



Telling the Investment Story – Taking an Integrated Approach to Build Visibility and Reach a Wider Audience

Written by: Linda Pazin, New York Stock Exchange

The investor relations profession has come a long way in recent years. A vital resource for senior management and boards alike, there's no doubt many companies now see IR as integral to communicating a company's business strategies and contributing to overall corporate perceptions and reputation. Business results and the efforts of an IR team's work leads to a company's shareholder value.

So, it's no wonder that an increasing number of professionals from fields such as investment management, equity research, corporate finance and legal, are turning to IR as a career choice. I've seen this firsthand during visits to many NYSE client companies in the western region – and I can confirm that this trend is a great positive for our industry. A more diverse group of talented professionals entering our field only strengthens our profession and the reputation that it has among management teams.

We all know that IROs naturally play a pivotal role in developing and telling the investment story. So, being a good communicator is a plus, but so is the ability to bring insights from related fields. For instance, it's arguable that few people have better experience in dealing with institutional investors than seasoned research analysts, while securities lawyers and finance professionals may bring a heightened sensitivity to disclosure, accounting and governance issues.

At its core, IR is all about delivering a compelling, yet realistic investment proposition that is aligned with shareholder interests and supported by a set of relevant metrics. Quarterly financial reporting, investor conferences and non-deal roadshows form the nucleus of the platform for delivering the story. All of these endeavors involve direct contact with existing and prospective investors. Pressing the flesh, as they say, is always highly effective in educating and forming working relationships with shareholders.

However, sometimes IROs – particularly those who come to the profession from other fields – miss out on utilizing a broader set of communications tools to tell the investment story. There is a risk of relying too much on the all-important one-on-one meeting circuit as a communications conduit. Other channels that should be considered for incorporating and delivering IR messaging more broadly include:

- Business and financial media interviews,
- Speaking engagements at trade and community events,
- Corporate messaging platforms, including the web-site and social media,
- New product, customer or service announcements,
- Integrated CSR programs, and
- Employee communications.

Each of these communications platforms can play an integral role in amplifying a company's investment story. They can aid in fostering positive and well-informed impressions among a wide group of current and potential shareholders, among other important constituents.

Those reading this paper whose companies are listed on the New York Stock Exchange will be familiar with NYSE Services. At its core, NYSE Services offer best-in-class tools for market data and analytics, communications, investor surveillance, targeting and reporting, corporate governance and compliance services, IR website hosting services and much more. In addition, NYSE offers opportunities to help IR departments raise visibility and extend their messaging among key stakeholders through media interviews, social media and advertising campaigns.

In order to leverage any or all of the communications channels listed above, IROs should consider taking a more holistic or integrated approach to the communications process. Just as they bring experience from fields such as legal and accounting to the fold, they also need to remain open to learning more about public relations, product marketing/branding and corporate communications. It all starts by fostering a positive dialogue internally among these departments.

Companies that build the most engaging and respected IR programs often do a commensurately good job in integrating select investment themes with a company's broader messaging initiatives. Consider that factors important to investors, such as market share, financial strength, profitability, innovation, board diversity and consistent growth, are also attractive to many other corporate constituents.

As more and more professionals from different fields enter the IR profession, it will be important for them to develop a broader sense of the overall corporate communications process and the tools available to them. This approach will support consistency of messaging, open up more avenues to tell the investment story and provide a more effective platform to reach investors.

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About the Author



Linda Pazin is Regional Head - West Coast, for the New York Stock Exchange. Linda brings nearly 20 years of executive experience in investor relations, corporate communications and public relations at both high-growth start-ups and Fortune 500 companies. Working directly with senior management teams in the western region, she provides counsel on financial communications issues, investor relations, capital markets strategy, and corporate governance best practices. Linda is speaker and active member of the National Investor Relations Institute, Financial Executives International, International Association of Business Communicators, VP Communications Forum and Public Relations Society of America.

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