

# Health clients prize trade placements

By Georgette Pascale

When it comes to medical device or pharmaceutical media coverage, clients often look to publications such as *Forbes* or the *New York Times*, and may even hope for that prized appearance on



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“The Today Show.”

Although such prominent news outlets are beneficial, some audiences, specifically in healthcare, treasure their specialized trade publications. These

publications cover the most precise medical fields and are an exceptional way to reach your target audience—the physician. With limited time and boundless work, an ophthalmologist, for example, may not be able to read *Monday's Journal* or *Daily News*, but he will most likely read every monthly *Ophthalmology Times* that comes his way. Whether the healthcare

product is over-the-counter or prescription, making connections and fostering relationships with trade editors is imperative.

Any successful healthcare public relations campaign will include several helpful, yet often-ignored, principles for working with trade press:

Obtain all publication information quickly—editorial calendars, manuscript requirements, etc; deadlines are firm, publishing is infrequent, and lead times are long.

Contact, meet, and develop stable relationships with multiple and diverse key opinion leaders (for healthcare, doctors) who support a specific product.

Establish trust with the trade editors and give them reason to believe in you; educate yourself. A reputable PR firm will take the time to do this, even at its own expense. This way, staffers can answer editors' questions, even referring to various opinion leaders to link experts, editors, and company executives.

Become familiarized with your audience and product. In healthcare, it usually takes hours to fully understand exactly what you are pitching, but more knowledge leads to more respect from the trades. Thus, more hits for your clients.

Look to trade publications for the most recent and beneficial pharmaceutical research and product development news. This is where workers—from technicians to surgeons—obtain their knowledge and develop preferences and patterns early in their professions.

Meet with editors at trade conferences. This can create an open dialogue between you, the company, and the editor.

## Knowledge and education

Remember, most trades continuously offer educational, helpful pieces, making this the underlying goal of every issue. Accordingly, PR firms often develop focused, educational stories, such as “Improving Clinical Outcomes with Precise Aberrometry”, that contain clients' products and are instantly interesting and less sales-focused for the readers. This technique is not unique to healthcare, working well for various kinds of presses, too.


Other examples of angles that editors appreciate are pitching a unique surgical technique or “surgical pearl” where the focus is on the technique, but the client's product is mentioned as a step or part of the successful outcomes.

Lastly, keep in mind that asking for information is often the most efficient way to obtain it. Don't just look to published editorial calendars, but also contact trade editors and organize physician discussions for feedback. Knowing just what trade readers, i.e. doctors, like to read is extremely important. Once on the phone, physicians will be straightforward and direct, offering more patient case studies rather than the muckraking that often occurs between pharmaceutical companies.

In your outreach, don't just look to surgeons or specialists either—talk to nurses, nurse practitioners and patients, if possible. This effectively creates strong relationships, distinguishes medications, and provides unique article angles that the editor and client will both appreciate.

In the end, building both relationships with and awareness of trade press is a constant, ongoing process that is vital to any healthcare PR program. With these communication tips and the resolve to learn not only for your businesses but for your client, the often complex and daunting world of healthcare becomes a place for lasting achievement and ultimate PR success.

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