

The Sources *HotLink*

Tips and Practical Ideas to Get Positive News Coverage

Number Thirty-five

www.hotlink.ca

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How does your Web site rank? Alexa tells you

The Internet ranking service Alexa tracks the usage and reach of millions of Web sites. You can check your own site's rankings by going to www.alexa.com. Just select "Traffic Rankings" and then enter your site's URL into the search window.

You'll see your site's overall rank near the top, and further down the page you'll see a graph tracking your site's usage over the past several months, as well as more detailed statistics for your site's reach compared to other sites, and the average number of pages viewed by visitors to your site.

You can also see which other sites are most commonly visited by visitors to your site, and you can get a list of sites that are linked to yours.

It's a quick way to get a snapshot of your site's profile on the Internet, and what you find can be quite thought-provoking.

If you're interested in having this kind of information available to you as you browse, you can also download the free Alexa toolbar and install it into your browser. Just click on "Alexa Toolbar Download" and follow the steps. Once installed in your browser, the light blue toolbar displays the ranking of each Web site you visit, and shows you which other sites are most often visited by the people who go to that site. It can be a very effective way of finding related sites.

To try it out, once you have the Alexa toolbar installed, navigate to your own Web site. You'll see your site's rank displayed, and, beside it, the sites most frequently visited by visitors to your site. You may be surprised -- or maybe not! Then try going to www.sources.com and navigate to your *Sources* listing (do a name search, or click on the Alphabetical Index). See which sites are most frequent-

ly used by visitors to your *Sources* listing. Almost certainly, they will be quite different, with the visitors to your *Sources* listing heavily weighed in the direction of other journalism-related sites.

Is Alexa just for computer nerds? Not necessarily. If you're putting money into your Internet presence, you want your site to be noticed. Alexa helps you see how you're doing - and that may give you ideas about what you could do better.

Technical note: Alexa compiles its statistics from a pool of millions of Internet users who have the Alexa toolbar installed in their browsers. Each user's site visits are added to the statistical database. As a result, some firewall programs flag Alexa as potential 'spyware' because it submits these statistics to the Alexa database. You may therefore be asked by your firewall program whether you want to allow the Alexa toolbar to access the Internet. For it to work, you'll have to say yes.

HotLink.ca bigger and better

The *HotLink* Web site — www.hotlink.ca — now has more information than ever about publicity and media relations. There are over 150 articles about many different aspects of getting media attention. They are now cross-indexed by topic, author, and title to make it easier to find what you're looking for, and in addition most articles provide link to additional resources on the topic.

And the last 17 issues of *The Sources HotLink* print newsletter are also available in PDF format. If you've mislaid the issue with that favourite article, or if you're a new *Sources* client and have never seen the old issues, they're all there to view or download or print.

And it's all free at
www.hotlink.ca.

The Top Ten Strategies for Appearing on a TV Talk Show

BY DR. ALLAN BONNER

1. Watch it - live, on tape or on the Web
2. Suggest other guests or expert callers
3. Are there visual aids you can bring?
4. Practice messages on your own video camera
5. Field tough angry questions
6. Talk to the host most of the time
7. When addressing callers, look at the phone or camera (careful, this is tricky)
8. Use slower, larger gestures
9. Be interested as well as interesting
10. Don't fight with callers or the host

Dr. Allan Bonner is leading a series of Media Relations Courses being presented by Sources

Why Print and Online?

People sometimes ask why, after 10 years of being on the Internet, are we still producing a print version of *Sources*? One simple answer is that we send copies of *Sources* to people who request it, and thousands of writers and reporters are still requesting print copies. What users tell us is that for some purposes, nothing beats print. And assumptions to the contrary, it's often more convenient and faster to use a book than the Internet. You've told us about Internet connections that are deadly slow, and about ancient, buggy computers that crash whenever they sense you're on a deadline.

Aside from that, we keep hearing that while the *Sources* Web site is great for finding contacts when you're working on a story, the print version of *Sources* is great for finding what you don't know you're looking for. There's nothing like browsing through a book to come up with new story ideas and new angles on existing stories. *Sources* in print brings you the power of serendipity.

