# 5 Steps PR Professionals Can Take to Generate and Measure Leads for Clients

*By Martin Jones*

Lead generation hasn't traditionally been the domain of PR agencies. Our core strength has always been storytelling—from thought leadership to messaging to relationship building. In the past, of course, a good story has been remarkably hard to track. A great piece might come out in *The Wall Street Journal* and there may be an uptick in sales a few days later, but directly linking that coverage to revenue has been notoriously difficult.

Digital PR is different. Online news articles, social networks and analytics tools make it much easier to divine exactly what's working and what isn't. If a PR team is in charge of a blog and that blog has started getting more traffic, it's easy to show that a blogging campaign is working, because **Google Analytics** or **WordPress** Statistics can show those numbers. Likewise, if a client's social channel is growing rapidly, it's obvious to anyone who looks at the number of followers.

In this era of transparency, it's up to agencies to adapt and leverage these new tools on behalf of clients. PR firms have never been better placed to show the impact of their PR campaigns. Agencies don't just have the opportunity to show clients what PR is doing—we have the opportunity to build a new kind of lead generation engine that can not only tell a brand's story but also generate leads. Best of all, we already have the skills to do it.

### Create Premium Content and a Landing Page

When building a PR campaign that can generate leads, the first step is to figure out how to measure those leads. A blog post might get a lot of traffic or a tweet could get retweeted many times, but how can you establish who is interested in your client?



*By creating premium content and offering it through a landing page with an email form, PR agencies can build email lists and generate qualified leads for clients.*

It all starts with getting more information from the people who are visiting the company website. Agencies need to create a landing page that encourages visitors to download something in exchange for their email address, first and last name, and the name of the visitor's company.

The creation of landing pages can fall to either the client's web team or the agency. If marketing automation software such as **Marketo** or **HubSpot** is impractical or out of reach, smaller, more specialized firms can integrate more affordable tools such as **Digioh** and WordPress Email Capture with blogs.

While the latter tools won't build full landing pages, an agency can work with the client to create a blog post that acts as a landing page. The point is to establish a central place to direct prospects once a campaign goes live.

To incentivize leads to offer contact information, agencies need to offer something of value on that landing page, such as exclusive research, a how-to guide, an e-book or a series of case studies, for example. That premium content should be behind an email form, creating the foundation for the landing page and the PR campaign behind it.

Once that content is in place and the landing page or post is built, it's time to launch the campaign itself.

### Extend the Press Release With Content Marketing

Last year, **PR Newswire** released a study that proves people are more willing to look at press releases that offer more content. In fact, the research showed:

- A photo increased views by 14 percent
- A video increased views by 20 percent
- A photo and a video increased views by 48 percent
- Photos, videos, presentations or PDFs increased views by 77 percent

## What Agencies Need to Generate Leads for Clients

- **Premium content.** Premium content is usually a guide, an e-book, a survey or research that will engage a client's audience and encourage them to exchange an email address for a free download of the premium content. The more premium content that's developed, the more ways PR firms can engage prospects and generate leads.

- **A landing page.** Landing pages collect email addresses, first and last names, company names, industry information, and more in exchange for the premium content download. Every different piece of content should link back to the landing page.

- **Website analytics.** WordPress offers WordPress Stats and the JetPack plugin as one of many ways to track traffic to websites. Google Analytics is another comprehensive way to monitor how landing pages, blog posts and other content are performing during a PR campaign. Aside from overall traffic, valuable statistics to track include clicks, referrals and popular pages. To further understand the way prospects are interacting with content across channels, use a Bit.ly link to track the clicks to the landing page.

- **Social analytics.** Paid social media marketing like LinkedIn Sponsored Updates, Facebook's Promoted Posts or Promoted Tweets can boost awareness of the landing page and premium content. These tools also offer PR agencies different analytics dashboards that track engagement level and effectiveness.

- **Email marketing.** The best way to follow up with leads is through strategic email marketing. Cost-effective solutions such as Constant Contact or MailChimp allow PR firms to help with the lead nurture process once prospects have downloaded the premium content.

If you can create engaging content for clients like surveys, infographics, e-books, white papers and case studies and share parts of that content through a release, reporters are more likely to dig deeper. They may even share some of that extra content.

In a PR campaign that drives leads, the most important part of the press release is the call to action. There should be a link that directs readers to the landing page and to additional content on social media sites, from blogs to **Facebook** to **SlideShare**.

