

6 Tips for Developing an Effective *RAPID RESPONSE PR PROGRAM*

Breaking news can create opportunities for companies to increase visibility by offering perspective and insight to the media when they need it most. A strategic rapid response PR program can help your company break into the news cycle to drive awareness, build thought leadership credentials for subject matter experts (SMEs), and cement reporter relationships, helping generate future coverage.

Here are six tips for building a programmatic rapid response engine that gets results.

#1 Prepare - It probably goes without saying that “rapid response” means you need to act quickly, meaning minutes and hours, not days. But don’t confuse “rapid” with ad hoc. One of the most important elements of an effective rapid response program is to have a plan and system in place to react before you need it. It’s unlikely that you can provide timely commentary if you’re trying to figure out what to say, which SME or executive will say it and which media to pitch it to on-the-fly.

#2 Anticipate - While no one can predict with absolute certainty what news will hit and when it will happen, there are certain types of events that you can plan for. In markets like cybersecurity, there is an almost constant stream of news about breaches and new vulnerabilities, each of which presents a potential opportunity to comment. In other markets, reporters often want a third-party perspective on moment-in-time news like impending regulatory changes, mergers & acquisitions, or regularly issued data reports from government agencies or major brands. Keep a running list of likely stories and develop the messages and insights you want to deliver beforehand so you only need to fine-tune them to fit the news.

#3 Coordinate - Effective rapid response is a team effort. Having assigned roles and responsibilities minimizes friction and the potential for off-target messaging. Build a roster of SMEs, their areas of expertise and their level of comfort talking to the media. As an agency, we try to minimize the load for clients by not only flagging stories, but giving them draft quotes for SMEs to react to. Develop a streamlined internal approval process for flagging stories, getting quote approvals and fact checking.



#4

Target - Be strategic about who you reach out to and which stories you reach out on. The shotgun approach - trying to comment on every piece of news to everyone on your media list - will quickly annoy or fatigue reporters. Keep in mind that you're trying to build relationships and establish trust and that means respecting reporters' time and processes. Over time, you'll get a better sense of which reporters are most responsive to rapid response pitches, allowing you to target accordingly. It also helps to spread out your outreach so that you're not overwhelming your most important contacts or making some feel neglected.

#5

Validate - Quality insights and content are essential to effective rapid response. Reporters want more than unsubstantiated opinions; perspectives and comments that are backed by data are much more likely to be noticed and included in stories. It's especially important to validate your observations with research or objective data if you don't have well-known SMEs. The flip side is that rapid response is a great way to get more value from your reports, studies, white papers and other content.

#6

Commit - Rapid response is like a muscle that you need to exercise to build and maintain. It takes time to get into the habit, establish relationships and develop a reputation for informed, objective commentary. But the more you do it, the stronger it gets.



The ultimate goal of rapid response is to drive awareness and thought leadership, not pure self-promotion. Reporters want perspective, not self-serving marketing. What you pitch to a reporter should add value and informed insight to a story or the broader conversation. If you want to be successful at rapid response, focus on your expertise and not your products and services.

Ready for your SMEs to be go-to resources for big, breaking news stories? Let's chat. At Voxus, we'll help you decide which stories to comment on, which expert should comment, what they should say and when.