

# The basics for successful PR for Spielwarenmesse

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# ToyKnowHow

**Spielwarenmesse eG**

...connecting the toy world



# The basics for successful PR for the Spielwarenmesse

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## Spielwarenmesse and PR

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In the hectic atmosphere of their own preparations for the trade fair, the exhibitors sometimes overlook an important element: **the Spielwarenmesse and PR go together**. For the largest playroom in the world provides the perfect conditions for making use of the company's presence at the trade fair for press relations work, in parallel to product marketing and sales activities. The advantages are obvious: around 2,300 representatives of the media from 40 countries visit the International Toy Fair in Nuremberg in person. Many more journalists look for newsworthy stories about the trade fair over the Internet. And it is true for all companies that continuous press reports in newspapers, on the radio, on the television and in on-line media help with brand development in the medium term. With press relations, manufacturers increase their profile and credibility, and put new products in a good position for specialist buyers and consumers.

**The way into the media is by no means as stony as it is perhaps assumed** to be at the outset. A few rules must be observed that are typical for dealing with journalists and their information requirements. The most important are listed here, so that companies can get started straightaway. Public relations is not reserved for large companies with whole PR departments or large PR agencies. Smaller companies, in particular, with good toy ideas are also in demand. No one should miss this opportunity.

Companies from the toy sector, in particular, have a decisive advantage over many other sectors in their public relations. They benefit from the fact that **they are very well liked in the editorial offices**. Companies in this sector can delight in being given a lot of attention by journalists and the media, regardless of their economic significance. Around 750 journalists register for the PressPreview alone, which is on the day before the start of the trade fair. They primarily come from Germany and Europe, but some also come from China or Brazil. Anyone who makes it onto the television or even onto the main news in the evening with relation to the press preview can count on higher order

volumes at the trade fair. Therefore, the Association of the German Trade Fair Industry (Auma) is right when it stresses that public relations is an effective and low-cost means of making the general public aware of the company, its products and its participation in the trade fair.

**Articles or reports in the press bring several benefits:** public relations generally raises the company's profile and thus also increases the confidence of business partners, in public, but also increases the identification of the company's own employees with their employer. Furthermore, the company becomes more attractive for skilled staff and young talents. Finally, public relations is also considered to be an instrument for complying with the social obligation to present oneself as part of society. This opening up to the public is frequently justified by social responsibility or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

**Public relations is not an aspect of marketing** that can be settled simply by sending new product catalogues to the editorial offices. Thus, in the same way as specific rules apply in marketing, they also apply in public relations. Unlike in many specialist and industry media, it is not sufficient to place an advertisement to get a positive article accompanying it. Instead, a press contact in the company must familiarise him/herself with the journalistic habits. This is not magic, depending primarily on close contacts with journalists. Here too the rules for successful public relations apply: 90 percent is perspiration – i.e. solid preparation by hand, in which simply the most important points are processed –, and 10 percent is inspiration and creation, the art of wrapping up the contents.

The main news programme in the evening should, however, not be the very first objective of the public relations of the company. Realistically, the PR officers should start by creating a clear picture of the "media target groups" that are worth considering for a report about their own company and its products. An up-to-date report can boost sales - but does not have to directly. Press reports have a more medium and long term effect, but they do have an effect. Most readers still give by far the highest credibility to the printed word in newspapers and magazines.

## Basics of press relations work

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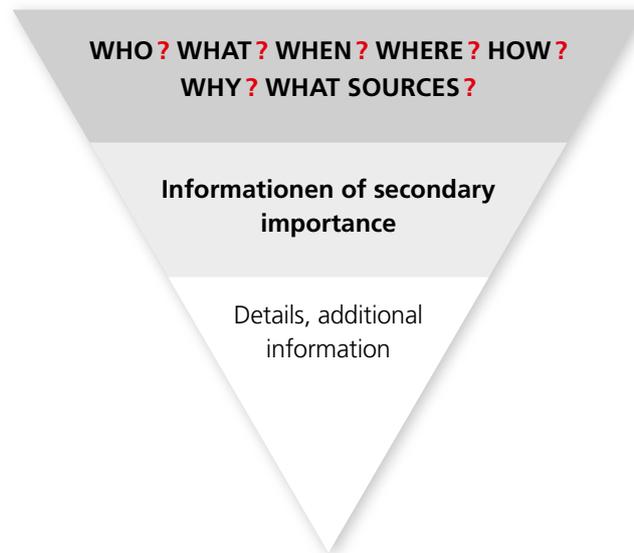
**The key difference between advertisement marketing and press relations work** is in the direct control over the result. Whilst an advertisement appears in the media exactly as it was commissioned, there is no guarantee in the editorial offices that a press release will be taken into consideration at all. Even an accompanying advertisement rarely prompts the editorial offices into action. Many journalists even react sensitively if their colleagues from the Advertising Department push for editorial attention. For the linking of an advertisement and a report is, for example, even banned in Germany, according to press law, and frequently results in defiance and rejection in the editorial offices.

