

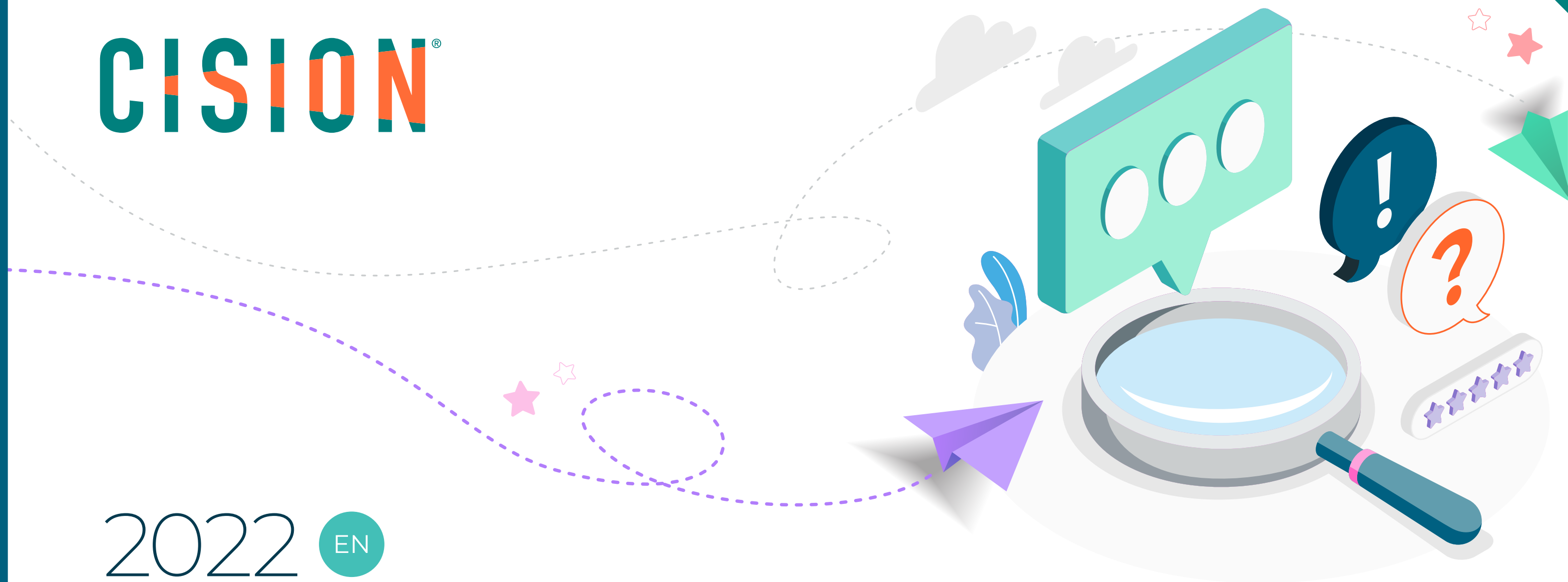
CISION®

2022 EN

Nordic PR-handbook

How to get media coverage in the Nordic countries

● Sweden ● Norway ● Denmark ● Finland ● Iceland



Why don't journalists cover my story?



Magnus Thell
Managing Director
Cision Nordics

All PR professionals know that media relations require skills and good instincts. If you also do PR in several countries, the task becomes even more complex.

communicators can also send their news and press releases to over 170 countries. These are all necessary tools for successful PR work but is often not enough. There is also a need for PR skills at all levels - from formulating a story with excellent news value to contacting the journalists in the right way at the right time.

Cision has been assisting companies and organizations worldwide with PR tools for over 100 years. With Cision's platform, PR professionals find the relevant journalists for their stories based on each reporter's interests and audience. For example, in our database, there are searchable contacts to over 10,000 newsrooms in the Nordic region. With our Comms solutions,

As a global company, we notice a lot of similarities in how PR work is performed in different markets. For example, you must deliver actual news stories to journalists everywhere, not just commercial messages. I dare to say that all reporters worldwide evaluate a story based on specific news criteria. But we also see differences between the markets.



Even if the differences are sometimes minor, they can be crucial in getting the local journalists' attention. There are even variations between countries that are as close to each other as Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland and Finland.

Therefore, we have put together this **Nordic PR-handbook** – insights in the do's and don't's in doing PR in each of the Nordic countries. We have five senior PR consultants with good local knowledge of each country to our assistance.

Altogether, they have over **70 years of experience** in media relations for multinational companies, startups, non-profit organizations, and authorities. We hope their knowledge combined with our solutions will help you succeed with your PR efforts.

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The media landscape:

Sweden



Marianne Ahlgren

Founder and Senior Consultant
Another View

***Marianne Ahlgren** is a senior PR consultant with more than 20 years of experience in media relations. To mention some examples, she has been acting press officer at McDonald's Sweden and in politics at the Liberal Party in Sweden. Today she runs the communication agency Another View.*

How would you describe the media landscape in Sweden today?

The consolidation in the media industry has slowed down a bit, and we still have a lot of newspapers, radio stations and TV stations.

At the same time, the digital scene is expanding, so in five years, the printed newspaper will probably no longer exist. In addition, the media has been successful with launching paywalls online.

How vital are news agencies?

Important, especially if you want to have a broad outreach in Sweden. For example, the largest one TT distributes news reports to almost all regional and local newspapers in Sweden.



How important are journalists for PR professionals?

The traditional media is essential for a broad outreach, but as in many countries, we have a different media scene nowadays than 20 years ago. But journalists are still critical.

Do journalists have the same impact they used to, considering competition from influencers and podcasts?

In my opinion, journalists play an even more significant role today regarding serosity and credibility. You must pay influencers to spread your message, but the editors select what's worthy of publishing with the media. In some cases, influencers could be the correct choice of channels, but you gain greater serosity and credibility with publicity in traditional media.

How close is the relationship between PR representatives and journalists?

