



# Media matters

**Julia Kendrick** on building your business through media relationships

For many businesses, getting a positive article in the media is a critical objective. The kudos and credibility that comes alongside a fantastic feature is what sets businesses apart, boosting brand loyalty, trust and ultimately, your bottom line. Achieving this lucrative (yet sometimes elusive) media coverage is the main reason many clinics employ specialist PR support – to gain access to their “little black book” – but there is no reason why you shouldn’t build your own media relationships to help drive business success. However, like any relationship, the quality and value will be determined by the time and effort you put in. All too often, practitioners fall into the trap of only connecting with media when they want something. Just think – how would you react to someone doing this to you? The dating analogy works nicely here – you need to move away from a “Tinder” style of interaction to a nice, committed relationship. So here are five easy steps to building good quality, lasting media relationships that will deliver value for your business for years to come.

## STEP 1: CHECK THEM OUT

It might sound obvious, but if you don’t already have a little black book of media contacts, it’s time you started building one. Start collecting names that crop up through your own media consumption: whether this be trade journalists, consumer beauty writers or bloggers, newspaper commentators or radio presenters. Don’t always be lured in by the big national titles; everyone wants to be in *Vogue* or *The Daily Mail*, but the success rate is alarmingly low and don’t forget the time factor – articles can literally take

months to appear. Just think about who you’re trying to attract into your clinic and where they get their information from – this is your shortcut to finding good media contacts who already have an established trust and rapport with your ideal patients. Google the contact information of all potential connections and build a log, complete with a comments column for you to regularly log your interactions. There are also many great subscription services that allow you to pay for access to a media database and get notifications for journalist requests on specific topics (such as cosmetic surgery, fillers, hair removal etc.) – generally these cost a few hundred pounds per month, so consider whether this is the best use of your budget.

## STEP 2: SECURE THE FIRST DATE

Let’s assume for the moment that you’re focusing your outreach efforts on local journalists, as these already have a vested interest in profiling businesses in their area. Get in touch to tell them what you find interesting about their writing and the stories they cover – reference recent examples from their work to build their trust in you and help make more of an impression. If you are a new clinic, take the opportunity to introduce yourself and ‘set the scene’ for your business: tell them who you are, what you stand for and what you offer the local community in a short, pithy ‘elevator pitch’. The ‘new clinic’ factor and personal approach may well be enough to pique the journalist’s interest and result in a news item! For established clinics, highlight your existing standing in the community, your successes, and your awards. You can reach out by phone, email, social media – the opportunities

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are plentiful! This process will also work for other types of journalists, however bear in mind that you will have to work much harder to communicate your reputation, relevance and value to contacts with no connection to your local area.

### STEP 3: KEEP THE ROMANCE FRESH

Take the opportunity to build and 'piggy back' on relevant stories from your key contacts. Did they get something slightly wrong? Politely offer a correction to help their audiences understand better. Did you agree (or disagree!) with something they have said relating to aesthetics, beauty, trends, or safety? Offer your expert opinion: journalists are always looking for those willing to put their heads above the parapet and be counted. Now is the stage when you can also seed in your own news and features for consideration – having built a foundation of credibility. The more you offer them value, the more your media contacts will trust and appreciate your inputs. Always bear in mind what journalists are looking to offer their readers – they will not promote your business for you, but by giving them interesting news, opinion and additional content you will make their work easier and build your reputation as a valued source. It's highly likely that you won't get a 100% success rate with them always accepting your input or suggestions, so take any pushback gracefully and see it as an opportunity to come back to them with something more relevant or interesting next time.

### STEP 4: MAKE TIME FOR FACE TIME

These days it is all too easy to hide behind emails or the phone: once in a while, make the effort to arrange a meeting in person. Offer to take the journalist out for a coffee so you can hear more about what they're writing about at the moment, or how you might be able to contribute to topics they have got pencilled in. Never underestimate the power of a face-to-face meeting – you will be more memorable and likely to stick in a journalist's mind. Why not invite them to visit your clinic and see what it's all about? But watch out: don't expect to short-cut the relationship building process by skipping steps 1-3, splurging on a nice one-off media lunch or dinner and then expecting blanket coverage. Not only will this damage your credibility, it will be a wasted investment which may work once, but is unlikely to do so again. This is a marathon, not a sprint!

### STEP 5: SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION!

Avoid the 'Tinder' trap – dropping contact with journalists if and when you get what you want. Your goal here is to pave the way for the next opportunity – which won't happen if the journalist feels used! We all crave recognition so if your article or quote is published, make sure you say thank you! Ideally, highlight the article (and your thanks to the journalist) on all your social media platforms so they get a boost of recognition from your followers. When it's not all about you, keep the flame alive by positively acknowledging their other articles which resonated for one reason or another. Connecting little and often is the key to success here – so good luck and get cracking! **AM**



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