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Tekrati FAQ: Working with an Analyst Relations Consultant

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Industry analyst relations consultants help vendors build, maintain and leverage industry analyst relationships.

This Tekrati FAQ introduces the basics of working with an industry analyst relations consultant. It focuses exclusively on high tech industry analysts.

Why are industry analysts important to high tech vendors?

High tech vendors value the industry analysts due to their influence among customers, media and partners. Vendors are equally dependent on analysts for their expertise in the high tech market.

Analyst opinions drive IT business decisions on technology purchases, service contracts and adoption of standards and architectures.

Analyst opinions are broadcast directly to IT decision makers via their subscription services, usually called “research and advisory services”. In addition, analyst opinions are disseminated throughout the industry and business world by journalists, investors and competitors. In addition, vendors can contract with analysts to write whitepapers or “instant analysis” briefs, and then distribute these documents to customers and prospects.

Influence: Industry analysts can validate, challenge or ignore a vendor’s strategies and claims when talking to clients or journalists. The industry analysts routinely advise IT decision-makers on everything from short-listing brandnames or specific products to negotiating pricing and terms.

CIOs who do not purchase analyst advisory services ascertain their opinions on brandnames or specific products and services via quotes in business and trade journals, such as ComputerWorld, or by reading reports provided by competitors.

Expertise: Vendors rely on industry analysts for market intelligence and consulting. Vendors purchase analyst research and advisory services to obtain data points such as market growth, market requirements, market trends and competitor strategies.

Vendors can also purchase consulting from the analysts. The industry analysts are a vital component of vendor product plans, message development and test, market sizing, channel strategy and partnering strategy.

Which industry analysts have the most influence?

Most likely, you're already familiar with the firms that have the greatest general influence among IT decision makers and media worldwide:

- Aberdeen Group

- AMR
- Forrester Research / Giga Information Group
- Gartner, Inc., including Dataquest, Inc.
- IDC
- META Group
- Yankee Group

Worldwide, more than 400 industry analyst firms influence specific aspects of high tech business. Some wield influence in a technology area, such as imaging or storage; others are influential in a geographic region.

The analyst relations professional draws from these firms to support specific business plans and initiatives.

How do analyst relations professionals communicate with the industry analysts?

The analyst relations professional uses a rich mix of outreach tactics, including telephone, email alerts, email newsletters, websites, telephone briefings, face-to-face meetings, ongoing relationship programs, participating at analyst conferences and involving analysts as consultants during the marketing and business planning process.

Typically, analyst relations managers also offer a central point for accepting inquiries from analysts looking for data to include in their research studies and client consultations.

Some vendors also centralize the purchasing and management of research services contracts under their analyst relations department. This enables analyst relations professionals to build stronger and more consistent relationships with target analysts and firms.

How do we know what the industry analysts are saying?

Most industry analysts publish their opinions and research findings. You can find their opinions in:

- Quotes in on-line and printed IT magazines
- Tradeshow presentations
- Research reports, press releases and newsletters published by analyst firms
- Conferences hosted by an analyst firm
- Teleconferences hosted by an analyst firm
- Excerpts and quotes in competitor marketing materials
- Feedback from customers, prospects and partners

The analyst relations professional knows or can predict the leading analyst opinions on a topic ahead of time. This is because the analyst relations professional focuses on building trusted relationships with the analysts. Through these relationships, the analyst

relations professional works to manage analyst perceptions about a vendor and its market segment.

The analyst relations professional evaluates analyst opinions by tracking and analyzing draft and published analyst research, presentations, media quotes and discussion comments.

How do analyst relations professionals start building analyst relationships for a new client?

Typically, an analyst relations professional starts by setting up a review of your business and marketing plans. The relations manager then identifies the analysts that can provide the most value to you as well as the best windows of opportunity for initiating relations. This results from an analysis of your target market, business and influence objectives, solution characteristics, media plan, and your available resources including budget, speakers and collateral.

The relations manager will coach you on:

- backgrounds, hot buttons and dispositions of the target analysts
- tuning your messages for analysts
- preparing your materials for analysts
- addressing questions and issues analysts are likely to raise

The relations manager also handles logistics, follow-up actions and on-going relations management. Significant analyst relations work goes into supporting analyst research needs.

What do industry analysts expect from vendor spokespeople?

Analysts expect vendor spokespeople to demonstrate:

- insight on the state of the industry or market segment, as it relates to the discussion topic
- how the discussion topic relates to and supports the vendor's corporate strategy and business objectives
- leadership thinking on related market requirements, solutions and trends
- knowledge of target customers, allies and competitors
- value propositions
- differentiators
- service and support strategy
- go-to-market strategy

Proof points are essential. This includes customer and partner references.

Analysts also expect the highest level of professional behavior from vendor spokespeople. Be prompt. Be attentive. Be responsive. Show respect for the analyst's

expertise. Be willing to listen, discuss and debate. Follow through on actions you accept.

What can vendor spokespeople expect from industry analysts?

Expect a reciprocal exchange of information and viewpoints. Industry analysts can provide insights and observations on:

- the state of the industry or market segment under discussion
- emerging issues and trends
- competitors
- perspectives from their client discussions

Normally, analysts will share their immediate assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the material you are presenting.

Once a good relationship is established, most analysts act as press references. They may also provide quotes for marketing materials. They may document the news in their publications, such as research reports, conference presentations or news analysis briefs.

Long-term, the resulting share of mind translates into future invitations to participate in upcoming research, positive inclusion of the vendor in their client consultations, and easier access.

Describe a typical industry analyst briefing.

The analyst relations professional schedules the briefing several weeks prior to the meeting, and helps you tune messaging and materials for each firm as needed.

Conference calls are the preferred meeting venue. Most meetings are dedicated to one firm and last less than an hour. The format is interactive and conversational.

The analyst relations professional introduces participants and reviews the agenda. You present key points including market assumptions, corporate strategy context, milestones, future plans and reference accounts. The level of technical detail varies by topic and analyst. Throughout your presentation, the analyst poses questions and provides observations. The analyst then offers his or her assessment of your solution. This two-way dialogue forms the foundation for your future relationship with this analyst.

The analyst relations professional reviews follow-on actions.

When analysts have favorable assessments, the relations manager asks them to act as media references. Usually, this ends the briefing. The analyst relations manager closes the call.

Later, the relations manager follows-up with the analyst via telephone or email to

reinforce messages and try to obtain a candid assessment of the briefing. At this time, the relations manager encourages the analyst to include the briefing topic in his or her upcoming research publications based on the value of the topic to the industry at large and the analyst's clients in particular. If the topic is of value, the analyst may publish their assessment.

Analysts contact reference accounts separately and independently from a briefing. The analyst relations manager will follow-up on this discussion as well. Periodically, analysts combine reference account commentary with their own to produce a case study or “best practices” document for their clients.

More information

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