Generally, Swedish journalists are not interested in having close contact with press officers. So, I would recommend a professional work relationship rather than drinking beer together after work.

Do you need to know the journalist before contacting them?

You can contact any journalist without knowing them. However, if you see the interest of the most influential reporters beforehand and if they have some knowledge of your company, the likelihood of getting published increases. Then they might even reach out to you for a quote or some facts. So, relationships with journalists can be beneficial but not necessary. The most important thing is to have a good story to offer.

The number of media outlets: Sweden



1190
Magazines



179
Broadcasting



299
Local press



441
Online*



11
National press



21
News agencies

*Newspapers and magazines only available online.
Source: Cision media database

Marianne's PR guide for Sweden

STEP 1

Find a newsworthy story

You must start with your story. What's your key message of interest to your audience, and is the story newsworthy for a journalist? Like in most parts of the world, Swedish journalists use some criteria when evaluating the newsworthiness of a story.

01.

Your story should be unexpected. The audience should think:
"Oh, I didn't know that!"

02.

Some closeness so that the audience can relate.

03.

Timing is essential. A news item in January is not necessarily newsworthy in December. Also, avoid ending up in competition with other major news items.

04.

Swedish media likes conflicts. For example, use classic storytelling, a good guy versus a bad guy, or David and Goliath.

05.

Your news should be relevant for more than one person. It must be relevant for the journalist's audience.

Importance of a press release

01.

Is the press release still a suitable format?

If your company is listed, the press release is mandatory since you must reach all stakeholders simultaneously. But if you're not listed, distributing a press release could still be a good idea if you have defined your target audience – who do you want to reach, and which media do they consume? If you research your audience well, you will have a more significant impact than just sending out a press release to everyone.

02.

Can you write the press release in English?

I think some media are more used to receiving English material than others, for example, the financial press. But if you want to reach an editor in a local newspaper, English-speaking material makes it more complicated for them to publish your story. In other words, writing in Swedish is more efficient.

03.

Can international companies distribute a single Nordic version of a press release to all four countries?

I would not recommend it. Localization is essential, so I advise doing local versions for each country.

STEP 2

Research a media list

If you don't know the media landscape on your topic in Sweden, do some research. Are there any journalists that might be especially interested in your kind of news? Take some time to research the media for your target group and your content. I would also recommend staying close to the media scene for your topics and industry. Ensure you know where the debates are and how the subject is discussed. That makes it easier to determine what is relevant or not.



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But doesn't every business already know who they want to reach?

Not always. Commonly, a CEO wants to have their face on the mid spread in Dagens Industri, the most influential financial newspaper in Sweden, even if the news is not relevant for this newspaper. So why go for that kind of newspaper if you have a story that would get significant coverage in a more specialized media? I get the impression it's every CEO's wet dream to get covered in Dagens Industri. It's my job to show other outlets for their industry who appreciate getting material and tips since it's relevant. They'll get better coverage reaching the target group.

STEP 3

Pitch the story

It's time to pitch when you have the story and the media list. You should decide if you want to send it out by email, by text message or if you want to make a call. Some people like to make calls to journalists, but I recommend sending an email to avoid the risk of disturbing the journalists with your call.

You must write a good headline. Every journalist and editor get hundreds of emails and calls every day, so your headline must be short, distinct and to the point. Consider what is interesting for the journalists and their audience, not what you think is interesting.

Is it necessary to offer exclusivity?

It's not necessary, but it's definitely a plus. Just make sure it's exclusive and don't give the same story to two journalists. That is an efficient way to ruin the relationship with the journalist, and that's not good practice.

When the article is published, can I send out a press release?

Yes, of course. You might not get much coverage, but you should also post it in your newsroom, and use it on your owned media channels and your social media.

Are press conferences standard?

No. In my experience, most journalists want to have one-on-ones instead of sitting together for group interviews. They don't have time to attend. But if you have a breaking news story, you can have a press conference. But it's not common.

When you reach out to targeted journalists, and they do not answer, should you chase them?

I think you should have respect for the editor's decision. You could try to repack the story, try

another angle, or try other media. But I don't believe in chasing journalists. That could make them skeptical next time you approach them and may not want to be helpful or even respond. Always try to make life easy for the journalists, and not the other way around.

Let's say my story gets published. Should I do follow-up actions?

If you liked the article, let the journalist know. If you have an upcoming story, give the reporter a heads-up.

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3 common mistakes international companies make, when pitching to Swedish journalists:

1. Oh, I sound very dull, but the most **common mistake is overestimating your newsworthiness**. What's interesting for you and your company is not always interesting for journalists or their audience.
2. **Not being available for follow-ups and interviews**. When the journalist calls you and wants to interview an expert and that person is not available, all the work with the news story and pitching is useless.
3. Maybe a bit boring as well, but to send out press releases and news stories in **bad language**. Swedish journalists are a bit picky, so put extra effort into the writing.

The media landscape:

Norway



Petter Gjelsnes

Head of PR and Content & Senior Advisor
Nova Vista AS

***Petter Gjelsnes** is a senior PR consultant from the Norwegian communications agency Nova Vista, where he acts as Head of PR and Content. He has worked with PR and media relations for over 20 years with clients like Procter & Gamble, Essity and Microsoft.*

What does the media landscape look like today in Norway?

The media industry is under more extensive pressure. For example, I work with several technology clients, and there are far fewer tech media outlets and journalists in that field today. Since they are fewer, I feel that the eye of the needle is narrower. At the same time, it also provides opportunities. If you can contribute with good stories that are easy for the journalist to do an article on without spending too much time, the likelihood of getting published is increased.

growing as a communication channel and will get more important. For example, the IT company Atea has its own podcast about tech with a large audience.

Are news agencies still important?

