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Public Relations Group  
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# Detailed Advice Guide

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How to leverage smart Public Relations to launch products, companies or services in North America

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# Introduction

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We are often asked by our clients for guidance on how to launch products and companies in North America. As a result, we asked Worldcom Public Relations Group experts from around the US and Canada to provide their advice.

The content of the Guide is based on the questions answered by our experts on a Webinar first aired in April 2017. You can listen to a recording of the Webinar by clicking on this [link](#).

We hope you find the Guide helpful. Have a look at our Insight page for other useful content as well as other webinars from our global experts.

If you would like to discuss any of the topics raised with any of our experts, please contact Crispin Manners @ [crispinmanners@worldcomgroup.com](mailto:crispinmanners@worldcomgroup.com)

Our Partners enable you to design, deploy, track and evaluate communications campaigns that deliver outstanding results and sustained value. By working with Worldcom you can access a significant communications advantage whenever and wherever you need it. If you would like more information about Worldcom and its partners, please contact Todd Lynch, Managing Director @ [toddylynch@worldcomgroup.com](mailto:toddylynch@worldcomgroup.com) or call Todd on +1-212-286-9550.

For regular updates and insights, why not follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#) or join our mailing list [here](#).

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# Panelists

## USA

**Greg Hakim – Massachusetts**

**Joan Schneider – Massachusetts**

**Jonathan Bloom – California**

**Matt Kucharski – Minnesota**

**Will Ostedt – California**

## CANADA

**Suzanne Rappaport-Cho – Toronto**

**Jason Lietaer – Toronto**

# Facilitator

**Todd Lynch – USA**



## Do you have examples of a launch campaign that was effective in getting noticed?

### Suzanne – Toronto, Canada

One of the most recent launches that we did in Canada was an event for a European technology client. In Toronto, it is becoming increasingly difficult to hold events that will attract media. Therefore, we needed to find a hook that went beyond the products the company provided. We decided to take advantage of their brand ambassadors and also the global perspective the client could provide. It was great for us to have intel on trends in Europe and beyond as well as what we should expect in Canada. Having the ambassadors for the event made all the difference – it helped us have a great turnout and, as a result, great quality coverage in the form of stories on trends.

### Will – California, USA

A few years ago, we were working with a company that made RAM (Random Access Memory) for computers. The company wanted to get out of typical tech media coverage and move into lifestyle. We took their product and equated it to lost time and frustration. We then partnered with John Grey, a relationship expert and author of the book: *“Men Are from Mars, Women are from Venus”* and centered the campaign around showing how slow computers can break up relationships and cause frustration. This approach really worked. The product was even featured in *Cosmopolitan*. I believe this is a good example of how good ideas and great execution can deliver outstanding results for products that may, at first, appear a little mundane.

### Greg – Massachusetts, USA

We recently worked with OAG, a European aviation provider, to launch their new brand in North America. Instead of just treating it as a news story, we decided to use data to tell a bigger narrative. We managed to leverage their on-time reports to rank and call out all of the airports that they were targeting. This identified which airlines were the most punctual and which arrived late within any given month. This made our client the champion of an issue which travelers cared about. As a result, we were able to raise their visibility in all their target cities. We have found that using data to create human interest to be very effective.

**The key to a successful launch is to really understand what your audience cares about.**

**Armed with this insight there are many different ways to create the human interest to capture the attention of your targets and trigger the right action.**

## Joan – Massachusetts, USA

We are finding that more and more people are launching things in non-traditional ways. One of our clients, Starbar Trap - a mosquito baiting device, was launching a number of new models and decided to sell these to QVC. We mounted an effort to employ 50 “mum” and “dad” bloggers to deploy right before the QVC broadcast. We were able to sell out their entire stock making it the largest sale on QVC in the Home and Garden category. This was a good example of how to muster all of the power of the internet to drive sales.

## Matt – Minnesota, USA

Our agency launched the Stealth Toilet, from Niagara Conservation – a toilet aimed to conserve water usage in drought stricken states.

We started with a lot of research upfront to find out homeowners’ views on their toilet. When they found out how much water was being used in their toilet, they became more interested. With this insight, we launched a campaign called **“What the Flush?”** which centred around educating consumers on the impact of their flushes on water consumption. This was a multifaceted campaign which include media relations, out-of-home advertising, a sponsorship from Jenni Pulos (TV actress, Flipping Out) and other PR exercises.