And that's why we continue to produce *Sources* in print and online.

SOURCES **HotLink**

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Sources HotLink is free to organizations listed with *Sources*. Subscriptions are \$20/year for those not listed with *Sources*. Subscription orders must be prepaid. Visa or MasterCard accepted.

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Give your Sources media profile an extra boost

You're listed in *Sources* because you want the media to find you when they're working on a story on your issues.

Part of *Sources*' power is its high visibility on the Internet. Your listing in *Sources* announces your expertise not only to the reporters who do a search directly on the *Sources* site, but also to journalists who do a Google search for experts on a given topic — and find your listing through Google's search results. *Sources* is a highly ranked site, so listings in *Sources* show up high in the search engines' results.

Search engines like Google rank cross-indexed and linked information as more important.

You can put this to your advantage by the simple expedient of putting a link on your own Web site pointing to your listing in *Sources*. This link automatically boosts the visibility of your listing — nudges it upwards in the search engine rankings, and makes it that much more likely that journalists will find it.

Sources is the top Web site for Canadian journalists — and it's in the top 2% of all Web sites worldwide. Being listed in *Sources* enables you to put that reach to your advantage.

Putting a link to your *Sources* listing on your own Web site allows you to maximize that advantage even further.

Setting up a link to your listing is easy.

1) Visit the *Sources* site and check the exact URL of your listing. It will be in the form:

<http://www.sources.com/Listings/Subscribers/L1234.htm>. (The three- or four-digit number immediately in front of the .htm is your unique Customer number which identifies your listing.)

2) On the appropriate location on your own site, create a link with appropriate text and with the above URL embedded into the link. For example, if you were going to create a link that said "See our media profile in *Sources*", the link would look like this:

```
<ahref='http://www.sources.com/
Listings/Subscribers/L1234.htm'>
See our media profile in
Sources</a>
```

If you need help, or if you'd like a graphical link rather than a plain-text version, send us an E-mail at sources@sources.ca or phone 416-964-7799.

Top 10 Questions To Ask When a Reporter Calls You

BY DR. ALLAN BONNER

1. Why me?
2. What topic?
3. Who else will be interviewed?
4. Are there reports or documents you want to ask me about?
5. Live or taped?
6. Studio or location?
7. Are there Web clips of your show, column or items?
8. Callers?
9. Panelists?
10. What if they did this item without me (to yourself)

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How Sources[®] magnifies your Internet visibility



Journalists need sources.

The media cover hundreds of stories every day. For each and every story they report, they need knowledgeable sources — experts to interview, spokespeople to quote, guests for their programs.

Where do journalists get their sources?

Their number one source is — *Sources* — www.sources.com.

Try searching for the word “sources” in Google. You get 640,000,000 hits.

That *640 million*.

Out of that huge number of hits, which is Number One?

The very first site listed at the top of the very first page?

Not to keep you in suspense — it’s *Sources* — www.sources.com

You get the same result if you search on Yahoo, MSN, or AltaVista. *Sources* comes up #1 — every single time.

And why is *Sources* #1?

Because Google rates Web sites on the basis of their credibility and on the basis of how many people use them.

And www.sources.com is the most credible and widely used site for journalists looking for sources.

Common misconceptions

The point of achieving the #1 spot is not to boost our egos (though we are proud of it!) but to *enhance our ability to help our customers raise their profile*.

Sometimes we still encounter people who tell us they don’t need *Sources* “because we have our own Web site” or because “everybody knows us”.

The people who say this are almost invariably people whose expertise lies somewhere other than in public relations or marketing.

The professionals know better. You don’t hear successful businesses saying “we don’t need to promote ourselves — people who want to buy something from us can always track us down if they really want to”.

Everybody has ‘heard of’ Coca Cola, but Coca Cola doesn’t stop advertising because ‘everybody knows us’, let alone because ‘we have a Web site’. Coca Cola has been actively promoting itself, every single day, for decades, in hundreds of different ways (including by listing in *Sources*), because their objective is not to be ‘known’ in a general way, but to have people *think of them at the crucial moment*, i.e., when they are thirsty and ready to buy a drink.

