

IRIS KRAMPITZ

**PR HANDBOOK FOR NEW ENERGIES**

More Marketing Success through More Media Presence

Excerpt of the „PR Handbook for New Energies“

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# CONTENTS

	<b>FOREWORD: WHY THIS BOOK?</b>	<b>007</b>
<b>I.</b>	<b>WHAT IS PR?</b>	<b>009</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>STRATEGIES AND CONCEPTS</b>	<b>017</b>
	1. Strategic Positioning	020
	2. Commissioning Strategies and Concepts	028
	3. Creating your own Concept	040
	4. Monitoring Success	052
<b>III.</b>	<b>MEASURES AND TOOLS</b>	<b>063</b>
	1. The Press Release	066
	2. The Professional Article	079
	3. The Interview	088
	4. The Press Conference	099
	5. PR at Trade Fairs	116
<b>IV.</b>	<b>DEALING WITH JOURNALISTS</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>INTERNATIONAL PR</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>VI.</b>	<b>CRISIS COMMUNICATION</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>VII.</b>	<b>MARKETING AND PR ON THE WEB</b>	<b>159</b>
	1. Online Marketing	163
	2. PR 2.0 with Social Media	182
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>197</b>

## WHY THIS BOOK?

The idea for this book developed after a lecture on PR strategies I gave at the belekro trade fair in Berlin in 2010. I was talking with a sector journalist about how important strategic press work is and how poorly some firms in the renewable energies sector understand about the needs of journalists. So I decided a handbook on press work was needed. I presented the concept for the first time at our stand at the Intersolar Europe trade fair in June 2011. The positive reactions and participation in our questionnaire convinced us that our idea and choice of subject were correct.

In this book, we explain to managing directors and marketing and PR heads of biomass, solar and wind companies how to select PR measures, find the right topics and the appropriate target media and how to prepare a timetable and action plan. We explain in detail how to compile a press distribution list, how to make contact with journalists at a trade fair, what to remember when formulating a press release and how to place a professional article. We complete all the articles with examples from the sector, checklists, excursuses and quotes from journalists.

In writing this book we concentrated on informative and credible PR and left out advertisement businesses and paid publications. We are convinced that with a good story, personal contacts with journalists and proper media preparation, you can address new target groups, increase your prominence and improve your image much less expensively and more credibly than would be the case with advertising – as long as you work strategically.

We explain how this is done on the following pages.

**IRIS KRAMPITZ**

Cologne, November 2011



### CHECK LIST FOR A PRODUCT RELEASE

You are launching a new product soon. Your target groups are dealers and installers, who you want to reach through a news piece in trade magazines. Your press release should have the following information:

- Name and description of the product (technical data, power output, dimensions, form, material(s), colour, size, area of application, etc.);
- When and where can the product be bought? If you choose a product presentation at a fair as a teaser: When and at which fair will the product be presented for the first time? Give your trade fair stand number and invite interested parties to your fair stand;
- How does the product differ from its predecessors?
- What is its unique selling proposition? /What are its special characteristics compared to the competition? What is different and better (technological innovation, improvements, price, quality, etc.)?
- What benefits characterise the product (efficiency, robustness, price, handling, simple assembly, simple maintenance, flexibility, compactness, etc.)?
- Are there any certificates, awards, prizes, test series, studies?
- Quotations that reinforce the benefits
- Special delivery and guarantee conditions
- A brief portrait of your company
- Product photograph, caption and copyright
- Editor and press contact (name /address /telephone number /internet page /email)
- Reference to print free of charge



## THE BRIEFING – HOW TO INSTRUCT A TEXT WRITER

1. First explain what the article is about, and what your company does.  
Collect the necessary background material.
2. Describe the medium for which the text writer should create the article.  
Name the target group and make the task as concrete as possible  
(length of the piece and necessary components, style, time plan, pay, etc.)
3. Formulate the core message of the article. Which one thought should the reader take away from the piece?
4. Substantiate the core statement. What are the characteristics of your product, your technology, etc. which lead to this core statement?

## 4. THE PRESS CONFERENCE

by Iris Krampitz

A press conference can increase your profile within a very short time many times over. With the right topic you can get your article into trade magazines, television or in the transregional daily press – if you do it right. At a press conference it is not just about the right topic. You also have to select the time, place and speakers very carefully. In addition, everything from the invitations, equipment check and the catering through to the wrap-up work needs to be organised perfectly.

Of course, all this is more time-consuming and expensive than placing a press release and considerably more can go wrong – in particular if the planning has been insufficient. However, in contrast to a press release, a press conference offers you an excellent opportunity to get to know journalists personally and to convince them about your company, products and your news – all on the premises. The journalists' articles will then be considerably longer than would be the case if you had merely sent them a press release – provided you have supplied them with enough material, answered the journalists' questions competently and included the necessary information and the right photo material in their press kits.

Consider what and whom you want to reach with your press conference. Do you want to raise your profile, present a new product or alter your image? Do you want to address trade journalists or TV and radio stations, local editors or business magazines? How international will the press conference be? The topic, the venue, the time and the speakers will depend on the answers to these questions.

### PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

The topic should be worth the effort because a press conference costs time and money and requires careful organisation. That also applies to the journalists. They have to drive to a certain place and remain there for a certain period, which means more effort for them than editing a PR report.

Remember that journalists will only come to your press conference if you offer exclusive insights, high-profile contacts and interesting information which they would otherwise not obtain. No serious journalist comes for the snacks or gifts. That also applies to press conferences at trade fairs. Even if the journalists have not come to the trade fair especially because of your event, they usually have a lot to do. Remember that your press conference is competing with events and presentations of other companies and everyone will try to get the journalists on their side. Therefore, clarify the date with the trade fair organiser and find out about any competing events.

