

Is offering an 'exclusive' story to media still effective as part of a PR program?

yes

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It may be fashionable to say that, like the embargo, exclusives are dead. But exclusives absolutely still work, so long as you understand that the art of using exclusives has drastically evolved.

The reasons to use exclusives remain about the same. You are fostering a relationship with a journalist and see this as a good way to further it. You're dealing with an outlet that won't publish your news if it's not an exclusive. Or you want coverage of something that normally would not be of interest to certain reporters/publications, but the promise of an exclusive changes that dynamic.

The list goes on, but whether you target bloggers, journalists, or influential Twitterers, early access to information is gold to anyone who creates content. So yes, exclusives still work.

What has changed is the science behind executing an exclusive to ensure the broadest reach and influence. Social media has made this process far more sophisticated.

Bite follows a three-step process around exclusives. First, identify what you're trying to

do and match that with targets who can help you – reporters, bloggers, social media influencers, etc., are all fair game.

Second, value that target's influence, not only via their primary channel, but also secondary channels. For example, a reporter whose publication is active in social media, and who is also personally active in social media, is a far more important target than someone whose outlet doesn't have a strong social media following.

Finally, evaluate when exclusive content will appear to ensure you're optimizing the likelihood it will be seen. If an outlet's publishing schedule means that a story will likely go online and be promoted via social media channels in the middle of the night, that outlet is less attractive than one where you can influence getting the content published and socialized during the hours when more people are online.

Changes in the media landscape have undoubtedly had an impact on exclusives. But for PR pros willing to do their homework, exclusives are still a vital tool in their kit. ●

no

John Margaritis
SVP, The Marcus Group
A 30-year veteran of the communications field and a former CEO of Ogilvy Public Relations



Granting an exclusive to a single media outlet has been an age-old and, for the most part, wrong-headed tactic since the art of media relations was first conceived. I'm talking about legitimate news stories here, not features or profiles, which by their nature must be exclusive.

We have all granted exclusives and have lived with the consequences, which are many. They can manifest into long-term credibility and relationship problems.

First and foremost, the exclusive limits other coverage. If you grant an exclusive to *The New York Times*, you have pretty much guaranteed that the *Daily News*, the *New York Post*, *USA Today*, and *The Wall Street Journal* will not be interested in that story. That's the short-term loss. No outlet wants to play second fiddle to a competitor, even if the audience is not the same.

I was reminded of this recently when, after debating the pros and cons, we decided to grant an exclusive on behalf of a client. The exclusive did help to attract local TV news

coverage, as the team had hoped. It also chased away any coverage from competitors, as we had feared.

In the long term, editors always remember. They will remember how they were slighted in the past when you approach them with your next pitch. Editors have egos and long memories.

There is also the risk that the exclusive may not remain exclusive. In this age of social media, it is too easy for a story to get out ahead of a granted exclusive. This can kill the story at the outlet that was granted the exclusive because it feels betrayed. And, even if the exclusive is broken, it still can alienate other media.

If a news story is good enough for an exclusive, then it's good enough for general distribution. When everyone is treated equally, they are free to decide how to cover the story. Knowing that the competition has it will be motivation for them to find the angle of the story that makes it unique for their audience. It also gets you the most bang for the buck. ●

PRWeek's View

The continued importance of the journalistic "scoop" guarantees reporters' interest in solid, exclusive pitches. This type of coverage also allows the organization the opportunity to fully tell its story to a target audience.

What's your view on this topic? Tell us at prweekus.com or e-mail letters@prweek.com