Yes, they still have a strong position, but they are few. The biggest one, NTB, has a central role in the Norwegian media landscape. If you succeed in pitching a story to them, you will get broad coverage.

anyone can post an update and get a relatively good reach via social media. It makes it challenging for the audience to determine which information is based on facts. So traditional media play an essential role as a source of credible information. We have seen the need for credible information increase during the pandemic, and Norwegian statistics show that the media has been an essential source for most people. Social media is, however, a competitor to traditional media, as well as influencers. In the end, the choice of channels and strategy depends on the objectives of the PR campaign.

Are there any new media channels, like podcasts?

In Norway, we see mainly niche podcasts for specific topics, like cars, hunting, and other hobbies and entertainment. But podcasts are

How vital are journalists when doing PR in Norway?

Traditional media and journalists still play a significant role in Norway, maybe even more important than ever in terms of credibility. Today

How close is the relationship between the Norwegian journalists and PR representatives?

It varies. I have worked with PR since the end of the nineties and have good contacts. Over time,

these relationships have been built up, and the journalists know they can trust me. But I also know some journalists who don't pick up the phone when some PR representatives call since they are too pushy. Like life in general, it's all about building good and long-term relationships based on trust. Although, my impression is that we are closer to our journalists in Norway than, for instance, in Sweden. And it's important to remember that the Nordic countries have quite different business and media cultures, so local expertise is often necessary to succeed.

Do you need to know the journalist to get the story published?

Not necessarily. It also depends on which media you're targeting. If you're contacting a national newspaper, there are different editors each gang. It's

different when you reach out to niche media where you are in regular contact with the same journalist.

In your experience, what is specific to the way Norwegians do PR work?

A good question. I think Norwegians are pretty direct in the way we work, communicate, and do business. I often come across international press releases that do not work in Norway. They are often full of commercial nonsense, which is a big no-no here. Like in all Nordic countries, successful PR work is all about adapting to each country and doing things on the premises of the media. And how do you do that? Well, you prepare the story and almost write the whole article so the journalist can copy-paste. Help the journalist as much as possible, especially since the reporters are under tighter deadlines nowadays.

The number of media outlets: Norway



585
Magazines



111
Broadcasting



206
Local press



239
Online*



15
National press



9
News agencies

*Newspapers and magazines only available online.
Source: Cision media database

Petters's PR guide for Norway

STEP 1

Find a newsworthy story

The first thing to consider is if the story has any news value. Unfortunately, companies often think the story has some news value, even when that's not the case. But what is very exciting for a company can be interesting for a journalist if relevant for the audience.

You can often create the news by building something around the topic of the original

messages, for example, through a survey or a data report. Norwegian journalists use criteria for evaluating the news value, and the requirements are in many ways the same as in all other countries.

A good news story should be:

- **relevant**
- **significant**
- **close**
- **sensational or conflict oriented**

But I think the story really must have a local angle for Norway. You should always ask yourself – is this story relevant for the Norwegian market?

This can be a bit tricky for me to explain to international companies. It can be challenging for them to grasp that Norwegian journalists prefer to interview a local mid-senior manager rather than the top global managers.

Importance of a press release

01.

If the local relevance is essential, is it easier to do PR for a small Norwegian business than for a large international company?

Yes. We are always hoping for Norwegian companies to do well and cheer for our local businesses. A small company outside Oslo can also target one of our many local newspapers. But of course, if the news is interesting enough from an international company, it will receive journalists attention and focus.

02.

Is the press release a suitable format in Norway?

Absolutely! It has been said that the press release is dead, but I can deny that. In my opinion, the press release is underestimated, and it often works to distribute complete articles that journalists copy-paste from. But the content of a press release must be of high quality – written in a good language without too many adjectives and commercial nonsense. International press releases need to be adapted; you cannot just translate.

03.

If a company wants to reach all the Nordics with the same press release, is it an option to write in English and distribute it in Norway?

I rarely recommend it. Even though most Norwegians understand English, it still means more effort for the journalist. But if it's urgent with no time for translation, send it out in English. However, my general recommendation is to translate and adapt it for the Norwegian media landscape. Don't look at the Nordic region as one country.

STEP 2

Research a media list

Identify your target audience and the relevant media. Is it a niche story, or is it a story of general interest? Make a media list based on the story and target group. It is a good idea to make different angles for different target groups.

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How much research is needed on each journalist?

The most important thing is understanding the publication and making sure the story is relevant before making contact. Focus on building long-term relationships, especially within niche media. A tip is to establish one or two good journalist contacts at the more prominent media, and then they can help you get in touch with the right person and vouch for you.



STEP 3

Pitch the story

Once the story is in place and the media list created, it is time to pitch it. However, how to properly pitch it depends entirely on the story. Sometimes it's enough to send out the press release via email but in my experience, a follow-up by phone is needed to get the story noticed. So, my best tip is not to be afraid of contacting journalists.

Do the journalists have time to pick up the phone?

Yes. Normally they answer. I speak to journalists over the phone every week. I think it's perfectly fine to call and ask if they received the press release and something you can help them with. But if they say no, it means a no, and you should stop calling or following up as it can strain your relationship with them and your reputation in the industry.

Is it a good idea to offer exclusivity?

Yes, I do it almost every time. In my view, it's necessary to get published. Usually, I'll give the story exclusively to the most significant media in the field and then distribute the press release when they have published their article. And I can't stress enough how important it's to keep the exclusive agreement with the journalist. In our business, it's all about trust.



Are Norwegian journalists interested in attending press meetings?

Press conferences are efficient for critical news, but there's been a shift in the past few years. We used to invite the press to important product launches etc., but not anymore, due to fewer media, journalists, and the pressure of time. Instead we do one-on-one interviews with relevant journalists and go on a press tour to visit the different newspapers. It is appreciated, as it is efficient, personable and memorable.

• • •

3 tips when pitching to Norwegian journalists:

- 1. It's all about localization.** Make sure the story has local relevance and adapt the story to the target group.
- 2. Use a local professional familiar with the local media landscape.** It makes the work so much easier.
- 3. Cut the commercial nonsense.** It doesn't do the job.