The decisive criterion is the **news value** that induces an editor to deal with a press release. This sounds relatively simple, but it is the key channel for finding a way into the media. For this point, it is necessary to take time to find the right message. For a message must prevail against other messages, of which several hundred appear on the editor's screen every day from news agencies. There are also press releases of other companies and authorities, tip providers over the telephone, their own research and press conferences. This demands a fast selection process in the editorial offices by the minute.

In view of this, it must be possible to recognise the value of a message quickly and sharply. Here, the old rule applies: **"Not everything important is important"**, there is a clear difference between the internal and external perspective of a company. Whilst a relatively high level of investment in a new production line is a key milestone in a company's internal perspective, its external value is low. But even this message can be wrapped up in such a way that the journalists pick it up. Generally, news factors decide about the attention given to information. The most important of these are topicality, proximity, conflict, surprise (news is what's different), curiosity, negativism and progress.

## Good press relations work answers 7 questions

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For a press release or a press conference, the most important questions (Who? What? When? Where? How? Why? What source?) must be answered. You cannot score points with the journalists with a statement that the sales of a product have increased by 150 percent – without mentioning the basis for this. The editors look for the most important facts from the written information or what was said at a press conference. Therefore, it is the coherence of the information provided, not the quantity, that is important. A common misconception is that the quantity of information influences the length of the report. In fact, a company runs the risk of a superfluous piece of additional information being given too much weight and thus distorting the overall picture.

## Thinking in terms of target groups

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In view of the **variety of different kinds of media**, it is worth thinking in terms of different target groups. Many editorial offices focus on business coverage. Many place the educational value or the play value in the foreground. Others try to filter out the most interesting new products from the around one million items at the Spielwarenmesse. The local editorial offices, on the other hand, are looking for companies from their area of circulation and make use of the trade fair for a comprehensive portrait. Specialist media go deeper and examine background information and industry trends. Even if these target groups have different requirements: in practice, leading toy companies demonstrate that these various requirements can be combined in a press conference. If you want that. If you would like to put just new products or toy ideas in the foreground of your public relations, this is also possible. In this case, however, information must be prepared accordingly.

**Special subjects** can also be prepared, depending on the objectives. The investment in a new production line, really not an issue for public relations, can be tailored differently accordingly. An attractive subject can be developed as evidence for the competitiveness of products "made in Germany", or as CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral production. A similar procedure can also be chosen for the issue of jobs. In addition to a growth in job security or the number of employees, focus can also be placed on fashionable special subjects, such as the proportion of women in management or "over 55s" in the company. Other subject options are certified toys made from biomaterials or toy materials that are verifiably low in harmful substances.

According to the target group, a relevant **media and editorial office distribution list** must be created. I.e. in addition to the actual target media, the responsible editorial office should also be invited. If individual journalists are known, these can be invited in addition to the editorial offices, to avoid distribution

gaps in holiday periods or similar. For invitations to press conferences, post is still recommended, but invitations by fax or e-mail (if the sender is not suspected of sending spam) are now accepted.

**Public relations in social media**, such as Twitter or Facebook, can only perform a complementary role. The unfavourable attitude of journalists towards these sources of news is changing. However, use of these is mainly for global events, such as the major earthquake in Japan or the north African revolutionary movements. The value of social media is still in direct and unprotected contact with fans, followers and customers. This is a part of public relations work, but indirectly and without the usual route through the press.

### Media target groups

<b>Media type</b>	Printed media (newspaper, magazines), radio, TV, on-line ...
<b>Distribution</b>	Local, regional, national, international ...
<b>Target readership</b>	<i>Specialist public:</i> toy sector, teachers ... <i>Consumers:</i> children, teenagers, adults, parents, hobby scene ...
<b>Editorial focus</b>	Business, local, arts, science, advice ...