This campaign didn’t just increase sales, it changed behaviour too. There has been a significant sales bump and an estimated 750 billion gallons of saved water in the past six months.

## What are some of the key components that comprise a successful launch?

**Research is vital. Truly knowing your target audience and adapting your messaging to their needs and interests must be a key part of your PR strategy.**

**You must also ensure that the PR strategy is designed to make immediate impact and then sustain it. This means you will need to integrate it with marketing, sales and logistics.**

### **Joan – Massachusetts, USA**

Market research is very important when creating your campaign. If cost is an issue, there are a lot of ways you can do research online to see if your target market is interested in what the product represents. Having enough budget to make the right impact is critical. In our latest product launch survey, we have found that consumers do not notice a product until they have received at least six sources of information – you need to be able to identify these sources of information and have enough money to support promotion amongst them. Finally, you need to have the infrastructure ready for a successful launch. Small companies may get a lot of leads and not be able to handle the amount of sales or not have enough products available.

### **Matt – Minnesota, USA**

Press conferences, bloggers, advertising, media, social media which should all be centred around a core strategy that is based on research and insights. You are not only trying to get a consumer to believe in your ability to deliver a great product or experience, you are also giving a brand's perspective of where the world is heading and how they intend to change it.

### **Greg – Massachusetts, USA**

It is important to look at the campaign as more than a launch – you need to think about how you intend to reach your prospects and cater to your marketing pipeline throughout the process. Think about the different ways you communicate with different audiences in different parts of your pipeline. Think about how you communicate to consumers who do not know about you or your product. How do you engage and nurture consumers that have an interest in buying your product but have not yet pulled the trigger? Finally, think about your message to current customers? Personalising your launch communications and outreach based on where your prospects are and what they need is one of the most important things to consider when planning a successful launch.

### **Jonathan – California, USA**

With clients coming from Europe, we advise that they fully understand the US mindset. Communicating product specifications will never be enough to succeed in the USA, you will need to help people to connect with the vision behind the products and the brand





## **Will – California, USA**

Understanding your audience is now more important than ever as demographics have changed drastically in the past decade. Target markets used to be a certain age and from a certain economic status. Today, there are hundreds different subsets and breakdowns of age, ethnicity and behaviour. If we were marketing a product to a specific social economic class we cannot assume each individual will behave and act in the same way. You need to ask what the true value of your product is to the consumer and why should they care. You need to be able to cater your messaging to reach beyond the products features and connect with their values. Consumers buy products to make their lives easier, therefore you need to see where your product can fit into their lives. Finding a psychological edge can make a huge difference to your success.





## At what point in the product development process should marketing and PR planning begin?

### Jonathan – California, USA

The earlier the better. Planning should start as soon as the product is in its final form as you would want to provide insight, research and recommendations on where the product fits in the US market. Entry points are different outside of the US, therefore the sooner you can get in, the better. If we cannot get in early then it is fundamental that we begin conversations with the company before the messaging and the launch strategy is set. If we cannot affect these two variables then we will struggle to relay a suitable message in the US.

### Suzanne – Toronto, Canada

The earlier PR can get involved in the process, the better. From a Canadian perspective, there is an extra step involved when a product may already be established in America or Europe. The key messages need to be tweaked per market – don't assume that the same strategy used in America will work in Canada or even across all parts of Canada.

### Joan – Massachusetts, USA

Timing is vital in the USA. For example, we are currently launching a new dental product and if you miss the annual dental conference in the US, then you have missed your opportunity for a successful launch. With other markets and types of products, you have to be aware of specific factors that will affect the success of your launch. Are you too late for a launch? What could possibly derail the launch? The earlier you can come in the earlier you can start to ask these questions and ensure that everything is in line and on schedule.

### Will – California, USA

Getting involved at the product development stage is best. If not, then as soon as possible. Agencies need to understand the rationale for certain product features just as well as the development team. Looking from the client's side, there are many benefits of a PR company being involved at the very beginning of the process.

