

Media Relations 101

Carrier® Dealers Media Relations Best Practices Guide



Carrier® Public Relations Best Practices Guide

Just as purchasing a TV spot or a newspaper ad buys your company valuable exposure, effective media relations can also provide you with additional coverage, often at no cost to your company's bottom line.

Sounds good, right? By leveraging existing relationships with the local newspapers, TV and radio stations where you have already purchased advertising, you have the opportunity to truly maximize brand awareness in your market and further boost the effectiveness of your advertising dollars.

The purpose of this guide is to help explain effective media relations and how to best utilize it to help promote your company and the Carrier® brand.

Manage Your (and their) Expectations

Before engaging in media relations, it's helpful that both sides of the relationship manage expectations. Unlike a TV spot or newspaper ad you purchase, positive exposure gained through media relations is not bought, and therefore is not something anyone is obligated to provide. For example, a sales rep should never guarantee a positive review of a Carrier product in his/her newspaper on the condition that the Carrier dealer agrees to purchase multiple ad placements in that publication. Nor should a Carrier dealer ask for such a deal. A media outlet needs to feel it has freedom to review/report on topics with a completely unbiased journalistic eye.

So long as both sides maintain proper expectations, utilizing existing advertising relationships with local media outlets to present your company as a viable source of news or feature content is perfectly appropriate.



Get Your Pitch Ready

The most important factor in media relations is having something newsworthy to offer. This is called your “pitch,” and it needs to involve a story or a topic that audiences will find interesting or helpful. For example, if Carrier invents a completely self-sufficient home comfort system that costs consumers \$0 to operate, that’s certainly going to be a newsworthy story that any producer or editor would want to hear!

Most times though, crafting your pitch to best appeal to a media outlet’s producer or editor, and by extension its viewers, readers or listeners, requires a bit of crafting, depending on many factors: the media outlet (i.e., is it a TV station or a newspaper?), the show or section where the piece may appear and the audience receiving it.

A good start is to ensure that whatever you are pitching offers something beneficial to all of the media outlet’s audience. Be sure to pitch the story, not the product. This means whatever you offer up shouldn’t simply be a commercial for your brand’s new product. In other words, a TV show’s segment producer likely won’t be interested in simply hearing about the new Côt[™] thermostat from Carrier. But if your pitch focuses first on the potential money savings and increased control that the latest smart thermostats can offer consumers, and then subtly offers the Côt thermostat as an example, it will probably be much better received. This will also set your company up as a reliable third-party expert that can be trusted to offer additional information on future home comfort topics, regardless of brand affiliation.

Whom To Pitch

Once you have a general story pitch in mind, you will want to reach out to the media outlet’s editors or producers. When possible, use your relationship with your advertising sales rep at a media outlet to gain introduction to the appropriate contacts. As stated above, ad sales reps will not be able to guarantee an editorial placement, but will likely know the right contacts at their respective media outlets for you to contact. If you have no sales reps at some of the media outlets you want to target, go to their websites and look for contacts listed in the news or features department.

Just remember that pitching to the right person can be key. For example, if your pitch has more of a general, home improvement angle (i.e., the importance of spring HVAC maintenance), ask to speak with the producer of the home and garden segment on your local TV station where you are currently spending advertising dollars. Or if the pitch leans more toward health and wellness (i.e., indoor air quality and its effect on asthma), this may mean speaking to the same station’s health segment producer.

Again, the more you get to know your local media outlets’ editorial or production teams, the better you’ll be able to zero in on the appropriate contact for each individual story pitch.

Pitch Examples

When you are ready to approach a producer with your pitch, keep in mind that how you present the pitch may also have to be adapted to best fit the intended medium or segment. For example, a hard news pitch will need to be approached a bit differently than something intended for a light-hearted, drive-time morning radio talk show.

Let's revisit our previous pitch example regarding the Côt[™] thermostat. Below are two examples of how the same pitch may be crafted slightly differently depending on the type of media outlet or segment:

Hard News TV Pitch:

Dear Producer,

Did you know that heating and cooling costs make up nearly half of our country's residential energy consumption? As you can imagine, this amounts to billions of dollars spent every year just to keep our homes comfortable.

My name is John Smith, and I'm with Smith Heating and Cooling. We're local home comfort experts, and we would love the opportunity to discuss with you the importance of energy efficiency in our homes, how new technology like smart thermostats is helping homeowners save money, and the features to look for when purchasing a smart thermostat.

Please let me know if you are available to speak about this topic soon. We can have an expert spokesperson ready ASAP at the location of your choice.

Thanks so much for your consideration,

*John Smith
Smith Heating and Cooling*

Morning Radio Home Improvement Segment:

Hi there (Producer),

Did you know that heating and cooling costs make up nearly half of our country's residential energy consumption? Fortunately, homeowners can potentially save hundreds each year by upgrading to one of the latest generation of smart thermostats.

My name is John Smith, and I'm with Smith Heating and Cooling. We're local home comfort experts, and we would love the opportunity to discuss with you the many benefits and interesting features homeowners and homebuilders can find in smart thermostats today. We think this story is a perfect fit for your home improvement segment.

Please let me know if you are available to speak about this topic soon. We can have an expert spokesperson ready ASAP at the location of your choice.

Thanks so much for your consideration,

*John Smith
Smith Heating and Cooling*

Notice the difference between the two previous examples isn't drastic. It's simply a slight shift in tone to better appeal to the producer and his/her intended audience. Here are two more examples, only this time using indoor air quality as our story focus:

Hard News TV Pitch:

Dear Producer,

According to the EPA, indoor levels of air pollutants are often higher than outdoor levels, sometimes as much as 100 times greater. As you can imagine, this is a potentially serious issue and could be causing chronic health issues for many Americans.