## Public relations for the Spielwarenmesse

The measures suitable for public relations for the Spielwarenmesse are the press release or the press conference. When composing **press releases**, basic rules must be observed. These include the American news style, in which the most important thing is at the beginning. Unlike in a school essay, there is no chronological structure here. A press release begins with the most important information (answering the seven questions), then comes information of secondary importance and finally, if necessary, supplementary details and additional information (see chart page 4). Linguistically, short sentences without a lot of clauses are preferable. "Nominalisations" can confidently be dispensed with, foreign words and specialist terminology can be avoided if possible, and active sentences can be used instead of passive ones. In terms of content, banalities and self-praise should be dispensed with; evaluating statements can, however, be incorporated as a one-sentence-quotation from the Managing Director. People are mentioned with their forename, surname and precise role, without Ms or Mr. This press text can be supplemented by expressive photos (image resolution 300 dpi; maximum 2 MB). Pictures just of the product or a group of people shaking hands are not in demand, however. An illustrative chart that shows the figures and trends can also be included.

The press release is designed on the company's usual letter paper to guarantee easy assignment or recognition. The note "press release" is in a prominent position. In addition to the usual contact information, the contact for the press is given with his/her full name and the extension and/or mobile number, so that queries can be clarified quickly or appointments can be agreed. It is now a matter of taste whether the margin for corrections and comments, which was once indispensable, is still necessary today, as the information from the homepage or the e-mail can often be edited seamlessly directly on the screen.

This press release can be sent "dry" to the editorial offices with its attachments, i.e. a pure text press release without further explanations. Then the press release should reach the editorial offices a few days before the PressPreview or the start of the trade fair, so that the journalists can include the subject in their planning, if applicable. Or you invite the editorial offices to the new products or trade fair stand with an informative invitation and keep the press kit ready with sufficient information and photos. In each case, a contact should always be available for enquiries or interviews at the stand during the trade fair. In the company, someone must be able to take on a coordinating role and not block press enquiries with the comment "everyone is at the trade fair".

The press release can also be a core element of the **press conference** on the Spielwarenmesse. Here, the core messages and basic information are presented in a brief statement and then the discussion is opened. A list of possible questions and answers is recommended for preparation, so that statements that are as precise as possible can be given in the heat of the moment. If there are several representatives of the company at the press conference, the roles and responsibilities should be clarified in advance up to the question of who gives interviews for TV and radio. As there are many press events in the run-up to and during the trade fair, good scheduling is extremely important. Spielwarenmesse eG keeps an on-line press schedule, through which overlapping can be avoided and events can be announced.

## Press services of the Spielwarenmesse

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Spielwarenmesse eG offers a whole package of services, so that exhibitors can provide the media with relevant information on the company and its products in a targeted manner. These include the **press boxes** in the Press Centre. There, often the first port of call for journalists, press releases or complete press kits can be laid out. In addition, Electronic Press Boxes are available ([www.spielwarenmesse.de/en/exhibitors-press](http://www.spielwarenmesse.de/en/exhibitors-press)), in order to make access around the clock easier. Around 3,000 accredited journalists are informed immediately about every new report in the Electronic Press Box by an RSS-feed. Moreover, the Spielwarenmesse also provides the press contact on-line database for announcing the PR contacts in the company and the on-line press schedule for publishing PR events. ([www.spielwarenmesse.de/en/press-services](http://www.spielwarenmesse.de/en/press-services))

Spielwarenmesse eG also helps with looking for a suitable **PR agency** if companies want to seek support for their public relations work. Professionals from the area of toys PR are recommended. (enquiry: [presse@spielwarenmesse.de](mailto:presse@spielwarenmesse.de))

Furthermore, Spielwarenmesse eG has developed additional packages to place new products in a position that is visible to the press. These include the **ToyTrends programme**, a package of measures that lets new products stand out from the quantity on show at the trade fair. The PressPreview starts the day before the trade fair as a unique media forum for launching new products. In NCC East, exhibitors can present their new products to journalists from Germany and abroad from printed and on-line media, the radio, and TV in a special setting.

A further reason for coming into contact with representatives of the media is the **ToyAward**, with which new products at the trade fair are awarded every year for product concept, creativity or playing idea. Anyone who makes it onto the podium for the ToyAward can count on international coverage and increased attention amongst the specialist public. ([www.toy-award.com](http://www.toy-award.com))

Exhibitors can also effectively highlight their products as part of the new products presentation in the **TrendGallery** in hall 3A. The Product Launch Package supports the market launch of new products at Spielwarenmesse with an all-round range of marketing and PR services. Detailed information is available on the Internet: [www.spielwarenmesse.de/en/exhibitorservices](http://www.spielwarenmesse.de/en/exhibitorservices)

## Success monitoring

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An element of professional public relations is the **monitoring of success in the form of clippings**. This is the evaluation of the media, whether and in what form there have been articles and reports in the press about one's own company and its products. This can be done autonomously, by obtaining the most important printed media during the trade fair (daily and local press) and looking through it oneself. Additionally, research on the Internet is also advisable, during which audio and video clippings can sometimes be found. In each case, the press release should be marked with the phrase "specimen copy or broadcasting information requested". In the case of a press conference and interviews, it is advisable to ask about the provisional publication or broadcasting date and engage assistance with the recording. A professional option is engaging a clipping service that trawls through the media landscape for a fee, often for a basic fee and a fee per hits. A precise agreement is necessary here in advance concerning which media are to be sought for which key words – i.e. company or product name, for example. The clipping services generally provide additional data for a fee, for example the article's reach, i.e. how many readers or viewers have read the report, or convert the report into an advertisement equivalence price.

