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## Get Your Message Out

How do you generate the visibility and credibility you need in the 'Wild West' of modern media?

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The world of public relations is almost as chaotic as the world of media these days--no doubt because the two are so closely tied together. What worked in years past may--or may not--work today, as far as generating the visibility and credibility clients expect--and deserve--from public relations activity.

I'd stop short of saying it's anyone's guess what will work, but to be totally honest, tried-and-true tactics are hardly a sure thing anymore. Some days, it feels a little like the Wild West. As I go through the week, talking to clients, as well as meeting with prospective companies, I hear many of the same questions and concerns voiced over and over. Let's take a look at just three of these concerns and some common-sense answers.

### Is it better to get into a printed newspaper or an online publication?

In today's media world, our feeling is: The more, the better. We like to overlay and leverage as much as we can. The public's reading habits are extremely fragmented these days. Some people read only the printed page, others read only what comes in on their smartphones. Still others are somewhere in-between. For some, listening to news and commentary on podcasts is their main source of news. Even when a company has carefully targeted audiences, it's very difficult to "slice and dice" the media opportunities to hit exactly the right people.

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The solution is to get your message in front of as many people as possible, through as many avenues as possible. That means that when an article about your company or quotes from you appear in a printed publication (or an online publication), consider that step one. Then, push that coverage out via every social media channel you can. That's why having social media channels fully

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functioning with followers, friends and people who "like" you (used to be called "fans") is key. Put the information on your blog. (What? You don't have a blog? Big mistake) Bottom line to all of this: The more, the merrier.

### I feel silly using Twitter--how do I know what to "tweet"? When to tweet? Or even why to tweet?

You aren't alone. Yes, people are using [Twitter](#) in huge numbers, and many of them are comfortable sending tweets, re-tweeting others' comments, and linking to articles and even videos hosted on YouTube. But the truth is, the vast majority of people in the business world don't really "get it." They are not comfortable with this medium, aren't using Twitter for the right reasons and are not gaining the best results.

While Twitter is not for every business, it can have [applications](#) for most. I encourage our clients to open a Twitter account and become comfortable first with "listening" to the chatter out there about their industry--and even about their own companies--and then bravely push out with tweets of their own. Listening or monitoring first helps you get clear on how to jump into the conversation effectively. You also will discover a variety of [applications](#) separate from Twitter itself that make using Twitter so much easier, such as [TweetDeck](#) or [HootSuite](#). Try a few and pick the one that makes it easier for you. Besides the ones designed for your computer, there are even more aimed at making Tweeting via smartphone easier and faster. Check these out, too.

No, you don't have to post silly tweets about the mundane details of your life that no one wants to know about (not even your spouse). You do see silliness coming through on the Twitter stream, but more and more people are realizing that's not the way to do it. Instead, your Twitter activity should be one tool in your social media toolbox, and it should be tied to the business objectives listed in your social media strategic plan. (What? You don't have a social media strategic plan? That's an even bigger mistake.) You will find plenty to say that is meaningful, interesting and fun.

Every company will have a different rhythm for Twitter. Tweeting frequency and the nature of the 140-character posts will differ greatly from company to company. Your social media strategic plan will help you determine your own road map for this tool.

### OK, I know what a marketing plan is, and I even know what a PR plan is. What exactly is this social media strategic plan you're talking about?

It's very similar to the other plans you referred to--it's a plan that first examines why you want to do [social media](#), and then how to do it. The why isn't too difficult: Just look at your business objectives and see how they relate to the exposure you can get through social media. Social media, as a category, is designed to be a conversation, to let you engage your target audiences. Sure, first listening to the chatter out there will give you insights. But pretty soon, you'll want to use it actively to talk back and forth to people who are either existing customers or potential customers. [Your business](#) objectives will drive just how these conversations can unfold.

Once you identify your objectives, you can easily roll into the how. You need to understand your resources: Who in your company can spend the time, has the know-how or can learn it, and has the savvy to represent your company on channels like [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), Twitter? Large companies can have multiple people, in multiple departments, all with different objectives tied to their jobs. At [smaller companies](#), the task might stop at the business owner's desk or push down to the newly hired intern. There is no wrong or right decision: Whatever works for your company is best. And whether the company is large or small, an outside resource (such as a consultant or a PR agency) might start things off and even keep them rolling.

A social media strategic plan should be as specific as you can make it, even to the point of creating a calendar and timetable for your tweets and posts. A simple plan is fine for starters; you can always bump it up a few notches once you gain a better understanding of how the various social media channels can improve everything from sales to customer service to [marketing](#).

Hilary Kaye is the founder and president of [HKA Public Relations](#), an award-winning public relations agency known for its ability to generate credibility and visibility via a variety of established and innovative PR approaches.



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