The media landscape:

Denmark



Rasmus Kristensen

Independent Consultant & Board Member
SENSUM

***Rasmus Kristensen** has been a senior PR consultant working with public relations and media relations since 1997. He's been doing PR for brands like Hummel and Nasdaq. Today he runs the PR-firm SENSUM in Denmark and is an independent consultant.*

How would you describe the media landscape in Denmark?

The Nordic countries are similar in that we all have a national broadcast system offering an extensive media palette – TV, radio, online, podcasts or webcast, streaming services, etc. We've seen a considerable consolidation of the Danish local press over the last 5–10 years regarding print media. They've been struggling, especially the smaller ones. And since we don't have the same geographical spread as in Sweden, we don't have as strong regional newspapers. We have some, but they are usually part of conglomerates sharing editorial rooms. Because let's face it, we are a tiny country.

Do Danes still consume traditional media at all?

I would say so, but like in many other countries, we consume the media via our social media channels,

so it's more of a mix than before. You're not as bound to specific sources as you used to be.

Are there any important new media channels?

We have the local Twitterati with a considerable impact. It's very easy to reach reporters or politicians via Twitter in Denmark, whereas the general population doesn't use it to the same degree. Also, podcasts are up and coming, starting to reach the general population. Podcasts are niche-based, with a significant spike in true crime, engineering, and specific fields. However, the general news is still mainly driven by TV and radio.

Are news agencies still important?

We used to have three or four important news agencies, whereas today, the only larger Danish

agency is Ritzau. They have a significant impact, but it's owned by the Danish papers and their stories are mainly concentrated on the ones of the owners.

So, I wouldn't say they're following the times, but they still have a significant impact, and it's a professionally run service.

Are influencers important in Denmark when doing PR?

Yes and no. Influencers are enormous when it comes to lifestyle products, and they have significant impact when it comes to NGOs.

However, in Denmark, we have rather strict enforcement of the laws regarding influencers, so the more serious the business gets, the tougher the crackdown on the influencers. And, of course, they don't have the same credibility as the traditional media.

How close is the relationship between the Danish journalists and PR representatives?

I would say it's not nearly as close as it used to be. For my part, of course, I have reporters who are my friends or at least my acquaintances, but the time editorial staff remain in the same seat is so limited today. The one you had as a contact last year in a major newspaper is now doing communications for the airport or something like that. So, keeping up a network for the sheer sake of knowing people makes less and less sense. Personally, I've always valued the journalistic quality of the story over the relationship. Still, it gives you a shortcut sometimes when journalists don't have to check your materials to the same degree since they know you bring them high-quality stories.

How would you say Danish PR work differs from other markets?

I would say that access to the top management is a crucial part. Danish media are used to full access to top CEOs in Denmark, so they are a bit spoiled. International leaders don't always understand why they need to be accessible to the media. So that's a huge difference.

The number of media outlets: Denmark



542
Magazines



101
Broadcasting



228
Local press



219
Online*



22
National press



4
News agencies

*Newspapers and magazines only available online.
Source: Cision media database

Rasmus' PR guide for Denmark

STEP 1

Find a newsworthy story

The first step is to find a newsworthy story. Then the follow-up question is, what is news for Danish journalists? If you have something groundbreaking, that's always a good story, and you won't need a lot of legwork. But we don't come up with a cure for cancer every day. So, if we need attention to something that is more regular business, I will see how it fits into the general societal discourse, especially the political one. And if you can make it data-driven, that gives you an edge.

What is the biggest challenge for companies when writing news?

Being too self-centered. For example, if you are a hot dog vendor and you had a lovely day at the town square where you sold a lot of hot dogs – is that

something that you would bother anyone with? The same goes for larger businesses like pharmacy, transportation, or big data. It doesn't matter if you're just describing that you went to work, did your job somewhat well, went home and then considered it a success. That's not a newsworthy story to anyone.

However, investor relations is an exception. Listed companies must communicate important events even though they may be dry or just part of the daily routine. But there are specific niche media following this news, so you shouldn't bother a tabloid.

Is the press release still a suitable format in Denmark?

Yes and no. The press release as a format is okay because it shows the editorial staff that you understand and respect their way of work. If you write a good press release, it is a fantastic tool for a reporter to use. On the other hand, the main issue with the press release is that many use it generically, without taking the time to customize it appropriately. The cardinal sin is an email blast to three hundred different media outlets simultaneously and then do cold calling to check if they received your message. This is entirely hopeless. I mean, you can choose to see it as a numbers game, but when you did that three times, you won't be read in their inbox for the next couple of years at least.

Can you do a Nordic version of a story for all Nordic countries?

Absolutely not. I suspect it would be the same for Norway and Sweden. A story from a central PR office in Europe directed to all Nordic people is dismissed at the door.

Can you write the press release in English?

It all depends on your gravitas as the sender. I would assume that Danish media would be okay with an English press release if you're representing Bill Gates. On the other hand, many larger businesses don't have a large amount of attention in Denmark. And they will fall short if they try to make a general version or not adapt to the Danish media landscape and society. It's never a good nor efficient idea.



STEP 2

Research a media list

If your story is strong enough, you go straight to picking out your targeted recipients. It's essential, though, to do your research to make sure that it lands on the right table.

Another action is to test whether your story has a general interest with people or not, and you can do split tests today. Perhaps this makes you a little bit wiser when tuning and tweaking the story towards a general audience. If you have a large budget, you can do it in a focus group, or you can do it digitally. If you're doing it without a budget, I would stop someone on the street and ask them. It's not about the methodology. It's about doing a pressure test of your thesis.



STEP 3

Pitch the story

When we have the story and know who to contact, it's time for pitching. First, you need to look at the different timing cycles for the various outlets, and you need to look at what's going on in society. You'd do best not to try to pitch smaller stories during a pandemic outbreak or during a situation where the prime minister is leaving office.

