

## **Need PR and Marketing Help? Ask Away!**

### ***Q& A with Jennifer Rodrigues of TravelInk'd***

Today I want to focus on a few questions I received about public relations - an underutilized marketing tactic that offers hoteliers and hotel-related companies a fabulous opportunity to raise awareness of their property, as well as drive sales. If you aren't already using PR to communicate your company's brand and messaging, then you are missing out on a highly-effective, inexpensive way of reaching your consumer audience and driving business.

And as always, if you need help figuring out how to get started with your PR campaign, please don't hesitate to contact me with your questions and I'll be happy to help you out - [jlr@travelinkd.com](mailto:jlr@travelinkd.com).

**Q: I've often heard with media and public relations that you get the best results by developing relationships with media. Any suggestions on how to do that most effectively without taking each journalist out to lunch or becoming their best friend?**

**A:** The best way to develop a relationship with a member of the media is to be honest, helpful and professional at all times. By always providing interesting ideas and content to the media, being professional, understanding that they often work on frantic deadlines, and by doing everything you can to make their job easier, you can develop relationships with media over time.

It's also good to be friendly. Ask them where they live and remember details of their lives - kids' names, hobbies, etc. I always try to include at least one non-business pleasantry with each email to journalists - something like "Did you have a good weekend?" - and for those journalists that I work with on regular basis, maybe asking about their kids or what their plans are for the weekend. It's the type of conversation that makes my name stand out from the hundreds of canned emails journalists receive every day.

By developing these relationships with journalists that I work with on a regular basis, and by always ensuring that I'm providing useful, interesting information, I am able to secure many more placements for my clients. And by following the same actions, you may be able to do the same for your hotel or hospitality business.

**Q: Over the past few months, I have been pitching stories to national hotel business writers. I have had some great results, getting interviews with some big publications but when the stories come out, they are so negative. The writers didn't stick to the story that I discussed with them and, in fact, they found all sorts of negative angles and focused on those. Why does that happen and what can I do to prevent it?**

**A:** This is often a problem with journalists who write for publications aimed at consumers rather than industry or trade audiences. They read a story about a great development in hotel revenues and they interpret that as "hotels are going to charge consumers even more with their new revenue programs".



*What causes this problem?*

First, many consumer-focused business writers lack the in-depth understanding of the hotel industry so whenever stories focus on revenue management or yield management (or other similar industry-related topics), they will often pass it over for something more interesting or generally understandable to them.

Second, because they don't understand the industry like us insiders, they often make assumptions on how something will affect consumers and run with those assumption rather than the facts. Their audience is, after all, the consumer.

*So, what can you do to prevent it?*

There are a few things that you can do to prevent this from happening:

- It's important to pitch consumer business publications and journalists with stories that will interest consumers, i.e., your guests. Focus on the benefits to guests vs. revenues or new hires and why your story would be of interest to the general public. By doing so, you will be clearly framing your story and communicating the most important points that journalists should include. Provide factual and valuable data to journalists (not sales copy or marketing fluff) or they won't bother. And make it as easy as possible: offer up sources to comment (beyond someone from your company to ensure that the story has credibility and objectivity) and provide facts and statistics to back up what you are saying.
- Be aware of industry issues or controversy surrounding your pitch. If there is controversy to be found in the story, there is a good chance that consumer journalists will exploit it - and not to your advantage. Avoid pitching related stories at times of turmoil or else you risk having journalists include it in their story. If you are still going to pitch the story, address the controversy and inform the media why it isn't important or pertinent to the story.
- Be prepared to take the time to really educate the journalist that you are working with about the hotel industry - operations, pricing, finances, reservations, marketing, etc. The more educated and knowledgeable a journalist is about how the industry works, the more likely they will write stories that will be fair to both hotels and consumers.
- Understand that business writers rarely will write an entire story about your company. They will often include competitors and industry experts to provide commentary on the story and to maintain impartiality.

If you pitch strategically and take the time to follow the rules above, you'll find that media are excited and interested to receive the information that you send and far more likely write a fair and informative story about your company.





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Did this information help you? If you have other questions, I'd love to hear from you – please don't be shy! Send an email to [jlr@travelinkd.com](mailto:jlr@travelinkd.com).

And don't forget to check back twice a month for more PR and Marketing Q&As.

*Jennifer Rodrigues, Visibility Specialist with ThinkInk and TravelInk'd, is a seasoned public relations professional with a passion for the hospitality industry, which is expressed in her role at ThinkInk's travel division, TravelInk'd. At TravelInk'd, she is responsible for developing cost-effective and creative public relations and marketing strategies for clients in the travel and tourism, airline, lodging, cruise and meeting/event sectors. For more information on TravelInk'd, please visit [www.travelinkd.com](http://www.travelinkd.com) or contact Jennifer at [jlr@travelinkd.com](mailto:jlr@travelinkd.com).*



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