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Eight Tips for Successful Analyst Briefings

By: Vicki LaBrosse

For technology firms, analyst briefings are an important part of the communications, public relations and analyst relations strategy. Keeping the analysts that advise your customers up to date on your company and products is essential. A surprising number of startups and even well-established firms are unfamiliar with the briefing process. Analysts are influential and having a successful briefing is key. Here are some tips to make the most out of your analyst briefings.

Know the analyst firm

There are now hundreds of analyst firms of all sizes, and just as you need to know the analyst before the briefing, it is important to know the analyst firm. Companies should find out what the analyst firm does to generate revenue. Many only do work for vendors. Others sell research reports. Analysts often serve specific vertical industry segments. Learn about and be aware of the variances of the analyst groups, and do not discount smaller firms.

Identify the right analyst

You can learn about most analysts by looking at their biography on the analyst firm's website and reading their reports to determine what areas they cover. Analysts sometimes are pulled into briefings when they do not belong. It could be because your PR people have contacted the analyst group's schedulers to line up appointments without doing their homework first. Reaching out randomly shows a lack of preparation. Everyone's time is too valuable to have the wrong analysts on the call when a quick check can avoid a problem.

Go through the proper channels

Do not send a canned email directly to an analyst to request a briefing. Most analyst firms have briefing request forms designed to capture the information they need to determine if they will accept a briefing. The forms then alert all analysts and researchers to the opportunity, so one briefing (if accepted) potentially goes much further inside the firm. It also streamlines the scheduling process on the analysts' side.

Choose the right people from your company

Once you know the analyst and firm, it is important to choose the right people from your company for the briefing. When deciding which people to have on a call, consider the analyst's level of technical expertise, client industry and coverage areas. Select a company representative who can speak clearly and concisely about the subject matter you wish to discuss. Bringing too many company representatives in on the briefing is not necessary and can be counterproductive. Limit the group to two or three at the most, and offer follow-up communications with others should an analyst ask something no one on the call can answer.

Prepare the analyst before the briefing

A briefing always goes better when the analyst has time before the call to learn about the company and products. Provide the analyst with names, titles and email addresses of those to be included on the call — in advance. This saves a ton of time on intros and allows the analyst to prepare better, more focused questions. Also share any slide deck, presentation materials, agenda and online meeting URL at least a



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few days in advance and not right before a briefing. If the first discussion the analyst has with your company lacks prior information exchanges, the call is more awkward, more time goes toward background discussion, and the analyst is less likely to be prepared to add much value.

Follow an agenda

During your briefing, focus on conveying a message. Too many PowerPoint slides leave the analyst confused and not completely sure what is important. The best briefings supplement the presenters, not vice versa. Only include essential slides, and where possible, work in product screens or short demos. Analysts want to see the product in action, but keep demonstrations under control. Also, respect the analyst's time. Be locked, loaded and ready to go when your briefing is due to begin. Analysts often schedule calls back to back. Therefore, it is essential to plan for only the amount of time needed and abide by the schedule by starting and ending on time. Make sure your technology works! Don't spend a lot of time at the beginning of the briefing focusing on information available on your website. Good analysts have already done their homework and know this. Don't bury the lead and wait until the end of the call to reveal a new and compelling idea.

A briefing is not a speech, it's a conversation

While the purpose of a briefing is for you to tell analysts about your company and products, good analysts have something to say and deserve a listen. Some executives get on a roll and cannot be stopped until they've delivered a message from beginning to end. Most often, they're working from a deck and a bit nervous, which they try to cover by being overly verbose. A briefing is a presentation, but it's also a conversation. The analyst has questions, as well as a research agenda. Throughout the briefing, make an effort to ask the analyst if there are any questions or if what you are discussing relates to any research projects the analyst is working on. Analysts make their living as strategic, research-based advisors. They are very well connected and informed about industry sectors, and good analysts will try to add value on their calls whether or not the vendor is a paying client. Through listening, you can determine the potential analyst value that might result from a more extensive relationship.

Follow up with the analyst

You don't want to spend valuable time and resources preparing for a briefing and then do nothing after the call. Build the relationship by keeping analysts aware of news and asking for their opinions or ideas. It is not true that analysts will only give ideas to paying clients. Most analysts are willing to have meaningful discussions with nonpaying vendors after a briefing. While the experience is fresh, you should communicate with the analyst to help improve the connection—which is the overall objective of the briefing in the first place.

Analysts represent potential advocates who know what the market's doing, who's buying and how your company's brand fits into the overall equation. These influencers not only provide coverage and ensure inclusion in the purchasing conversation, but also competitive intelligence and market insights. By maintaining good relationships with industry analysts, you can ultimately garner more attention from the media, close more sales deals and gain a leg up on your competitors.



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Vicki LaBrosse is director of global public relations at Edge Marketing, Inc. Leveraging more than 18 years of experience working in professional services industries, LaBrosse works with clients to develop and execute comprehensive PR and marketing strategies that will help grow their business.