My name is John Smith, and I'm with Smith Heating and Cooling. We're local home comfort experts, and we would love the opportunity to discuss indoor air quality with you, its potential for health problems and ways your viewers can help improve the quality of the air inside their own homes.

Please let me know if you are available to speak about this topic soon. We can have an expert spokesperson ready ASAP at the location of your choice.

Thanks so much for your consideration,

*John Smith
Smith Heating and Cooling*

Morning Radio Home Improvement Segment:

Hi there (Producer),

According to the EPA, indoor levels of air pollutants are often higher than outdoor levels, sometimes as much as 100 times greater. As you can imagine, this is a topic that many of your listeners might want to hear about, especially those in the middle of a new home build or a major renovation.

My name is John Smith, and I'm with Smith Heating and Cooling. We're local home comfort experts, and we would love the opportunity to discuss indoor air quality with you, as well as some of the new technology available to your listeners that can help clear the air in their own homes. We think this story is a perfect fit for your home improvement segment.

Please let me know if you are available to speak about this topic soon. We can have an expert spokesperson ready ASAP at the location of your choice.

Thanks so much for your consideration,

*John Smith
Smith Heating and Cooling*

Don't Forget The Follow-Up

Once you have delivered your pitch to the appropriate producer or editor, it's always a good idea to follow up directly with that contact in a reasonable amount of time. If the initial pitch is made via email, it's best to allow a day or two to pass before a follow-up phone call. Just remember: it's OK to be persistent, but don't be pushy. In your follow-up call, simply introduce yourself, ask if the contact has had a chance to review your pitch and let them know you can answer any questions they may have.

And above all, be nice! While this is admittedly a simple thing, it's always good to keep in mind that these editors and producers receive lots of pitches and are typically under very tight deadlines. A little pleasantries in this situation can go a long way to gain you a spot on that producer's story calendar.

Successful Examples

Here are two real-world examples of dealers using media relations to gain positive exposure in their markets for themselves and the Carrier® brand:



Tommy Estes was inducted into the Carrier Dealer Hall of Fame recently.

Example #1: Atlanta's Estes Heating and Air Conditioning used Tommy Estes' induction into the Carrier Dealer Hall of Fame to earn coverage in the Henry Daily Herald ([click here](#)). This is an excellent example of leveraging an industry honor or award into increased consumer awareness for your company.

Example #2: Expert Heating and Cooling in Taylor, Mich., used an on-air plea from an area radio station to help a local family in need. While obviously not free, the positive buzz and ongoing goodwill created by such a unique opportunity can far outweigh the cost of the equipment donated. [Click here](#) to read the full story.



Mark Angellotti, left, president of Expert Heating and Cooling Company of Taylor; Jason Raithel, morning show personality at 99.5 WYCD; Gloria Regorrah of Lincoln Park; and Rita Castorena of the nonprofit organization The Information Center stand outside of Regorrah's house. The radio station and the Taylor nonprofit organization brought Regorrah and Expert Heating and Cooling together. Angellotti wanted to help a family in need this season and was pleased to install a new furnace for Regorrah. Photo courtesy of The Information Center.

Pitch Ideas

- Indoor air quality – Could focus on health and wellness.
- The Côr™ thermostat – As discussed above, this could focus on smart thermostats and their potential to save money and increase comfort through new tech.
- Spring/fall maintenance tips – Seasonal furnace and air conditioning maintenance is another helpful way to use your expertise to bring valuable information to an audience.
- Unseasonably warm or cold temps – When record cold or warm temps hit, home comfort and energy costs become hot topics (pardon the pun!) in your market. Use this as a chance to remind local media outlets of the importance of energy-efficient HVAC equipment and proper HVAC maintenance.
- Greenspeed™ intelligence – New tech like this that results in tangible results for consumers can be an appealing story if presented correctly. Possibly angle the story toward the potential energy savings benefits of new HVAC advances and give Greenspeed as an example.

The Checklist

So let's summarize the process we've laid out here and the steps to follow to ensure your pitch gets the best shot at coverage:

- 1. Prepare The Pitch:** Identify the product you'd like to feature in your pitch, then determine the story that will be most appealing surrounding that product. Pitch the story, not the product.
 - 2. Identify The Appropriate Producer/Editor:** No matter the pitch, there will always be one person at every media outlet who gives it the best chance to get picked up. Use your contacts at the station or publication to help identify this person and zero in on them when you make your pitch.
 - 3. Tune Up The Pitch:** Depending on the outlet you are pitching, you may need to adapt your pitch language to be even more appealing. If it's a money-savings segment, play up the efficiency that new HVAC products can provide consumers. If it's a home improvement column, focus more on what to look for in a quality HVAC service tech. Just a little bit of personalization can really help your cause.
 - 4. Make The Pitch:** Once ready, go ahead and make your pitch. Whether it's via email or over the phone, remember to be prepared, be available and be nice.
 - 5. Follow Up:** After giving the producer or editor some time to consider your pitch, be sure to follow up. Ask if they have questions or if they would like to set up a meeting to discuss next steps. Be persistent, but not pushy.
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Summary

We hope this guide helps prepare you and your team for using media relations to gain positive media coverage in your local market and beyond. With a little preparation, a compelling story and the right approach, properly executed media relations can be an effective (and affordable!) means of earning valuable awareness for your company.