The object of a sophisticated media relations or public relations strategy is similar. The point is not to be ‘known’ in a vague and general way, but to get journalists *to call you* when they are doing *a story on your issues*.

Giving reporters what they need

This is the job *Sources* excels at. Reporters and broadcasters need knowledgeable sources to interview and quote when they write stories or line up guests. The *Sources* directory is commonly the first place journalists turn to when they need to find experts and spokespersons, because *Sources* gives them what they most need in their day-to-day work: a wealth

of human contacts offering a wide range of views and expertise, *ready and willing to speak to the media*.

When you are in **Sources**, your media profile, including your expertise and your contact information, is there working for you whenever a reporter turns to **Sources**, as they do thousands of times every week. *More than one thousand journalists a day* use the **Sources** Web site to find the spokespersons they need. Every time they do, each one looks at an average of five or six listings to find the most appropriate contacts to call. In addition, more than 10,000 copies of the print edition of **Sources** are in use on journalists' desks at this very moment. Every time they use **Sources**, in print or online, your media profile is right there, telling them about you.

The main problem that journalists face every day is finding sources. They need to find experts and spokespersons who have expertise about the topic *and* who are willing to speak to the media about it *and* who can be reached quickly and easily.

And that's exactly why **Sources** was created. **Sources** helps journalists find the sources they need — quickly and easily. And by doing so, we help the organizations listed in **Sources** get media coverage — by leading journalists right to you.

The pros use Sources — and they list themselves in Sources

The media relations experts know this. That's why they *use Sources*, that's why they *recommend Sources*, and that's why they *list* themselves in **Sources**.

And in fact one of the strongest testimonials to how well **Sources** works is that the media experts themselves pay to be included in **Sources**.

Organizations like the Canadian Marketing Association, the Canadian Public Relations Society, the Canadian Association of Journalists, the Professional Writers Association of Canada, the Canadian Media Guild, the



Canadian Newspaper Association, Magazines Canada, CCN Matthews, and the Canadian Business Press association, as well as the top business colleges like Queen's School of Business, Schulich School of Business, and the Joseph L. Rotman School of management. Not to mention hundreds of media-savvy businesses and organizations ranging from the Royal Bank to Greenpeace who list themselves in **Sources** — not as a substitute for their other PR efforts, but as a valuable enhancement.

Harnessing the power of the Internet with Sources

Our high Internet profile is so important because it increases **Sources**' effectiveness.

The Internet ranking service Alexa (www.alexa.com) tracks the usage and reach of millions of Web sites — how many people visit each Web site, how often they visit them, and how many pages they look at when they visit them.

The Alexa rankings show that **Sources** is in the **top 2%** of all ranked Web sites worldwide. Out of the roughly seven million Web sites that are important enough to be included in the ranking system, more than 98% are ranked lower than **www.sources.com**, and fewer than 2% are ranked higher.

This is a phenomenal achievement, especially when you consider that **Sources** is a site for professional users, meaning it has an inherently limited potential group of visitors (journalists and researchers), whereas many other sites are for the general public. Bear in mind, too, that **Sources** is a Canadian site, being measured against sites not only in Canada but the U.S., Europe, and Asia.

But the most important point about this is what it means for organizations listed in **Sources**.

It means that having a **Sources** listing — especially when your listing is further enhanced by your free news release postings on the **Sources** Web site and your free **Sources** Calendar entries — *greatly increases your odds of being found by journalists* working on stories related to your areas.

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A typical example

Recently, in the midst of a controversy about the safety of organic produce, the Canadian Organic Growers (COG), a *Sources* listee, took advantage of the privileges of their membership to post a news release about this topic on the *Sources* Web site. They also posted the same news release on their own Web site.

So what happens when you do a Google search, the kind a journalist might do, for the words “organic products regulation Canada”?

First of all, note that you get approximately 4,420,000 hits.

Obviously no journalist is going to wade through page after page of results to find a contact. They’re going to look at what appears on the first page — or, if nothing useful appears there, they might check the second page of results.

On that first page of results, the first few are for government Web sites: not surprisingly, since the government is introducing the new regulations. Most likely, though, the journalist is looking for someone from industry or from consumer groups to comment on the new government regulations.

