

If you do business in America, have important shareholders there or are thinking about raising your profile in order to do business in the US, it is likely that you have thought about trying to get media coverage. There are five things you should consider before starting a PR campaign.

1. Why do you want to do it? Is there a clear business rationale? Do you feel pressure to get coverage because your competitors are, or is it simply vanity? The only compelling reason to seek publicity is to advance a business objective.

2. Who are you trying to reach? You need to be clear about your audience, whether it is customers, shareholders, employees, suppliers, a potential take-over target or a mixture of some or all of them. Having a clear understanding of whom you are trying to reach is vital if your initiative is going to be a success.

3. What are you going to say? What you say, and how you say it, will be crucial in determining whether you get media coverage. The challenge is finding a subject that resonates. The US media are almost overwhelmingly focused on domestic issues and organizations, and it can be a struggle for foreign companies to be heard. Of course, media interest spikes if the company is headline news for the wrong reasons, like legal proceedings or being fined.

Developing and testing messages takes time, but it is time well spent. It is important to remember that people are much more interesting than organizations. The business media in America prefer to focus on individuals but, for some firms, the idea of showcasing an executive can be culturally difficult.

4. How are you going to execute your plan? You need to have a clear idea about the media outlet and the reporter you are going to approach. A reporter is a conduit to your audience, and working with someone who has an appreciation of your business will make a significant difference.

5. When would you start? Like many things in life, timing is everything. Picking the right time means making sure you factor in external elements like public holidays, political events and even days of the week. Nothing should be left to chance.

Working with a communications expert who knows the market and can help you develop your messages and tell your story will significantly increase your likelihood of success.