These clippings must also be evaluated by the entrepreneur as a follow-up. Have the objectives been achieved or avoidable errors been made? Have the most important statements been presented correctly? Even if the response does not always correspond to the ideal objective: public relations for the Spielwarenmesse offers every exhibitor an ideal opportunity to draw attention to itself in addition.

## PR check lists

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### 1) PR infrastructure

- Responsible PR contact
- Competence and authenticity in front of the microphone and camera
- Clear responsibility and language regulation
- Confident accessibility, putting office through preferentially, clear procedure even at meetings, during business trips or during the trade fair (representation arrangement)
- Punctual start of the preparations (finding appointments etc.)
- Define target media, create distribution list, identify potential contact within the editorial offices
- Involve additional service providers, if applicable, such as PR agency, digital press distribution list, clipping service

### 2) Check list trade fair preparation schedule

<b>6 Months</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Six months</b> in advance, make decision about public relations and PR measures (check list) and prepare infrastructure (obtain quotations)
<b>4 Months</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Four months</b> in advance, check publication frequency and editorial deadline of monthly specialist magazines and identify the optimum edition (e.g. middle or end of January, beginning of February) for placing the company's own news before or relating to the trade fair
<b>3 Months</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Three months</b> in advance, coordinate appointments and conference room space at the Spielwarenmesse in case of a press conference. (Note: many companies in the industry have had a "fixed" appointment for press conferences before or during the trade fair for decades)
<b>2 Months</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Two months</b> in advance, send the journalists a "save-the-date" note about the press conference
	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Two months</b> in advance, provide the specialist magazines with text and pictures before the editorial deadline
<b>1 Months</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>One month</b> in advance, entry of the press contact in the press contact database for exhibitors ( <a href="http://www.spielwarenmesse.de/en/service">www.spielwarenmesse.de/en/service</a> )
	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>One month</b> in advance, prepare a press release on the Spielwarenmesse (press conference) (possibly in English and German)
<b>14 days before</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>14 days before the trade fair at the latest</b> , send invitations to the press conference
<b>Middle of January</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Middle of January</b> , book press boxes
<b>Trade fair's eve</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Trade fair's eve</b> (PressPreview), bring press folders to the Press Centre if possible in the morning
	<b>Trade Fair Start</b>

### 3) Reasons for public relations for the Spielwarenmesse (selection)

- Annual business figures turnover, staff etc.
- Outstanding company history (e.g. 75 or 100 years)
- Special new products
- CO<sub>2</sub>-footprint, climate-neutral production line, creativity, toy idea, educational value
- Topical, national or international significance, regional significance, curious (furthest journey to the Spielwarenmesse ...) ...
- Awards, such as the ToyAward
- Supports this issue not just from the company's perspective, but also from the external perspective
- ...

### 4) Press release check list

#### *Form*

- Business letter paper for clear assignment with a note at the top "press release"
- In addition to company contacts, visible reference to press contact and telephone number (extension/mobile/e-mail)
- Line spacing 1.5; paragraphs with subheadings; extended right-hand margin
- Place name (head office/Nuremberg), date of the publication
- At the end of the company portrait, core business etc. in three sentences (boiler plate)
- Phrase "specimen copy or broadcasting information requested for ..."
- Maximum length is two pages in the final version

#### *Contents*

- Informative heading (possibly with continuing subheading)
- Key statement with "seven questions" (Who? What? When? Where? How? Why? What source?) in the first paragraph
- "American news style" (the most important information at the start)
- No abbreviations, avoid specialist terminology and foreign words
- Factual information, no self-praise, no advertising, no superlatives, no empty phrases, no commenting
- Mark evaluations and comments as a one-sentence-quotation
- Short and clear sentences
- Active instead of passive
- More verbs than nominalisations
- Names are mentioned with the title, forename, surname and precise role; at the second mention, just the name without Mr or Ms
- Today, yesterday, tomorrow is replaced by the date

