



SPOTLIGHT ON HR TECH: 5 Things Reporters Want From You Today

The HR tech industry is on fire. Human resources has found its place at the C-suite table as companies seek to engage and retain their most important assets – employees – and obtain greater insight into how people impact the business. HR tech companies have seized on this opportunity to provide human resource executives with the best possible data analytics, engagement tools and intelligence, but they don't always have success breaking into the media.

To get to the bottom of what HR reporters really want to cover and how companies can help craft these stories, we asked our team of HR tech media specialists as well as some of the top reporters in the industry what works, what doesn't, and what companies need to know when pitching the media.

1. Understand How Reporters Choose Their Stories

If you have a truly 'newsworthy' story, publications will cover it as long as it is applicable to their audience. However, most organizations are not 'breaking news' on a daily basis. Therefore, they need to be creative when it comes to developing story lines and inserting themselves into trends and topics that reporters are most interested in at the moment.

Like the rest of us, reporters scour the news to find the most important story of the day, and then interpret it for their readership or industry. They also use social media to find out what their audience is talking about, as well as look at their own website analytics to see what people are searching for and reading, and then build coverage based on that.

TAKEAWAY



Keep a close eye on what's trending, and build a story for your company around that. We refer to this as Trend Intervention/Story Hijacking. For Trend Intervention, take a long tail topic like "employee engagement" and bring new life to it with proprietary data or a new way of measuring it. For Story Hijacking, jump on breaking news – like a diversity report coming out of a Silicon Valley company – and offer a counter opinion or a comment on what it means to the industry. Reporters told us they might not even know about a breaking story until a PR person tells them, or in other cases they're scrambling for sources, so being prepared to Story Hijack is a great media strategy.

2. Be Aware of Current Trending Topics for HR Tech



Publications stay relevant by reporting on trending news or new findings. Surprising, shocking or counter-intuitive data will generally pique a reporter's interest. One reporter said, "If you had a study that said, '98% of people download work content from their unsecured mobile phones—without telling HR,' that's something I would cover".

There are some primary themes of interest to HR tech reporters this year, as well as buzzwords they're sick of hearing about.

DO talk about:

-  Cybersecurity and analytics
-  Talent management
-  Changing overtime regulations
-  The evolution of performance management

DON'T talk about (unless you have something really new to add):

-  Customer experience management
-  Human capital management

TAKEAWAY

Topics that may seem 'overdone' may actually still have a shelf life, as long as you have a new angle to share. For example, the topic "employee engagement" has been written about ad nauseam, but reporters say that sharing new research about the lack or increase of employee engagement, or how technology is alleviating that concern, would make the topic worth covering since HR executives are still struggling with this key objective.





3. Gather Your Data: Proprietary, Commissioned or Aggregated

It's hard to argue with facts and figures. Arming your media relations initiatives with strong data is one of the best ways to garner media coverage. If your company has proprietary data (perhaps as a result of your technology, customers or operations) that's the best way to ensure your company is featured in the news cycle. If you don't have that type of data, you can always commission a study with a third party. Often, a survey or research project in collaboration with an outside vendor can have more credibility and strength if the number of respondents is larger or the third-party is well respected. If you're on a tight budget, consider aggregated data. You can gather existing data from previously published surveys or research (sourcing appropriately) and combine it, or present it in a new way. There may also be some obscure data from a public source that bolsters your case or confirms your story that previously went unnoticed by the media.

"We cover trends. We cover innovation. We cover new studies that may have implications for HR professionals that will impact the way they do their jobs and how they help managers and companies better manage employees."

– SHRM

HR Tech reporters are currently looking for data on topics like:

-  Cybersecurity issues and how best to protect the enterprise
-  HR and analytics
-  The new overtime rule and how that may impact the workplace
-  Effectively using technology to implement benefits

"We're looking for good story ideas, and access to sources who will help us tell those stories well."

– eWeek

TAKEAWAY

Reporters are interested in any kind of data that may interest HR professionals, specifically related to technological innovations, as long as it's statistically significant. However, they will also consider qualitative data (research not in numerical form, such as personal accounts, open-ended questionnaires, unstructured interviews and observations) if you have a small but important sample. Leveraging the three types of data - proprietary, commissioned or aggregate - will strengthen your story and enhance your profile as a credible source.

4. Provide Expert Sources to the Media

Reporters are looking for subject matter experts in their fields – people who can provide specific details about the topic. They are not interested in speaking with vendors who are trying to sell things to their readers, unless they have some really good research or a point of view that may be eye opening or beneficial to HR professionals. They also love when people can bullet point advice for their audience; for example, "here are 5 things HR professionals can do now to make sure their employees don't fall for phishing attempts that could lead to a data breach at your company."

"Read my stories before you pitch me."

– Fortune

TAKEAWAY

If you're a vendor, try to use a business executive (vs. a marketing or sales person) as your spokesperson – and make sure to provide valuable insights rather than a pitch for your product or service. Try to build the expert's resume by authoring articles, actively participating in industry forums and speaking at relevant conferences or events. Also train your expert to share clear, tangible and easy to understand advice or strong opinions (even if they are polarizing) rather than vague commentary.

5. Know the Outlet You are Pitching

Read the publication, watch the show and listen to the channel. Knowing the reporter you are pitching and the outlet they work for is critically important. Investing the time to read the articles they write, learn about their audience, get a sense of what they cover – who the reporters really are – and what might interest their readers, is a key component of media relations. And if you're ever in doubt of who covers what, call and ask the editorial department.

"Pitch your stories to the RIGHT editor. We all sit next to each other. It's not an effective use of our time or yours to send press releases to a bunch of people here. Sending it to the right one first saves you and us time."

– SHRM

TAKEAWAY

Only send pitches to the reporters who are responsible for that coverage area. Newsrooms change often, with reporters getting promoted, leaving the publication or changing beats. You want to make sure you're sending it to the right person the first time.



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