**PR and marketing planning should start as early as possible – if possible, during product development. This will help to ensure that the right positioning is developed to match the needs of the USA and Canada.**

**Timing is a key component when launching in the US as, in some markets, there are events that you just cannot miss.**

**Starting early will enable you to adjust the messages to appeal to the different attitudes and needs in the US and Canada.**



## How much budget would you recommend to successfully launch a company, product, or service in North America?

### **Joan – Massachusetts, USA**

It depends on the size of the company and the projected sales of the product. It also depends on whether there are other objectives to be achieved such as general brand recognition. Will you need television or radio advertising? You can easily launch a product with a budget in the millions of dollars as well as an online launch for \$50,000.

### **Matt – Minnesota, USA**

Asking how much a launch will cost is like asking the price of a house: do you need a one bed cabin or do you need a multi-room mansion? Before we can begin to establish a budget, we need to know the goals and objectives a client has as well as their commitment to the market.

### **Suzanne – Toronto, Canada**

This depends on the product and the goals for the business. It is important to look beyond the impact made by the launch to sustaining the advantage created by the launch.

**Budgets are dependent on the goals for the launch.**

**It is important to budget beyond the impact made by the launch to sustaining the advantage created by the launch.**



## What are new and interesting ways to launch a product?

### **Will – California, USA**

There is a growing trend in “news hacking” and “disruptive” practices. There is a high level of “white noise” or clutter and sometimes you need to do something drastic in order to gain attention. The more you can take advantage of current events and trends as an agency, the better you will fair with a launch. There is, however, always a place for traditional product launches, again it depends on the product.

### **Greg – Massachusetts, USA**

The market can be very competitive and noisy. You need to be aware of breaking news and emerging trends so that you can bring your company into the conversation. We have seen a lot of companies leverage paid tools such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Google to repurpose media coverage to ensure that it get where it needs to be and ensure that content is amplified across multiple channels.

**You need to find ways to break through the background ‘noise’ and get the attention the product deserves.**

**Aligning your launch to current trends and breaking news can be effective in making your brand stand out.**

**Amplify your launch impact by using paid tools on social channels such as Facebook and LinkedIn.**

## How important is traditional media relations in launching new products?

**The role of traditional media relations is changing. It still has a big part to play in building credibility and trust. But it should also be seen as a major source of word of mouth buzz and triggering online consumption of your content.**

**Don't just think about traditional news pages but also the reach of a media outlet's social channels. The New York Times Facebook page has over 14 million likes!**

**However, you have to consider the habits of your audience. Coverage in a big publication may get a wide spread but completely miss your target audience.**

### **Suzanne – Toronto, Canada**

I believe traditional media still plays a major role in not just generating awareness, but building credibility and trust for a brand or product. A recent trust survey published in *The Globe and Mail* revealed that newspapers are the third most trusted source of information about products, services, brands or organizations behind sampling and word of mouth. This was closely followed by reviews and opinion editorials. Bloggers and online influencers, although a major part of our communications programming these days, have fallen to the bottom of the list of sources people trust, so while the industry is changing rapidly, traditional media still plays an important role.

### **Will – California, USA**

There is always a place for traditional media for product launches but it depends on the product and audience. It can be very important in some cases and a waste of effort in others. Don't forget that a lot of online media and "word-of-mouth" buzz is created by traditional media relations.

### **Greg – Massachusetts, USA**

The day of just focusing on traditional media relations has passed, especially in the B2B tech world where traditional methods are no longer enough on their own. Even if you are able to get a premier feature in a target trade magazine or the Wall Street Journal, it does not mean that the target audience will actually see it. Getting the coverage, creating content and preparing the launch is just the starting point; the next part is figuring out how to amplify the impact afterwards and ensure that the coverage gets in front of buyers, prospects and customers.

### **Joan – Massachusetts, USA**

Getting media coverage for a new product is a great way to build awareness and jumpstart word-of-mouth. The credibility that earned media lends to new products is extremely important especially considering that traditional media now have a powerful digital media presence. Big media does a great job of translating their coverage to social media. While your brand-new product's Facebook page may only have a handful of likes, the NY Times has 13.8 million, and the only way to get to those users is through traditional media relations.



## How long is a launch period typically and what are your thoughts on sustaining a follow-up campaign?

### **Matt – Minnesota, USA**

When an overseas company tries to launch in the US, they treat it as a one-off event. In reality, for most companies in the US, a launch implies more long-term action. A launch is not a single project which stops at a certain point. The launch strategy need to be capable of sustaining the launch impact.