- Numbers up to twelve are written out, then quoted as Arabic numerals
- Give figures with a basis (increased by 50 percent to 100 items) or comparative figures (e.g. previous year); check carefully

#### *Additions*

- Expressive, dynamic photos of the Managing Director (no meeting table etc.)
- No pictures just of the product, but children playing (settle image rights)
- Photo from production with staff (settle image rights)
- Final inspection: all pictures technically flawless and printable
- Compose picture caption; For photos of important people, give full names and role
- Reduced and meaningful charts

#### *Distribution*

- E-mail, fax or letter to the right recipients
- Press release and images into the press box at Press Centre East
- Press release and images into electronic press box
- Press release and images on homepage on the morning of publication
- Distribution via news aktuell distribution service to 400 daily German-speaking media ([www.spielwarenmesse.de/en/exhibitorservices](http://www.spielwarenmesse.de/en/exhibitorservices))
- Link to press release via social media channels

### **5) Press conference check list**

#### *Preparation*

- Sustainable subject for a press event (company figures, new product, restructuring, change of ownership, ...)
- Coordination of appointments and space via Spielwarenmesse eG ([presse@spielwarenmesse.de](mailto:presse@spielwarenmesse.de))
- Participant platform (possibly including experts, developers ... recommendation 3 people plus moderator)
- Room size (for ten participants, desired seating)
- Prepare and agree upon 15-minute statements
- Technical infrastructure (projector, light, sound, Internet, space, translators and technology for a product demonstration)
- Scheduling (welcome, speakers, Q&A session): moderation, clarify responsibility for queries
- Refreshments, drinks (possibly a small press gift)
- Invitation to selected editorial offices 14 days beforehand with precise details: subject, place and space, time and estimated duration (max. one hour), fax or e-mail response (for space planning), send a reminder e-mail four days before the press conference

- Interview training, if necessary, to express oneself clearly and concisely (some TV formats broadcast 20 or 30 second reports, the radio works with statements between 20 and 180 seconds in length)
- Entry in Spielwarenmesse press schedule ([www.spielwarenmesse.de/en/press-events](http://www.spielwarenmesse.de/en/press-events))
- Announcement of possible date on your own homepage
- Entry of press contact in the press contact database for exhibitors  
[www.spielwarenmesse.de/en/press-services](http://www.spielwarenmesse.de/en/press-services)

#### *Day of the press conference*

- Sign-posting to the event location
- Have journalists entered in the list of participants
- At the start of the press conference, put out a press kit with a cover page with the names and roles of the platform party, a press release, product information, a CD-ROM or USB stick for a digital version (photos, press release, company logo, product logo)
- Welcome, procedure according to plan (who is responsible for statements, presentation ...)
- Q&A session
- Then time for interviews, individual discussions, photos
- Send press release and photos by e-mail to the editorial offices
- Ensure accessibility for further enquiries (observe editorial deadline, in particular)

#### *Follow-up*

- Collect and evaluate press clippings

## Glossary

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*Clipping service:* service providers who trawl through media for the company's own name, products or photos, to ascertain the company's image in the press, in exchange for payment.

*Payment:* remuneration of journalists for an article is not permitted in Germany.

*Release:* an article or similar cannot be revised by a company before its publication in a medium. In individual cases, a release can be agreed separately for interviews. This is, however, unusual for daily media and virtually impracticable in view of the deadline pressure.

*Reply:* incorrect or impermissible representations can justify a right of reply. Nevertheless, companies should deal with this right sensitively.

*news aktuell:* news aktuell GmbH is a company of the news agency dpa and top dog in the digital press service segment. Texts and images land right in the editorial systems of 400 daily German-speaking media for a fee.

*Public relations:* (also: public relations work, press relations, PR or corporate communication) describes the communication of companies with the media and thus the public.

*Press report:* report, audio or TV piece about a company, not to be confused with a press release.

*Press conference:* meeting with journalists for information and discussion

*Press release:* information by companies for journalists (also: blurb)

*Press law:* In Germany, press law is a state matter. It obliges the media to exercise journalistic due diligence in their reporting.

*Distribution list:* structured address list with data about editorial offices and contacts

## Responsible for content: Thomas Tjiang

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A business and local journalist, an expert and communication consultant, he has worked freelance since completing his studies. Since the start of the 1990s, he has worked for all types of media, such as daily and monthly press, the radio, TV, news agencies and on-line editorial offices. As an expert and consultant, he passes his varied practical knowledge on to medium-sized companies, so that they can professionalise their public relations. The neglect of company public relations is like a thorn in the side for him. For companies give away their own potential and only insufficiently satisfy their significance as part of society.

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