So, you need to put your ear to the ground and find the correct time. The competition between the different outlets is fierce, so exclusivity is critical. Carving out an exclusive angle to the story is key and if you can assist in this, you are more likely to become successful.

How do you contact journalists?

It may be old-fashioned, but I like to talk to people. Depending on the story's weight, I will sometimes even ask the editorial staff what they prefer before creating the story. So, I would be old fashioned – I would grab the phone, strike up a conversation, ask them, and respect them if they say no.

Can an international player call a Danish journalist?

Suppose you have the right story, for sure, but I would do a teaser first. Potentially a text message

aimed at this one reporter saying, "I'm doing this story, and I would like to give you exclusivity, I would give it to you first, or we're breaking the story on Monday or whatever is the case". And I would ask them for their interest in the topic, only teasing a couple of the main points from the story. If the reporter digs into this story out of curiosity, they will do a better story.

Are Danish journalists interested in attending press conferences?

If you're doing a press gathering to reveal the new Tesla, I would say sure. If you're doing it to

announce the quarterly financial results of a medium-sized industrial component manufacturer, then probably not. It needs to be something rather large to do a press meeting. And there is a risk that is built into doing press briefings. There needs to be a bit of controversy to the topic for reporters to show up. And it is much more challenging to control a situation if you have a room full of reporters and one reporter asks the question that you didn't think of. So obviously, it needs a lot more preparation. But I wouldn't totally abandon the idea of press briefings, but it's an uphill battle.

If a journalist writes the story, should you do follow-up activities after they've published?

Absolutely, I always give them an email and provide them with feedback. And I'm always honest. If I'm disappointed in something, I will tell them. If I'm happy about something, I will say to them. Usually, I work closely with clients, and I know in what direction the next story will be pointing. So, a couple of days later, I would tell the reporter that, and if they're interested in doing something more on the topic or the client, then immediately I put it in my calendar, and I make sure to do the follow-up when we're ready with the story.

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3 common mistakes international companies do, when pitching to Danish journalists:

- 1. Seeing the different Nordic people and their societies as one.** We have a lot of things in common, but we hate being pigeonholed as the Nordics.
- 2. Using generic press material from larger markets.** I get a lot of press releases from the UK, with messages like "Just translate this and make a broad distribution." I'd rather not spend the time or the money.
- 3. Pitching stories that don't hold up in court.** It's always been a no-no in PR, but with the focus on sustainability, climate change, this is even more important. You see greenwashing, pinkwashing, and people virtue signalling in the way they communicate without any action. This is not specific to Denmark, but a general thinking. If you have a good story, they will come. But if you have a bad one, they will remember.

The media landscape: Finland



Ville Blåfield

Director
Milton

***Ville Blåfield** is a director at the PR agency Milton in Helsinki. Before joining Milton three years ago, he had a long career of 19 years as a journalist and editor, at Helsingin Sanomat and other notable Finnish media.*

What does the Finnish media landscape look like?

Finland is a small country and language area, so the media houses aren't big compared to the Swedish or English-speaking market. But Finns tend to consume a lot of media. There's a strong newspaper subscription tradition in Finland. When Reuters Institute does its annual research on media trust, it's clear that Finns trust journalists much more than people in other countries, also compared to our neighbouring countries. So even though the media is relatively small, they have a significant impact on Finnish society and culture.

Which media owners are the most important in Finland?

There are a few big players; The Sanoma Corporation, Alma Media and Otovamedia. There is

also room for some smaller players, but these big players own most newspapers, magazines, and digital media products. Recently they've been dividing the market in a new way. The Sanoma Corporation acquired some regional newspapers from Alma Media and now owns most of the prominent regional newspapers in Finland. As a result, Sanoma is now the sole leader in the newspaper business in Finland. On the other hand, Alma Media is the leader in business media and digital marketplaces, a sector that Sanoma left when they sold their digital marketplaces to Schibsted. So, the big players aim at owning a share of the market where they can be the market leader.

Do the outlets share content if they have the same owners?

Yes, very much so. That's a trend for the moment, and it makes sense from the media companies'

point of view. If you produce quality content for one regional newspaper, why not publish it in your other newspapers if you have different audiences? But it's a bit tricky for the organizations or people being interviewed for the stories. If you're giving an interview to newspaper A and then get published in newspapers B and C as well without you knowing it, who should you target?

Have the changes in the media landscape affected the content?

During the past ten years, one-third of professional journalists in Finland have been laid off. At the same time, the media suddenly became 24/7 online with fierce competition. The editorial staff need to be faster and publish more content. So, I think it affects journalism because it's done more in a hurry. I'm not saying they aren't creating great journalism, and sometimes competition is also

good for the quality. But not always. I think you can see in journalism today that there's fewer people, more competition and more of a hurry to get stories published.

Are there any interesting new media channels in Finland?

There are, of course, all these social media platforms that traditional media uses to reach their audiences. Another exciting development in Finland is that audio as a communication channel has taken off during the last few years with podcasts and audiobooks. Also, the media are using audio more in their offering, launching their podcasts and using audio as a storytelling tool on their digital platforms. We also see new business models and new media startups trying to come up with innovative ways of financing. One

interesting example is Long Play, a media startup run by journalists that publish only one long article per month for their subscribers. And that article is heavy stuff. Then we have MustRead, a niche digital media solely focusing on political and business decision-makers. So, these smaller new players are trying to reinvent the industry's business model. Maybe their end products are not that innovative. It's basically digital written media. But the new thing is how they make their money.

How strong is the position for news agencies?

I would say they used to be stronger. The leading national news agency STT had a more substantial footing before. Now I would say the most important media are the commercial media houses and the national broadcasting company YLE.

How vital are journalists nowadays when doing PR in Finland?

Journalists are important. If you want to be the talk of the town and gain attention in the public discourse, sure, you can try using your own media channels or social media. In my experience, you get a push when you get credible earned media attention to lift your story. The engagement or discussion around your brand on social media builds on visibility in traditional media first.