And what he or she will find on that crucial top page of Google results is the COG news release — *the version of the release posted on the Sources Web site*. The COG’s identical version of the release on their own Web site appears nowhere on either the first or second page of the Google search results. (It does appear halfway down Page 3, but the vast majority of Google users never look further than the first page of results.)

Why does this happen? Why does a Google search put the *Sources* result so near the top, and the COG result, with exactly the same text, so much further down as to render it almost invisible?

It comes out this way because *Sources* is a very highly ranked site, and *Google sorts results according to the ranking of the originating site*. *Sources* has a Google Ranking® that is only slightly below that of major Canadian sites like



the *Toronto Star*, the *Globe and Mail*, CTV, the *Weather Channel*, Canada 411, and the National Library of Canada.

Another important measure, similar to ranking, is “reach”. *Sources* has a “reach” that is about 14 times as great as the COG site. As a result, when a search engine encounters the same information on the COG site and the *Sources* site, it automatically puts the *Sources* result near the top, and the COG result much further down.

Is this a problem for Canadian Organic Growers? Not at all: because they have a *Sources* listing. Their *Sources* listing — with

the accompanying benefits, including the free news release postings — *multiplies* their own reach. It leads reporters to them who otherwise would never know they exist. By being in *Sources* and posting their release on www.sources.com they accomplish their goal. Their news release makes it onto the top page of Google. Journalists see it, click on it, and read it on the *Sources* site. The release states their position on the issue, and it contains the name and phone number of their contact person — plus a link to their *Sources* listing, and a link to their own Web site. They get calls. *Their position gets media coverage.*

This is *Sources* working exactly as it is supposed to work — and benefiting a listee exactly as it should.

And it happens all the time. Our clients continuously use *Sources*’ reach to multiply their own reach.

There is another very important thing to note about this example: In the Google results, there are five industry associations which are listed ahead of the Canadian Organic Growers site in the results, but behind the *Sources* result. In the deadline-driven world of the media, it is extremely likely that one or more of those five associations would have got the reporters’ calls instead of the COG, simply because they were on a higher-up page. Being in *Sources* enabled the COG to leapfrog into a more prominent spot in the results. And that makes all the difference: the difference between getting called and not getting called.

The Benefits of Reach

But what if an organization has a very highly ranked Web site of its own? Does that mean they don't need *Sources*?

Absolutely not. First of all, the magnification of impact still occurs. If your Web site has approximately the same "reach" as *Sources* (and remember, more than 98% don't), being in *Sources* still *doubles* your reach. Nothing at all wrong with that.

Secondly, and even more importantly, our reach is primarily to journalists, not to the *general public*. Even in the unlikely event that an organization's Web site is ranked higher than *Sources*, the fact still remains that it is reaching a general audience of people interested in the organization, while their *Sources* listing will reach *journalists specifically*.

These journalists, by the way, are more often than not totally new to the subject of the story they have been assigned to cover. They don't know who to call — but they know that using *Sources* will find them sources they can call and interview.

So a *Sources* listing is more likely to be found by reporters, and therefore to result in media coverage.

However, because the *Sources* site is so prominent on the Internet, it obviously also attracts a certain percentage of people who aren't journalists. This can be a nice fringe



benefit of a *Sources* listing. We came across a perfect example of this recently when one of our listees, a clinic specializing in cosmetic procedures, called to tell us that their *Sources* listing, which they'd placed solely with the intention of getting media coverage, was also resulting in so many calls from people who wanted to book appointments that

they had to put a phone number in their listing for the people calling to book appointments. All of these people had done an Internet search on these cosmetic procedures, found the clinic's *Sources* listing, and then called for an appointment.

Finally, a word about the *Sources* print directory. Despite the impressive reach of the *Sources* Web site, people keep asking for the print directory. They still like it. They still use it, especially for coming up with story ideas, a priority for the thousands of freelancers out there. Journalism schools regularly request copies of the print version for all their students, even though their students obviously have access to the *Sources* Web site. They tell us there's no substitute for browsing through a printed book. We've even received a special advance order for 1,000 extra copies of the Winter 2007 edition.