### **Jonathan – California, USA**

The launch is the easiest part of a campaign. Everybody can create a news cycle around a new product launch in the US, however what is expected in the US is longevity. What will the company do next? Is the company dedicated to the market? Does the company have plans to stay in the US or is just passing through to get initial attention for a launch? If the company is not prepared to make a long-term commitment to the market and is not willing to adapt its communication style in the US, interest will go away very quickly and you will be back where you started.

### **Joan – Massachusetts, USA**

If you have an innovative idea at launch, it may sky-rocket awareness. But you will need additional effort to sustain interest. You cannot do one single thing in the US market and hope it will sustain the launch of your product. You need to have an integrated marketing campaign that is long lasting.

**In North America, a launch should only be seen as the beginning of a sustained campaign.**

**In order to penetrate the US market, a follow-up campaign is mandatory and the launch strategy needs to ensure that the initial impact can be sustained.**



## What trends in measurement have you seen?

**With the shift to digital, it is possible to track the reaction to content created to support a launch.**

**Many companies see qualified marketing leads – or even sales out – as the key measure. If this is agreed as part of the strategy it is possible to build-in measurement of techniques to the content that is created.**

### **Greg – Massachusetts, USA**

For B2B companies, we find the most desired measurement to be qualified marketing leads. C-suite executives are interested in how many individuals are coming into their sales pipeline. While we are able to generate a lot of visibility and awareness and use metrics such as web traffic and organic search ranking, it all comes down to who is coming inbound and who can be sold to. It is difficult to track PR activity all the way through the pipeline, but, with the right planning, it is possible to create tracking on a wide array of content used in an integrated launch campaign.

### **Suzanne – Toronto, Canada**

In the past, showing audience reach was sufficient but now, clients are asking for much more qualitative analysis. Whatever the measurement is, expectations need to be established in advance of the campaign. It all comes back to establishing very clear goals and outcomes for the launch.



## If you had one key piece of advice on launching in North America what would it be?

### **Matt – Minnesota, USA**

Understand the market. Start with research that leads to insights. Ensure that these insights are then matched up to business goals. Finally, make sure you use all the channels available when considering your launch. Force yourself to commit to metrics: these can include sales or conversions and are not limited to clicks, shares and likes.

### **Joan – Massachusetts, USA**

Consider your PESO tactics (Paid, Earned, Shared, Owned.). You cannot rely on any one tactic. When you are choosing tactics, make sure that you build in some that are paid and measurable such as Facebook and Google Ads. In addition to awareness, you have to show that you are creating sales opportunities – companies like awareness, but really want sales, therefore they are looking for their PR agency to give advice on how to connect awareness to trial and purchase.

### **Greg – Massachusetts, USA**

Get the timing right. Make sure you have enough time to make your launch successful. Through our own research we found that 80% of companies who have expanded found that a poor brand awareness had a negative impact on their future sales. We also found that 40% of companies who recently expanded into a new country wished they had started their brand building earlier. Finally, a third of executives wished they had taken more time to tailor their message to tend to the needs of the market and their new buyers.

Launching is a process that cannot be rushed. You need to ensure that you have everything in your strategy in place and communicate the right message to the right consumer.

### **Will – California, USA**

It is important to establish realistic expectations for what you want PR to deliver. If you want to use PR to just sell products, you need to understand that you may not sell out with PR efforts alone. PR is about building sustainable brands.

### **Jonathan – California, USA**

Recognise North America is different. When launching from outside North America, be aware that you are in strange and different territory. Therefore, you should embrace the counsel you receive from experts regarding cultural practices and the media landscape of the North American market. One size does not fit all and the mind of the business consumer here may not match the consumer from your core market.

### **Suzanne – Toronto, Canada**

Think local. Truly understand each of the regions that you are launching in. In Canada alone, there is a big difference in the planning and strategy that you should put together in Quebec as opposed to English speaking Canada. It is about understanding these differences and allowing your agency partner to lead you. On a granular level, you need to ensure that you have someone locally in the market who can speak on your behalf about the product.

**When launching in North America, you need to understand the market differences and adapt accordingly. A local agency will provide the perspective you need to succeed. There are different regions that require their own unique approach.**

**Make sure you have a local spokesperson who can explain how you will make a difference in North America.**

**If you would like to discuss the content of this document, or its recommendations, or to talk to one of our experts about your communications needs, please contact: Crispin Manners [crispinmanners@worldcomgroup.com](mailto:crispinmanners@worldcomgroup.com)**

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