

Going Direct: A Case Study

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Organizations typically hire a public relations firm to obtain media coverage. In the case of the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, our client was getting too much of the wrong kind.

After several high-profile leadership changes, public officials began questioning everything about the organization, from strategy to staffing. Whenever LVEDC defended its actions, the media contacted its detractors for rebuttal. The negative stories threatened to erode the organization's public image, as well as its financial support.

When traditional media relations didn't work, we created profiles of businesses that benefited from LVEDC support and communicated them directly to key stakeholders, through an electronic newsletter and other channels.

According to Margaret McConnell, marketing manager at LVEDC, the results have been impressive, "The newsletter has a 40-45% open/read rate, which is exceptional compared to the industry standard of 5-10%." The piece that garners the most readers is a letter from the CEO. The second-most-read article is the profile.

For each article, we discuss why the company relocated to the region and finish with how LVEDC has helped them grow their business. In between, we sandwich statistics quantifying the company's impact on the region. The profiles are then circulated through additional channels, including digital (websites, blogs and online ads), electronic (public TV) and traditional (annual report, investor materials, posters, banners and print ads).

As PR professionals we do not advocate bypassing the media, but direct communication can assure our clients' side of the story reaches the people who count . . . and ultimately rebalance public perception.