All that makes us happy too.

Print or online, it all adds up to this: *Sources works*.

**To include yourself in Sources call 416-964-7799
or fill in the online form at www.sources.com/ListNow.pdf.**

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Don't Forget to Write

BY ULLI DIEMER

Writing letters to the editor is an effective and inexpensive way of getting publicity for your point of view and your organization.

Letters to the editor are published by almost all publications, from newspapers and magazines with a national circulation such as the *Globe and Mail* and *Maclean's*, to community newspapers, special-interest magazines, trade publications and newsletters.

A letter to the editor may not have the glamour of splashier forms of media exposure, but the letters pages are among the most widely read sections of almost all periodicals.

Guidelines for writing a letter to the editor:

- Make it brief. 100 to 150 words should be the maximum, fewer if possible.
- Confine yourself to one subject. Make one point and make it clearly. You or your organization undoubtedly have views about many issues, but in a letter to the editor, you can make only one point effectively.
- To help you focus, begin by summarizing the point you want to make in a single phrase or sentence. Use this to guide you in writing the letter.
- You can and should bring in supporting evidence and arguments, but

they should all be in support of your main point. Don't digress.

- Your main point can be specific or broad e.g. "The proposed land fill site will pollute Otter Creek" or "Because we're overfishing, the world's oceans are becoming deserts."
- Have someone else read or edit your letter before sending it. It's hard to judge one's own writing objectively.
- If you're writing on behalf of an organization, make that clear. Be aware however, that newspapers tend to favour letters from individuals over letters from organizations.
- Avoid personal attacks or disparaging the motives of someone with whom you disagree. Stick to the issue and the facts.
- Send your letter quickly, while the issue is fresh, preferably within 24 hours. Chances of your letter being printed diminish with each passing day.
- If possible, fax your letter, send it by E-mail or deliver it by hand. Sending it by mail may delay its arrival by two or three crucial days.
- Remember to include your name, address, and phone number. Many publications have a policy of contacting the letter writer to confirm that s/he is truly the author.

Sources Media Training

We are very pleased to announce that **Sources** has entered into a strategic partnership with Allan Bonner Communications Inc., North America's #1 media trainers.

Sources clients can now have the same high-quality media preparation used by eight heads of government, three dozen cabinet ministers, approximately 4,000 federal and provincial officials, and blue chip corporations on five continents.

You will remember the course leaders from *The National News*, *Hourglass*, *Metro Morning*, *Ontario Morning*, provincial legislatures, *Morningside* and Canada's largest major daily newspapers. These are exactly the assignment editors, anchors and writers you want to reach. Now, **Sources** ensures they work for you.

When you sign up, you will immediately receive the critically acclaimed book *Media Relations*, by course leader Dr. Allan Bonner, a workbook and pocket guide to get you started. In the training session you'll be interviewed in realistic simulations on the phone and in person. You will receive a tape of your performance for private review.

Courses are on regularly scheduled dates in Toronto throughout the year. We are also able to offer customized courses at times convenient to you at your own location, and across the country. Call 416-964-7799 to register or visit www.sources.com/Courses.htm for more details.

Top Ten Things to do Before a Radio Talk Show

BY DR. ALLAN BONNER

1. Ask why they want you?
2. Other guests?
3. Length of time they need you?
4. Listen to it, live, taped or on the Web
5. Suggest other guests or expert callers
6. Alert potential expert callers who are supportive
7. Practice your messages out loud
8. Field tough, angry questions in rehearsal
9. When you're on — don't debate, deliver your messages
10. Don't interrupt professional interrupters

Dr. Allan Bonner is leading a series of Media Relations Courses being presented by Source

PR industry launches new standard for measurement and ROI

By **MARK HUNTER LAVIGNE, APR**

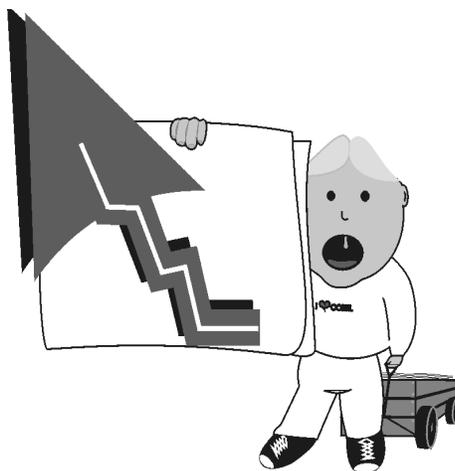
Evaluation of media coverage has always been a problem. Credibility was always at the mercy of the many different paradigms used to calculate reach and quality -- until now.