How close is the relationship between Finnish journalists and PR's?

There is this traditional division between us, as it should be. I think more journalists realize the value of professional communications and even PR when done transparently. At least that's my experience.

Do you need to know the journalists to get your story published?

No, but it helps with personal contacts. And it helps to have firsthand experience on what the discussions are or how the decisions are made in the newsroom. But it's not necessary. I contact journalists daily without knowing them beforehand. If you have a good news story to share, the journalist will listen to you.

What is specific for the Finnish PR work compared to Sweden?

Good question. Since Miltton is an international group, it's interesting to compare the different ways of work in each country. What is very characteristic of the Finnish media ecosystem and media work is its small circles. It's widespread to know the people you're contacting, and personal connections play a significant role.

When I've been working with my Stockholm colleagues, I feel that the relationship with the journalists is more businesslike. But what I like about Swedish culture is that it's very upfront. Everyone understands each other's roles. And my impression is that in Sweden, there's great respect for communication and PR professionals from the journalistic side. So maybe the relationship it's a bit more mature in Sweden.

The number of media outlets: **Finland**



1055
Magazines



118
Broadcasting



309
Local press



153
Online*



26
National press



1
News agencies

*Newspapers and magazines only available online.
Source: Cision media database

Ville's PR guide for Finland

STEP 1

Find a newsworthy story



Start with finding a newsworthy story. Finnish journalists use the traditional news criteria – the effect, the closeness etc. The criteria develop, however. When I went to work for Helsingin Sanomat in 2006, I inherited an office from a journalist. She had a poster on the wall that said: “Interesting is newsworthy”. During that time, it was an ongoing debate among editorial staff whether we should create new news criteria, which would be to cover something just because people are interested in it. The more old-school journalists were against it. They thought that something being interesting should not in itself make it news. But recently, I was talking to the editor-in-chief of Ilta-Sanomat, the biggest online news media and one of the two big tabloids in Finland. He claimed that it’s by far the most crucial news criteria today. So, interesting is the driving news criteria nowadays, which also means there are no more “bad news days”.

Importance of a press release

01.

How localized or “Finnish” should the press release be?

It helps if you write it in Finnish, but you don't need to. I think Finnish journalists can work in English very well nowadays. And if your story is international by nature, it might even feel natural that your communication has that international flair as well. But the most crucial part is to customize and localize your message. You must come up with an angle that touches the Finnish market and has local relevance.

02.

Can I do a single Nordic version of my press release in English to all the Nordic countries?

You need to have a massive breaking news story to share to be successful with the same format in all markets. If not, you need to localize your message and find a local angle. The angle can just be how your news affects your local customers. Make sure to show some relevance for the local audience in the story.

03.

Is the press release a suitable format?

Yes, absolutely. If you have a good news story with a catchy headline and you formulate it well and add all other elements a good press release needs to have, then I'm sure it works.

STEP 2

Research a media list

When you have your story, it's time to plan the pitch. You should put in some work customizing the pitch and understanding the media you're contacting. Which are their audience, and what kind of news are they looking for? Create the pitch through that understanding instead of starting with what you want to convey.

Only contact the journalist or media you think would be interested in your story. Too many organizations are just sending out press releases to every possible media outlet. That will eventually lead to that the journalist isn't even open the press release.



STEP 3

Pitch the story

It's time to pitch your story. A common mistake I came across working as a journalist was receiving an email with just the headline "Press release", so I would open the email and read the press release. If the story is very delicate, it might make sense to start with a phone call with the reporter. In general, send an email first, and then a follow-up call. But if there is exclusivity or embargoes in a particular case, I tend to call the journalist directly.

Do journalists respond when you call?

As I described earlier, it is hectic at newsrooms nowadays, so we need to make sure we respect them and their time. But I have noticed that journalists tend to take calls. Maybe it's getting exotic that someone uses the old technology of

phoning someone. But it's very often the case that you send an email, and then you follow up with a call, and they answer: "Oh yeah, I saw that you sent an email. I haven't read it yet." So, you get their attention to the email by following up by phone.



Are Finnish journalists interested in attending press conferences?

In general, it's hard to get journalists face-to-face, and during covid it's been impossible obviously. When we've organized some face-to-face events during this fall, it has still been hard to get people to attend, but more and more journalists have asked for a stream link. So, the pandemic way of doing work over Zoom or Teams has also affected press events. There's no turning back to a world where you could organize a press event and not offer a possibility to follow it online. For a busy journalist, it could take hours for them to go to the other side of the city just for some quotes. I get it from their perspective. They prefer to open a live stream, get the quotes there and move on to the next story. I would even say that it's easier to get journalists to follow your live stream online because it's such a low bar for them to jump in. But you need to have engaging content to keep their attention.

If my story gets published, is it a good idea to do follow-up actions?

Sure. When giving an interview, think of the situation as building your media network. You might benefit from this connection a year from

now. The reporter may do another story and come back to you, or next time you have a story to share, you know who to contact. So, if the story was good in your opinion, why not send a text afterwards and thank them for good cooperation? Think of it as standard networking.

...

Common mistakes international companies do, when pitching to Finnish journalists:

- 1. Distribute a press release in English with no localization.** It's not going to fly. But if you make the story relevant for the Finnish audience, there are no barriers. The Finnish journalists will be interested in international players, and they understand English.
- 2. Circulate a story to all possible journalists and media in Finland.** You need to contact the relevant ones, and you need to explain why this would be interesting for a Finnish audience.

The media landscape: Iceland



Fridjon Fridjonsson

Managing Partner
KOM Consulting

***Fridjon Fridjonsson** is managing partner at Kom Consulting, one of the oldest PR Agencies in Iceland. He has 20 years of experience, working with media relations for clients like Icelandic Air, Boeing and the aluminum company Alcoa.*

What does the media landscape look like today in Iceland?