### Sensational, prominent and significant

A new product or a new reference plant alone does not justify a press conference. It is different matter if the product is a technological innovation which the inventor will be demonstrating live, and if the system is – for example – the biggest solar-power system in thin-film technology or the first commercial off-shore wind-park.

The plant will also be of interest if a mayor or the German Chancellor commissions it at the press of a button or if the Bläck Fööss (a Cologne-based Carneval band) or Robbie Williams will be giving a concert at the commissioning. While the Bläck Fööss and a mayor tend rather to attract local editors, the report about the German Chancellor and Robbie Williams will be reported nationwide and internationally. A discussion on the subject of “Advantages and Disadvantages of Thin-Film Technology”, on the other hand, is only of interest for international trade journalists but not for the local press.

Besides prominent guests, sensational products, unusual milestones and groundbreaking innovations, the press is interested in major orders and IPOs. Presentations and round-table discussions by and with experts who say something new and interesting about current issues, technologies and market developments are also worth reporting. In this way, sales managers or managing directors have the opportunity to report on the market and the future plans of the company. On the other hand, the research director, head of research and development or product manager will introduce the latest developments from the laboratory or the factory. And a strategic partner can say something about planned cooperation.

Let a maximum of five people speak and restrict speaking time to about ten minutes each. Then let the journalists ask questions. And make sure that the individual lectures

each differ in content. Select the speakers carefully – they should not only be experts in their subject but also be media-capable, be comfortable in front of an audience and master the language of your press conference. Alternatively, you may need to book a simultaneous interpreter.

### Find the right venue

The choice of the venue depends on the topic and the target group. Think about which setting is suitable for your press conference and where you can best bring your target group and the speakers together. For example, you will meet international trade journalists at international trade fairs and conferences. Some conference and trade fair organisers make premises available for press conferences. Alternatively, you can invite the press directly to your fair stand where you can present a new product or a demonstration system. Or you can rent a room at a hotel or conference centre close to the trade fair. In all cases, make sure that the venue can be reached quickly and easily and that the journalists can find it easily. If this is not the case, you will need to organise a shuttle service or signpost the way.

For visits to your production plant, invite people to your company headquarters. The groundbreaking for the construction of your new factory should also take place there, as should the opening of your spectacular new plant. For local editors, the route to such venues in such cases is short. Specialist journalists who cannot come should be given a complete press kit and photo material as soon as possible after the event (see below).

### Find the right moment

Choosing the right moment for your press conference will have a considerable influence on its success. When planning times and dates, pay attention to major events and competing events. If Germany is playing in the semi-final, if Prince William is getting married for the second time or if your neighbour at the stand next to yours is introducing a world first, you will certainly need an important topic to still attract journalists.

Generally, the best time is in the late morning. Daily media and internet portals will then be able to publish their report the same day or the next day at the latest. If your press conference takes place during a symposium or trade fair lasting several days, it is best to invite journalists on the first day as experience has shown that most media

representatives are around at that time. Coordinate the date and time with your key speakers and with the most important media representatives.

Some trade fair organisers offer exhibitors the opportunity to hold press conferences before the trade fair begins. The journalists can then report on the innovations in advance or at the same time as the start of the fair. For example, at the IAA Commercial Vehicles trade fair, these press conferences – to which only journalists have access – take place one and two days before the exhibition starts. Intersolar Europe brings journalists and exhibitors together several months before the fair starts.

Remember that a press conference should not last longer than one and a half hours. It will usually begin with a short greeting before the speakers begin their presentations. Afterwards, sufficient time should be allowed for questions. Offer those journalists who want to go into more exclusive detail additional, individual interviews with the speakers and make sure that separate rooms are available for this (see page 92).



#### **EXAMPLES FROM OUR WORK**

##### **WHO SPEAKS WHERE? TO WHOM? WHEN? AND ABOUT WHAT?**

###### **EXAMPLE 1:**

When the Spanish solar power market collapsed in 2008, we organised a press conference for the organiser of the European Photovoltaic Solar Energy Conference and Exhibition (EU PVSEC) in Valencia (see page 48). We chose the subject “Photovoltaic on the Test Bench?”. Experts from research, industry and politics were speakers.

This allowed us to address both international trade magazines together with television stations, local media, news agencies, daily and business newspapers. With an invitation to the opening press conference without a specific theme, there was no question that we would only have reached trade journalists who would have known the organisers and who would have come to the symposium anyway.

**EXAMPLE 2:**

For the press conference of Konarka Technologies, which we organised in Hamburg in 2011, we chose the subject “World Premiere: Organic Solar Cells for Building Integrated Photovoltaics” (see page 45). The event was aimed at international trade journalists and was held in English during an international conference of experts. Besides the strategic partners, experts from Konarka Technologies in the USA and Nuremberg spoke.

Had we wanted to address local media, we could have chosen a subject such as “Solar Power Company Konarka Expands – 100 New Jobs in Nuremberg”. In this case we would have held the press conference with German-speaking speakers at the company headquarters in Nuremberg.

**EXAMPLE 3:**

For the Swiss company Panotron we invited industry journalists to the press conference on “Heating and Power from Roofing Tiles” and to a product presentation by the inventor Martin Bieri at the company’s stand at the Intersolar Europe trade fair in 2010.

If we had wanted to reach the editors in Bern, the capital of Switzerland, we would have organised the inauguration ceremony of the first reference system with clay roofing tiles there. Besides the inventor, we would have invited the Lord Mayor of Bern and the system operator to speak.