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Editor's Note: Thanks to everyone who attended the "New Trends in IT Marketing" teleseminar on August 24, 2005. [The files are available online.](#)

Read this month's interview to find out...

1. The role of PR in B2B marketing efforts.
2. How to reach IT people who actually use your products.
3. How to target the IT market more effectively.
4. Three things you can do to improve your PR efforts.
5. The next PR trend you should be aware of.

Using PR to Reach the IT Market

An Interview with Brian Solis, Founder and President, Future Works

Seemingly overnight the number of avenues to reach prospects has exploded. If you decide to pursue every one it's going to be incredibly costly and the results may or may not justify the expense. Staying one step ahead of the competition requires focus and a complete arsenal of direct and indirect techniques, including public relations.

In this issue Brian Solis, Founder and President of Silicon Valley-based Future Works, shares his tips for using PR to reach the IT market.

Call for Queries

We are now accepting interview queries. If you would like to recommend an expert for consideration, please email Michael Grover at mgrover@cmp.com.

Marketing2IT: How do you define the role of PR in B2B marketing efforts?

Brian Solis: PR is a bridge that takes a company's product, value proposition and solutions to people who are selling to IT or are in IT themselves. It includes everything from traditional press releases and email blasts to getting the Internet involved and going to discussion groups, blogs, forums, and newsletters. The role of PR is much greater than it's ever been.

Whether you're an internal or external PR person, the better you know the market and the products, the more successful you'll be. PR used to be just 'how well do you write?' Now you really need to know what you're talking about. No one's looking for hype. They have real problems; they're looking for solutions. To influence IT you must understand how your technology applies to the market, understand your prospect's pains, and do your homework so that you understand how you can reach a variety of customers.

The TechWeb Top 10 Terms

The current top 10 terms IT pros are searching for.

1. ESD
2. PC
3. Bit
4. VoIP
5. Zotob
6. CPU
7. Network
8. Browser
9. Computer
10. RFID

Using PR to Reach the IT Market

Five Tips from the Interview

1. Understand how your technology applies to the market and understand your prospect's pains.
2. Become a resource - a product expert who happens to know about marketing.
3. Create a value proposition that speaks uniquely to every level of IT from purchaser to deployer.
4. Don't try to be all things to all people.
5. Roll up your sleeves and really understand the technology.

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BtoB Lead Gen Seminar

Boston-area Oct 24-25; San Francisco Nov 17-18. From MarketingSherpa. Excellent content includes "Top Ten Lead Generation Form Mistakes." [Find Out More.](#)

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Recommended 'Reading':

[Sam Whitmore's 'Tech Media This Week'](#) (audio) This podcast offers an inside look at what's new in tech-centered business media. Tune in each week and find out what goes on behind the scenes in tech media.

M2IT: How can our readers reach the IT people who would actually be using their products? Should that message be different than one targeted at the CIO?

Brian: IT is composed of everything from developers, resellers, and actual users to the CIO and CFO. All of those folks go different places for information. There are some newsletters, magazines, etc. that everyone reads. But some are more targeted. Today's good PR needs to examine how we create a value proposition that speaks uniquely at every level so that it's legitimate and not just hype. The CFO is concerned with ROI. The CIO wants to something that helps the company's infrastructure run better and offers scalability. The IT manager wants to know how the product works and what problems it solves.

There are so many different levels within IT, from purchaser to deployer. PR traditionally would send one message to everyone. In this economic climate you have to justify so much more than the volume of press releases. PR is now tied more than ever to sales. You have to figure out the value proposition to each level. Take the core message and link it to each level's pains, what they're looking for and how they want to hear it. Then figure out where all these folks go for information.

M2IT: How can marketers reach the IT market more effectively?

Brian: Marketing to IT is much more sophisticated than marketing to consumers. IT is a highly educated market. They're technology savvy, they've gone through pains from trial and error, and they have pressures from all different parts of the organization. These are real needs. Marketers need to take the time to understand exactly what their needs are and how you can help them implement, manage and grow with your product.

Before you write the release or pick up the phone, figure out whom you're talking to, at what level -- do your homework. You want to avoid a shotgun approach, designing one message and hoping that it applies to everyone. The more homework you do the more of a resource you can become to your market. We become product experts who happen to know about marketing and that gives us so much more credibility.

The indirect way of reaching IT is via press release, where you email the reporter and hope they pick it up and readers see it. Now people who are not traditional reporters, enthusiasts with no formal training, are posting on blogs and discussion boards. The direct way of reaching IT is monitoring the boards and providing proactive assistance. If you understand the product, the marketplace and their pains you can get an incredible word of mouth campaign.

M2IT: What are three things readers can do to improve their PR efforts?

Brian: The most common mistake is to treat IT as a label. IT is so big and so diverse in terms of what the needs are. It exists in so many different shapes and sizes, from non-profits through multi-nationals. It's a mistake to lump them all together. Some blanket marketing to get mind share or build a brand is fine, but you're really trying to reach those who can buy, recommend or refer someone to your company.

First, evaluate the market opportunities for whatever your product is. Figure out who you want to sell to and why would they want to buy it.

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Don't try to be all things to all people. Second, do your homework and figure out who your customers are and how you can help them. Everyone in IT wants to be trusted within his or her organization and you can help him or her out. Put yourself in their place. Third, roll up your sleeves and really understand the technology.

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PR tends to be misunderstood and it can be difficult to prove its value. Occasionally you'll have a CEO say, "How come I'm not on the cover of the Wall Street Journal?" or "How come we're not podcasting?" You need to anticipate this and practice PR for PR. Market your value at every level. Do your homework, tactfully show why it's not the right option, based on the research, and come back with alternatives.

[Complete Contact Details](#)

M2IT: What do you think is the next PR trend our readers should be aware of?

Brian: The number of channels will continue to explode. We'll see both push and pull. The methods through which we get information will be wide and varied. The constant will be that you have to reach your customer both directly and indirectly. The number of untraditional people who are becoming resources to customers will increase -- integrators, technology enthusiasts. As technology becomes more global more people are getting smart about technology. And the more we rely on technology, the more we need help with it. We can help get the message out.

About Brian Solis (brian@future-works.com)

Brian Solis founded FutureWorks Inc. in February 1999 with the goal of bridging the communications gap between rapidly evolving technology and the real world benefits for users. Solis started his marketing career 15 years ago at a small advertising/PR firm in Ventura, California. He has also held a series of executive marketing and public relations positions within both agencies and companies. Prior to founding FutureWorks, Brian was a Director at The Benjamin Group, a Top Ten National Technology PR agency.

About FutureWorks (www.future-works.com)

With offices in Silicon Valley and Orange County, FutureWorks partners with market leaders and emerging companies to increase their visibility and customer-pull, cultivate existing markets and create new opportunities that are necessary to expand their businesses. The company's specialty lies in its ability to understand technology and to deliver real-world solutions to target audiences.