We have one large public service newsroom for TV and radio, and then several independent entities who are facing challenges now because of social media competition. In addition to that, we have two daily newspapers and some industry specific weekly magazines as well as tabloids. Since everything is consumed through a computer or a phone nowadays, it comes with challenges for some. We have entities that are strong in publishing printed paper and although we have been online for over 25 years, it's still a business model that is demanding for some.

Have you experienced consolidation within the media industry?

Yes and no. Much of the consolidation was done in the nineties. Since then, there is in many ways more

of a diversification and fragmentation in the media landscape because the entry level is so low. Well known media persons have started their own websites and basically live off Google ads and others are news or commentary websites. And then we have the state-run TV/radio that has revenues far exceeding anything else. They sell ads for the radio and TV, so they have income both from the taxpayer and from the private market which I believe differs us from the rest of the Nordics. Our government just passed a law two years ago where they are supporting independent media financially because basically everybody was making a loss.

Would you say that the media industry is struggling with the financial situation?

Yes. As I mentioned, the Government is supporting private independent media that fulfills certain requirements because all of them are hurting. We

have a strange field of many small websites that are all trying to sort of compete for scraps. And then we have the newsrooms who are struggling with high turnover rates from journalists. Many are filled with junior journalists since the experienced ones are too expensive and therefore, the institutional memory often lies on the PR side instead of with journalists. I'm not a fan of how things have developed, but I don't know what the solution is. You need good journalists who can spend time on working on pieces and news stories. The general problem over the past years is recourses, there simply isn't enough time.

Are there any new media channels, like podcasts?

Podcasts, of course. A lot of things are happening in that field. I like to joke and say that you're not really middle aged until you've started a podcast. And yes, it's an interesting field because the

journalistic standards do not necessarily apply there. We have had some cases where scandals have been exposed in podcasts and journalistic standards clearly didn't apply. I'm not saying it's a bad thing but when you have someone telling their story and the interviewer is not a trained journalist, the questions can sometimes be less demanding with less verification. There is something brewing that's going to be interesting to follow in the next few years.

Do the Icelandic people still consume traditional media?

Yes, the main state news on TV have around 25 to 30% of the population as viewers. So that is the strong media, and TV is such an emotional medium that you get the strongest responses. There's only two real newspapers left in Iceland. We used to have five.

How close is the relationship between the Icelandic journalists and PR representatives?

It matters. There is a revolving door of people that used to work within media but now have become PR representatives of companies or institutions. There is a lot of turnovers in that. But again, I sound like a broken record but it's a small country where we know them. We break bread with them or, you know, or share a beer with them. There is a fair amount of closeness, especially with former employees and friends and so forth.

Do you need to know the journalist to get the story published?

Not necessarily. I mean, if you have a good story, you have a good story. It's our job to find the story, the arts and science behind it. What I like to call



the soap opera of the story, something that creates interest in the minds of the writers and the consumer. So, if we have a good story, we can get that through. But if you don't have a good story, then it absolutely helps to know somebody to pick their interest. I mean, that's what our job sometimes consists of.

In your experience, what is specific to the way Icelandic people do PR work?

One difference I've noticed when working with foreign companies is that our press releases need to be more like a news space. We can't write superlatives saying that this is the best company in the world and so forth, we write the story to make it easy to copy/ into a news piece rather than going through a long explanation of what it is and so forth. Again, we are a small country, and most people know the company you're writing

for. It's not as common that we do background work and explain all angles, because we just have to get out the news piece. When I'm working with foreign entities, we sometimes get a three-page press release, and decide to cut it down to a half a page.

In other words, helping the journalist as much as possible?

Absolutely. There are always journalists initially are suspicious towards PR people. What I try to explain to them is that we see ourselves as a bridge between our client and the journalist, both in terms of explaining to the to the client how the media works but also how newspapers and newsrooms work for them get the better picture of the story that we're trying to tell. I can't count how often just want to provide a sales text to the media that will never be printed. Our job is to create a story, basically.

The number of media outlets:
Iceland



13

Magazines



6

Broadcasting



6

Local press



17

Online*



4

National press



0

News agencies

*Newspapers and magazines only available online.
Source: Cision media database

Fridjon' PR guide for Iceland

STEP 1

Find a newsworthy story

It is all about the story and what is interesting. Regardless of if the story circles around a crisis or a positive event, brands tend to be stuck in their echo chambers thinking they are the center of the universe. People are not necessarily all that interested in what is happening at a certain corporation, regardless of if the news are positive or negative.

If you are a foreign company wanting to do PR in Iceland, the key is that it must have something to do with Iceland. I'm not saying that we are insular in the

way that we're only interested in news that are Icelandic but a connection with Iceland or an Icelandic always helps. When easyJet started flying to Iceland, they brought the only Icelandic pilot within easyJet to do that first flight because it created a better story.

Even though everybody was excited about getting a low-cost airline to Iceland, it was an angle to the story that made it much more interesting, both for the media and for the public.

Can companies do a Nordic version of a press release and send it to all Nordic countries?

You can, but I would not expect great results if it's not localized. There was a Polish American politician who said all politics is local and in many ways all news are local. Also, we are interested in people that surround us. Icelanders are more interested in what's happening in Scandinavia than what is happening in India or sub-Sahara. That's not to say that we are insular in that term. We are simply more interested in people that share our experiences and our heritage. So yes, you can do something Nordic, but I would always try to make things as local as possible.

If an international company wants to get the media coverage in Iceland, should they write it in English?

Yes, but you better have a great story for them to translate it. If Tesla would come to Iceland it could have been a press release sent in English because it is a major brand and an exciting brand. It needs to be a known international thing. But if you are a drug company announcing a new drug that is good for 3% of the country, find something more specific or make it local.

Is the press release a suitable format in Iceland?

Yes, absolutely. Sometimes you have to chase it, but you have to make it interesting. But I mean, it's the main form. And sometimes the press releases can be informal, I've sent news pieces through Facebook Messenger to journalists. It's just the way of the communication game.



