



MANTLEPIECE PR

PR TIPS SERIES (1)

Recruiting Media Case Studies by Kate Zadah, Founder of Mantelpiece PR

A picture is worth a thousand words. The impact of a dramatic pair of 'before' and 'after' images can be enormous and the effect on your business can be nothing short of miraculous! Not only can case study images clearly illustrate the efficacy of the product or treatment you are offering to your customers directly, but such materials can also help you reach out to a potentially wider audience through PR, advertising and marketing. The visual representation of the results that a patient can expect is likely to make the difference between a general enquiry and an appointment booking or product sale leading to...revenue!

A clinic we work with here at Mantelpiece PR has turned promoting case studies to customers into an art. With clear, well-presented anonymous case studies in their waiting room for all to see, this clinic knows exactly what it takes to motivate clients to book-in. Remember too that a journalist is much more likely to feature your story if it carries a human interest angle – a case study and a suitable image. From a PR perspective, case studies are vital to the success of a media campaign; after all, what appeal has a story without visible proof, or some sort of illustration? As a society we are very responsive to images and chances are that isn't set to change anytime soon.

Often you will be too busy to recruit your own case studies and organise your own photography but all is not lost; if your suppliers don't have a bank of case studies and imagery ready for use on your website, in your waiting room, and for marketing and PR purposes then get your PR team on the case!

It's a good idea to set yourself apart from the crowd with your own, exclusive stories and imagery to use. After all, you don't want to spend all your time and effort promoting generic case studies in place of your own. Evolve to illustrate the results that *your* clinic and *your* products get specifically to give you a unique selling point and generate patient interest. To give you a steer on how to do this have a read over some of these tips...

Who Makes A Good Case?

When considering who would make a suitable case study, have your customer base firmly in mind in terms of the age group, work and family commitments, affluence, geographical spread plus their goals and expectations and pick a case study that fits with this criteria. If the bulk of your clients are in their forties and fifties and interested in non-invasive anti-ageing techniques then a facelift case in her sixties shouldn't take pride of place on your waiting room wall.

Without question, your message has to fit your audience's agenda. A good story is always useful and if you suspect some of your patients or customers have something really interesting to share, perhaps create the opportunity for them to speak out by planting an 'Inspiring Stories' box in your waiting room or dedicating a page of your website to feedback and stories for people to post their

stories (obviously an incentive is useful here). Those that genuinely interest you are likely to interest others so make contact and see if he or she is likely to want to talk publicly. Also, train your staff to recognise an inspiring, interesting story when they hear one and then of course, what to do if they find a gem.

The Recruitment Process

Incentives are of course a very important when it comes to recruiting case studies. You will find that a small percentage of people are so happy with their treatment they become almost evangelical about it and want to share their happiness with the world. Others will be more likely to want to shy away from the media gaze and a proportion will be keen to benefit from the support they can offer..

Case study payment is a bit of a grey area but the general rule is that if you are not sure if what you are offering is ethically sound or not, don't go ahead, check it out first. The good news is that some media publications will pay for case studies so you don't need to get involved in money changing hands at all. That transaction can happen between media publication and case study direct.

Also, be advised that of the case studies you manage to take through the process from the initial chat, through to photography and permission granting, no less than 85% will fall at the very last hurdle and usually it happens just as you have secured an interview with a journalist. At this point you can do nothing but accept the patient's wish to decline and move on. Do not be forceful!

Anybody that agrees to have their story and images used in PR and marketing activities must sign a 'release form'. If you don't already have one drawn-up by your legal team then you may want to ask your PR team if they have a standard format they can show you to help build your own. Ensure that the form is clear and easy to understand so any prospective case studies are fully aware of what they are signing. The clearer you are about your intentions from the word go, the better.

A Note on Taking Pictures

Think about the images you have for your case study, do they show an obvious and clear difference post-treatment and are the before and after pictures reliable? To ensure your images can be used by both journals and consumer media you will need to ensure that they are in no way enhanced and are taken in good light at exactly the same angle for the before and after.

Keep the location for the images the same so the background is consistent and if there is any clothing featured ensure it is exactly the same in both shots to be sure that at a glance it is obvious that this is the same person.

Refrain from plastering the case study in makeup to enhance the 'after' shot – this is also a form of enhancement. If you are unsure how to take suitable case study images then ask your PR team for advice. Some companies will even offer courses to help teach you to shoot the best possible images.

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If you have any questions or need any advise please do not hesitate to contact Mantelpiece PR on 02077884006 or email pressoffice@mantelpiecepr.com