After four years in development under the leadership of Tracey Bochner, APR, Senior Vice President, APEX Public Relations, her group of senior agency, industry and client side media relations specialists has launched a new standard for measuring editorial coverage and return on investment (ROI) called Media Relations Rating Points (MR2P™) in partnership with the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS).

A marketing-PR industry poll conducted by the CPRS Measurement Committee in 2005 revealed 96 per cent of respondents agreed there was a need for a standard PR measurement. A solid 99 per cent of respondents said that they would use a standardized MR2P system.

“Our members tell us that one of the greatest challenges communications practitioners face today is measuring editorial media coverage,” say Karen Dalton, APR, executive director of CPRS. “Media Relations Rating Points will allow us to use for the first time a consistent, official system of measurement that can compare media relations activities, as well as accurately calculate return on investment to stakeholders. MR2P s will soon become as important in the PR industry as GRP ratings are to the advertising sector.”

The CPRS Measurement Committee, chaired by Bochner, also includes representatives from Porter Novelli, NATIONAL Public Relations, DDB Public Relations, Thornley Fallis, Strategic Objectives, Cara Operations, and the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion. David Jones of Thornley Fallis has led the development of a blog on MRP, which can be found at www.prmeasurement.ca.



To understand how valuable this media relations measurement paradigm is, look at how media relations evaluation has been conducted previously.

Generally, it starts with the audience numbers. Then a multiple is applied to arrive at impressions. Traditionally, multiples for print can range from two times to 10 times, depending on the evaluator. “For broadcast, if you called an outlet and asked different people who work there on both the editorial and sales sides, you would probably get different answers on the ‘reach’ because those numbers depend on how that department reports the numbers which could be total show reach, quarter-hour audience reach or even total station reach,” Bochner observes.

MRP provides consistency. The system uses standardized data on print circulation to get total impressions, and provides BBM numbers for broadcast, which are often inaccessible to PR firms unless they have official advertising agency status or ad agency partners. The cost for the data will be modest (and there is a discount for CPRS members). The measurement template and user guide is free to anyone to download at www.mrpdata.com.

All of the audience data, including Web site audience information, will be provided by News Canada, which won

the RFP. “We’re delighted to be working on this project and believe it is very important to clients to have a common media relations measurement paradigm,” says Ruth Douglas, President, News Canada. The online service will be available in both English and French via www.mrpdata.com for an annual fee of \$725 for a single license with a 10 per cent discount to CPRS members.

What MRP does not do is provide advertising equivalencies, and rightfully so. That form of measurement has at least a few problems. Firstly, editorial cannot be purchased and therefore cannot have an advertising equivalency. As Bochner puts it: “You simply cannot buy media coverage!” Secondly, editorial often has far more third-party word of mouth generation power than does advertising. Bochner adds that “you can’t buy space on the front page, above the fold, so how would you measure that through ad equivalencies? It doesn’t make any sense.”

In a nutshell, the MR2P system provides a score based on standardized criteria that incorporate tone as well. The tone plus the ratings generate an overall percentage score. “In the tests we have done to date with our clients, we consider 75% or above a good campaign,” notes Bochner. The system also works out a cost per contact (this is where the standardized reach data becomes useful), “so our clients can demonstrate ROI to their stakeholders and evaluate a program’s success compared to other campaigns,” says Bochner.

For more information on MR2P, go to www.cprs.ca or contact Tracey Bochner, APR at tbochner@apexpr.com.

Mark LaVigne, APR, is an elected member of the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) National Board and is Past President CPRS (Toronto). He runs a media relations and media coaching firm based in Aurora, Ontario where he can be reached at (905) 841-2017 or mark.lavigne@sympati-co.ca.