

Secure brilliant PR at The Bett Show

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Introduction

The Bett Show is the biggest education technology show in the UK and one of the largest in the world. More than 40,000 people visit the show and hundreds of companies, organisations and governments exhibit each year.

Whether your priority is generating new leads, closing sales, or building new partnerships, the big challenge at Bett is getting the right people to visit your stand.

Carefully targeted PR can help you to reach the right people, promote what you're doing, demonstrate your expertise and grow your reach. And we can achieve this at a fraction of the cost of traditional marketing.

More than 900 exhibitors will be vying for the attention of journalists in the run up and during Bett. The sooner you start to plan your Bett PR campaign the better. Good stories don't grow on trees – it takes time to plan and develop fantastic PR.

What this guide covers

- Planning and strategy
- How to create a newsworthy story
- Case studies, experts, celebrities and influencers
- Securing coverage

Planning and strategy

Identify your target audience

To get the right people talking about you, it's essential to identify who you want to reach and what you want to tell them. Are they secondary teachers, primary head teachers, or ICT coordinators? Be clear who you want to target.

Research your media list

There are thousands of media outlets, so do your research to understand your target audience. For example, many people think TES is the key publication in education PR but it depends who you want to reach.

Talk to your existing customers and find out what they read, watch, and engage with when they are in 'work mode'. Ask them about:

- Traditional media (TV, radio, print) - national, regional and local
- Education sector media – newspapers, magazines, websites and podcasts
- Social media - education blogs, Tweeteters, Instagrammers, and YouTubers

Identify what is relevant to your audience and brand

PR isn't simply about the amount of coverage you secure. It has to be relevant to your audience and connect clearly with what you do. How do you want your target audience to react? What do you want them to think about your brand? What you want them to tell others?

How to create a newsworthy story

Journalists and bloggers need to have something that's new, timely and relevant to write about. How can you create something that will grab their attention?

- Launch a new product or service
- Publish a research paper
- Launch some free teacher resources
- Announce a new partnership or deal
- Run talks or seminars on your stand
- Secure a slot as a Bett speaker
- Involve teachers, children or celebrities on your stand

From a PR perspective, think about what is most newsworthy, will appeal to the audience, and help to set you apart.

Case studies, experts, and celebrities/influencers

As humans, the opinions of our friends, family and work colleagues say influences us a great deal. It's the same with the opinions of people we admire – celebrities, sports people, politicians, experts, etc. This is important to remember, when you're thinking about how best to communicate your message in PR. Think about who is most likely to engage and persuade your target audience and how they can tell your story.

- **Case studies** - Journalists are always keen to speak to the people using your product or service. Case studies bring a story to life and make it easier for others to relate to your news. Make sure you have at least one customer (ideally more) who is happy to speak about how your product or service makes a difference.
- **Experts** - Journalists are also interested to hear from experts and others from the wider world. These are often academics but could be a senior expert from industry, or a political figure who has a known interest in the area. They may be connected to your organisation as an adviser or board member, but they should have an independent profile.

- **Celebrities and influencers** - Celebrities and influencers can be a very effective way of securing coverage and increasing mainstream media interest in your story. If you are lucky to already have someone involved in your project or product, book their time early in advance and work with them or their agent to ensure there is a clear understanding about how they will be involved, e.g. quotes, number of interviews, mentions on social media, photo call, etc.
- **CEOs and founders** - CEOs, founders, Directors of Education and others from your organisation are also important spokespeople. Make sure the person you select to represent the organisation is media trained, can communicate in simple language, and has an engaging manner which will strike a chord with your target audience.

Securing coverage

Once you have your news story and have organised case studies, experts and celebrities/influencers, you're ready to secure some coverage.

Start by creating a target media list and think about what might interest them. There are lots of types of coverage, so be creative with your story and think about how it can fit into a range of media content:

- News
- Features
- Interviews
- Opinion
- First person (education sector media love articles written by teachers)
- Reviews
- How to's

Pitching your story

It is worthwhile preparing a press release about your news, but pitching a story to a journalist is not about simply emailing them your press release. Instead send a tailored email which includes:

- A clear subject line which summarises your story
- A first sentence that summarises the top line of your pitch
- A second paragraph which provides more detail
- A third paragraph which explains who you can offer for interview

Following up your pitch

If you don't hear anything, follow up by email or phone. If you are emailing, forward your initial email and add a quick sentence asking if they've had a chance to take a look yet. If you don't get a response it is likely that they are not interested in the story. Generally, this is because it just isn't right for them, but it can also be that your timing was wrong, the subject line didn't stand out, or they simply missed it amongst their other emails.

What to do when a journalist responds

When you get a response from a journalist they will generally want more information and want to speak to one of your spokespeople, case studies, experts, etc. Be prepared! Make sure you know when your case studies, experts, company spokespeople are available.

Make sure you get the journalist's name and mobile and check their deadline.

Timing your PR

There are three main times to secure coverage for Bett. Be organised and take advantage of them all.

1. Bett preview publications – September to end of November

In the run up to Bett, many education publications produce previews featuring highlights of what's happening at the event. These are published in December and January. Editors start to plan these in September and most copy is finalised by mid November.

Competition to be featured is fierce, so make contact early, so you know the deadline dates and have a sense of what journalists want.

Magazines (e.g. Teach Secondary or Headteacher Update) have longer lead times than weekly/daily print or broadcast (TV and radio) so start speaking to them in early October to make sure they know about your story in time to publish it in January editions.

2. Post Christmas sell in

Bett is very soon after Christmas, so there are only about two weeks to speak to journalists about your story. We recommend thinking seriously about launching your story in the run up to Bett. There is less competition from other exhibitors pitching their stories, and you can engage your target audience when they're most likely to be planning their visit to the event.

As well as pitching your story, find out if journalists are planning on visiting Bett and send them an invitation to any events you might be running.

3. During Bett

After all the planning, you might feel you can just relax once the show starts but there are still opportunities for spreading the word.

- Brief the show organisers about what you are doing that's newsworthy and find out about broadcast media attending on day one
- Do things that draw attention and provide good film or photo opportunities at your stand, e.g. hands on demos, school children, eye-catching guest visitors, VIPs, etc.
- Get involved with the fringe events taking place: TeachMeet, panels, etc.
- Be in touch with the journalists that are attending and meet them (tip: keep an eye on their Twitter streams, they may well Tweet when they are at Bett and you can reach out to them)
- Wifi can be patchy at Bett, so pre-plan social media posts and ensure someone is at the office to share posts if you struggle with images or video
- Be opportunistic and say hello if you spot a journalist or blogger
- Team up with other exhibitors who complement what you're doing and agree to cross promote each other on your stands and social media channels, etc.

Finally....

Good luck with Bett 2018! There are plenty more ways that we can help you to make the most of the event. Get in touch and let us help you plan and deliver a campaign that will get your voice heard.

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