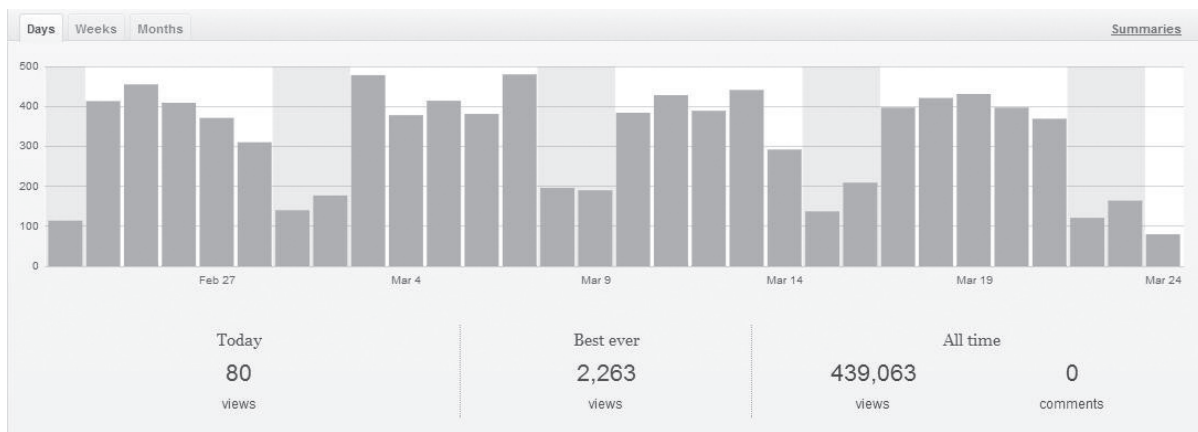### Diversify the Story with Content Tailored for Each Channel

The campaign should be promoted across different social media channels in a variety of bite-sized formats. Maybe there's a one-minute video on **YouTube** and an image gallery of a new product on Facebook and **Instagram**. Maybe there's a SlideShare presentation highlighting some research from a new white

paper and a Tweetchat and a Google Hangout about the implications of the study.

On **LinkedIn**, you could run a Sponsored Update that sends people to the landing page by talking about the premium content. **Google+** can serve as a tool to share content in order to help with SEO rankings.

Scan media properties like **Business2-Community** that allow companies to post thought leadership articles to broader audiences. Proactively pitch bylines that link to the landing page or create a series of videos that helps promote the premium content.

All of this content should point readers to the same landing page as the press release.



*JetPack from WordPress allows you to see valuable website metrics such as clickthroughs, referrers, top pages and overall website traffic. This plugin allows firms to better analyze the traffic coming through to a client's website and blog.*

**Different Media & Press Release Views**
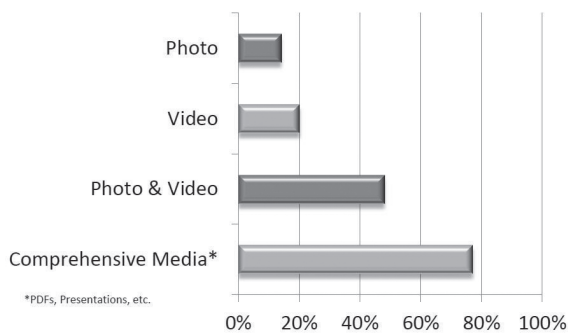


*Today, PR agencies can maximize the effect of press releases by offering additional multimedia content that engages readers. Research shows that releases with additional content get a lot more exposure.*

## Track and Analyze All Traffic

The traffic to a landing page is a strong indication of how well a campaign is working. If your client's website is on WordPress, use WordPress Statistics or JetPack plugins to see exactly which social channels are driving traffic. Integrate Google Analytics well before the campaign launch to monitor web traffic. Don't forget to use a Bit.ly link in the press release to easily track how many people were sent from the release to the landing page.

**Twitter** offers a comprehensive analytics dashboard on ads.Twitter.com. If you sponsor a LinkedIn Update or promote a Facebook post, those social media sites will offer advanced analytics that you can share with clients, too. Additionally, YouTube offers powerful analytics that can show PR pros everything from demographics to minutes watched.

There are a million and one ways to track which parts of a campaign are working best. Many of them are free. Explore your options before launching the campaign and you'll be able to deliver granular statistics to clients about where leads are coming from and what they click when they arrive.

## Capture and Nurture Leads

To generate leads for clients, PR agencies need to offer a list of email addresses that can be passed on to marketing and sales departments. Leveraging a press release, contributed content and social media can generate traffic to the landing page, but what happens when the page collects all those emails?

Through strategic email marketing, PR agencies can provide clients with an in-depth lead nurture service, too. By sending emails full of other client content to the leads database, it's possible to track who is interested in what content and to segment accordingly.

While marketing automation software offers full-featured email marketing solutions to help nurture leads, there are intuitive and affordable email marketing solutions available, too, such as **MailChimp** and **Constant Contact**.

## The Power of a Story

Public relations has always been about helping clients tell their stories. As analytics tools become more sophisticated and the pressure for measurable results grows, PR firms have an unprecedented opportunity to tell those stories in new and creative ways—and to track the results. And, as silos are eliminated between sales and marketing, PR firms can help craft the story that helps both departments succeed. Whether a rep is giving a presentation to a prospect or marketing is creating a brochure, it's storytelling that's going to help lead those efforts and attract interest. And that's what PR has always done best. **PRN**

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