined audience on request. Many years ago, this was how BBC journalists determined whether an interviewee was able to make their material accessible, and so could appear on their programme.

Keep the interview to 12 minutes.

THE ASSESSMENT

After the interview, assess the subject matter expert using the five questions below, by awarding 1 point for a 'yes' answer and 0 for a 'no' against each of the six questions asked of them. A total of 30 points are available:

- Was the answer to the question clear?
- Was the answer to the question appropriately concise?
- Was the answer interesting?
- Was the delivery engaging?
- Was the company solution proposed with conviction and clarity?

If the potential spokesperson scored below 18, they probably won't make a good spokesperson. Anything below 25 and they need media training, anything above 25 and you have yourself a winner – but we would still recommend some top-up training. You may want to check out our FLARE media training guide.

Tip:
If your subject matter expert is not going to be conducting any kind of media interviews, and we include webinars in this as well as press interviews, you do not need to pursue any media training for them. A pure editorial thought leadership programme can be executed without your subject matter experts ever having to be publicly insightful and engaging!

STEP FIVE

Tools, training & partnerships

STEP FIVE

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Tools, training & partnerships

Working through this guide you may notice that you don't have access to specific skillsets, resources, and expertise.

For example, these gaps might include copywriting, content management, design, executive profiling, lead generation, media relations, media training, photography, research, and thought leadership.

To successfully move from the activate phase and start delivering, you will need to fill these gaps. There are several ways you can do this. You can recruit, upskill, outsource, or do a hybrid of all three. Clearly, there are pros and cons associated with each, so you will need to assess these against your business priorities and available budgets.

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1. RECRUIT
2. UPSKILL
3. HYBRID

RECRUITING NEW TEAM MEMBERS

Pros:

- Recruiting allows you to build a dedicated team of in-house marketing experts who are familiar with your brand and can create campaigns that align with your overall marketing strategy.
- Having a team in-house allows for more control over the creative process and can lead to more consistent messaging.
- In-house teams may also have better access to company information and data, which can be used to inform marketing decisions.

Cons:

- Recruiting can be time-consuming and costly, especially if you want to bring on high-level talent.
- There may be limitations on the types of skills and expertise that can be found within your organisation or local job market.

UPSKILLING EXISTING TEAM MEMBERS

Pros:

- Allows you to develop the skills and capabilities of your current team, which can lead to more efficient and effective marketing campaigns.
- Can be a cost-effective way to improve your marketing efforts, as it doesn’t require bringing on new employees.

Cons:

- It can be difficult to find the time and resources to provide training and development opportunities for your team.
- Not all team members may be receptive to training or may not have the aptitude for certain skills.

PARTNERING WITH EXTERNAL EXPERTS AND AGENCIES:

Pros:

- Outsourcing allows you to tap into a pool of specialised talent and expertise that may not be available in-house.
- Outsourcing can be a cost-effective way to handle specific marketing tasks or campaigns.

Cons:

- Outsourcing can lead to a lack of control over the creative process and may result in campaigns that don’t align with your overall marketing strategy.
- There may be communication and coordination challenges when working with an outside vendor.

EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING

To help you whizz through this step, here's a proven process that works for us:

- [ ] For each of the steps in this guide draw up a list of the tools, capabilities, and expertise you think are missing.
- [ ] Research available options – we recommend checking reviews and don't be shy about asking for recommendations from your network on LinkedIn.I
- [ ] Identify three possible options with costings.
- [ ] Prioritise each option with a clear rationale fo your thinking.
- [ ] Submit your request for budget approval!

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NOW LAUNCH

Once you have completed these four steps, you will have a relevant benchmark, selected appropriate media channels, developed strategically aligned seed ideas for content, and a process for selecting and training the right company spokespeople.

The next stage is to move into your PR campaign delivery phase in which you research, build and distribute your content. Harnessing creative flair to deliver inspiring campaigns is, as you would expect, something in which we excel.

CONTACT US

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Call: 0203 740 6080

At EC-PR, we are passionate about B2B communication and pursuing our instinct to make tech brands distinct. We believe your work is amazing and we want to help you tell the world how extraordinary it is.

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