How to Create an Expert Source Program to Gain Positive Publicity

1. The purpose of an expert source program is to generate positive publicity for your organization.
2. An expert source program (ESP) involves pitching internal and external experts associated with your organization. (Could use best customers or clients as experts depending on their knowledge area).
3. Persons serving on your governing board, or individuals capable of giving a testimony about your organization or company might also be in your ESP.

Step One: Identify your goals. What do you want your ESP to achieve?
4. Benefits of establishing and maintaining an expert source program may include:
   a. Gain credibility with media outlets
   b. Increase brand or cause awareness
   c. Increase leads
   d. Engage target audiences in your brand
   e. Increase brand loyalty
   f. Assist with employee recruitment and retention
   g. Aids in professional development
   h. Helps establish your brand as a thought leader
   i. Helps secure your employment
   j. Provides tools for sales force
   k. Provides tools for customers, if you’re a B2B company
   l. Someone who can address the importance of your business
   m. All of the above.

Step Two: Identify your target audience(s).
5. Target audiences may include: journalists, bloggers, consumers, business leaders, investors, legislators and vendors.
6. Internal audiences may include: employees, sales force members, board of directors.

Step Three: Identify your internal and external experts.
7. An internal expert is a company employee that is a subject matter expert in a brand-related subject.
8. An external expert may be a customer, an association leader, or other outside constituent who is an expert on subjects related to your business and akin to your brand’s philosophy.

Step Four: Identify key outlets where you can pitch your experts.
9. Outlets for your experts may include:
   a. Industry trade media outlets
   b. Consumer media outlets
   c. Business media outlets
   d. Social media outlets
   e. Bloggers, convention planners, etc.
Step Five: Create the forms to manage your ESP.
10. Standard forms in ESP could include the following (request templates from burtond@missouri.edu)
   a. Intake form
   b. Expert source list
   c. Article checklist
   d. Tracking form

Step Six: Contact potential internal and external experts.
11. What’s in it for them?
   a. Develop oral presentation skills
   b. Develop writing skills
   c. Develop presentation skills
   d. Establish themselves as an expert in their profession
   e. Receive company recognition as a leader
   f. External experts: Increase exposure to their key audience(s)
12. Explain program to your experts.
   a. Training time involved
   b. Time needed to write articles
   c. Time needed to be interviewed
   d. How the news media works
   e. Any industry regulations
   f. No payment for being an expert source

Step Seven: Reach out to outlets to pitch your experts.
13. Create relationships with your key media outlet editors, reporters and bloggers
14. Help them do their work
15. Make the pitch for experts that fit the bill

Step Eight: Provide guidance to your experts.
16. Editing support
17. Presentation skills support
18. Encouragement
19. Thank vous! (Preferably handwritten.)
20. Notes to their boss

Step Nine: Evaluate and refine your ESP.
21. Did you meet your ESP recruitment goals?
22. How many internal/external experts pitched per year? How many outlets?
23. Track and measure how often you pitch and/or where you pitch.
24. Update expert source list as your experts change or become over-used.

Bonus question: Who is the number one person you should recruit as an expert source? Yourself!