STEP 2

Research a media list

If you are new to the market, that's not easy. Certain journalists and newsrooms are more interested in different kinds of news. If I don't know, I go and look at bylines online to see who has been writing about similar issues. There are new people coming in every few months, so you have to stay on your toes and read a lot of media just to know who is writing about what and who is interested in what.

My advice is to go through to bylines, find similar new stories and see who has been writing these articles.



STEP 3

Pitch the story

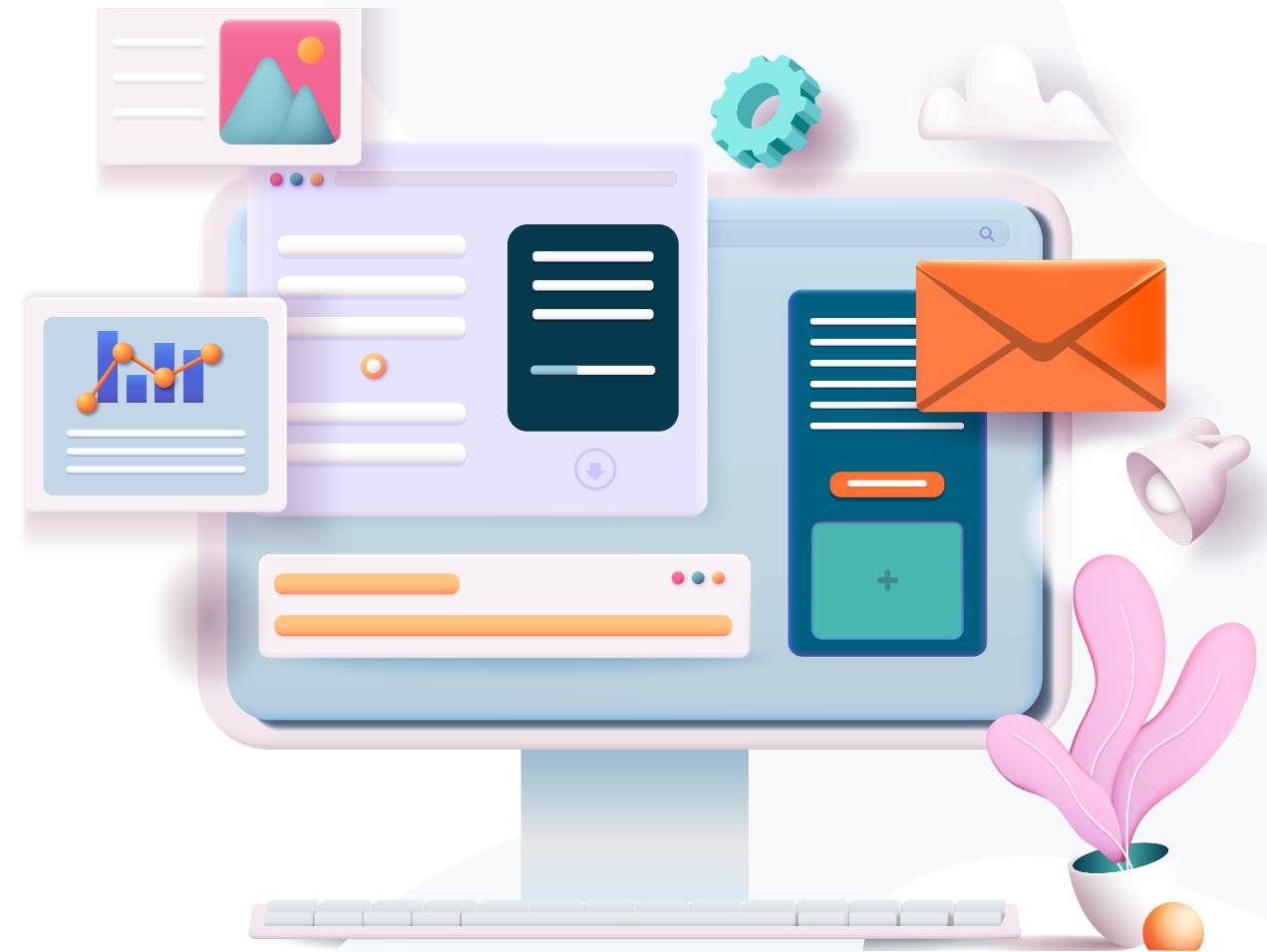
The pitch can come in many ways but there is always a pitch. You're pitching a story and you need to convince them that it's interesting. If you have something that everybody wants to know, spread it wide but if it's more niche you should target the pitch to selected recipients.

How do I get in contact with a journalist?

If it's a press release, which we know is most likely going to be picked up, we might just send it to the main emails of the main media rooms. In general, it depends on the story. Sometimes you meet somebody in a dark alley and whisper it and sometimes you send everybody an invite.

Is it a good idea to offer exclusivity?

Yes, we do it of course. Especially when the stories are big enough that we want it to have a certain platform in a certain way. An example would be if we want it to be a front page or on the TV news at a particular time and date. We offer exclusivity when we have the right story for it.



How should brands use the story in other channels?

Well, now it depends on the market of course. We have about 90-95% of Icelanders on Facebook but many are using Instagram instead for stories and media consumption and it is the biggest grower here. When everybody's grandmother joined Facebook, people stopped using it essentially. It's also a matter of generation, especially people under 35 have been spending less time on Facebook and are spending more and more time on Instagram. Twitter is good and there's a lot of journalists and politicians who can support people that are on it. But only about 7 to 9% of Icelanders are on Twitter daily.



...

3 common mistakes when doing PR in Iceland:

1. Assuming that everybody's interested in your story is the worst mistake in my opinion.
2. Not localizing and not putting yourself in it. You have to put yourself in the shoes of the consumer and the reporter.
3. Thinking that you are the center of the universe, and everybody is interested in knowing what you are talking about – that's often not the case.



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