



Are you self-quarantined? Way to be a good human!

Even if you aren't high risk, staying inside and working remotely is a great way to keep others safe. If you tend to get stir crazy like I do, you're likely exploring new ways to structure your day and habits to maximize WFH productivity. That's why I've released—for FREE—my **15 Ways to Boost Your PR While Stuck Inside**.

Sometimes, we all need a perspective shift. Maybe COVID-19 is a memo from the universe that we all need to take a collective pause, and consider how we, as individuals and as society, care for our neighbors as ourselves. I won't get political here (find me on Twitter @caitlincopple for that action), but the past three years have felt pretty bonkers, so perhaps it's time for a reset.

In any case, in the spirit of generosity toward one another during this scary time I'm offering this free video so you can channel your anxiety into meaningful, actionable steps to improve your business. We might not be able to control a whole lot right now, but we can control how we spend this extra time we have at home and revisit aspects of our business that are easy to put off during regular life.

Whether you are a solopreneur, independent consultant, small business owner, or you handle communications within a large company, I hope these 15 tips will give you something meaningful to focus on as you grow your business now and in the future.

Stay healthy,  
Caitlin

# ***15 Ways to Boost Your PR While Stuck Inside***

## **1. Up your social game!**

All PR is digital PR, so while you're away from office distractions or if you experience a lull in clients resulting from coronavirus, use the opportunity to create GOOD habits that help you create the time and boundaries you need to do social media well. Stop being reactive and just posting when you have time each day. Instead, set up an editorial calendar and plan your content for the next month. Get set up on scheduling tools like [Buffer](#) or [Hootsuite](#) so that you don't have to devote daily time to social media, unless it's truly a rapid response scenario.

## **2. Reflect on what makes you different.**

What makes you stand out from other business owners or consultants or even other members on your staff team? What is your personal "why" that inspires you to get up and do the work you do every day? If this is hard (and particularly for women it can be), start by thinking about how people who love you would describe you. Heck, you need to Facetime your relatives right now anyway, so ask your mom and grandma to describe you in three to five words. Then, think about a time you felt like your most "you-iest you"—the best version of yourself. Take a pen and paper and literally write down what that experience was like, then review it, circling key themes. This may feel like it's not "PR" but it **TOTALLY** is. What generates interest from the news media is what is unique, novel, or

inspiring. You are all of those things, you just need help getting your authentic story out into the world.

**3. Reflect on what makes your business different.**

This is similar to #2, but for your business. What problem were you put on this planet to solve? Who are your customers and how do you put yourself in their shoes each day in the course of your work? What is unique about your company's approach? Is your business the first of its kind, the only one of its kind, or do you have a really inspiring origin story? How do you give back to your community? Now's the time to write this down for future use with members of the media once the crisis subsides.

**4. Take the new lens you've created through #2 and #3 and apply it to your website copy.**

How are you telling your own story online? If and when you are in the news, you want to make it super easy for reporters to see who you are, what you offer, and what you stand for. If your value proposition isn't clear on your website, you're a step behind. Take this downtime to refresh how you're writing about your business on your website and on your social media bios. Make sure you are consistent, succinct, and true to your core purpose.

**5. Take a reporter to virtual coffee.**

Find the local reporters who are **not** covering COVID-19 and ask if they'd like to meet you virtually. A lot of them are working from home right now too! You can ask them questions about what they look for in a story and start to build a relationship. Now is a great time to do this with lifestyle magazine editors and reporters who may have more time in light of the virus and are not swamped covering breaking news. Early in my career, I

was a fundraiser for a large nonprofit, and I learned, ask for advice, you'll get money; ask for money and you'll get advice. The same principle works with reporters, who are naturally curious and tend to appreciate someone being curious about them for a change. Ask what they look for in a pitch, and how they decide what to cover. By making connections with reporters now, they are likely to remember you when they need a source for future stories.

## 6. **Build a media list.**

I've heard it before, you don't have time, you'll build a list later. Which really means you'll do it at the last minute when you have an immediate need. But during this virus-induced pause, take the time to build a robust list of every local or state reporter or editor who covers your beat (i.e. business, education, healthcare). If you want to reach a national audience, build a list of the top 50 reporters who cover your beat or magazines/websites you'd love to be featured in. Read what they are covering so you get a sense of which reporter would write about your business. If you don't know or can't tell from the outlet's website who covers what, it's okay to put the generic email for a local newsroom on your list. The editors will make sure it gets to the right person if it is a strong pitch. Getting ahead of the curve and making a media list **before** you need to use it puts you in a better position next time you do need to outreach to reporters—you might have to double check the contacts are still correct (Twitter and LinkedIn are helpful for this), but it will be much faster than building one from scratch.

## 7. **Pitch yourself and how you're dealing with COVID-19.**

Local news outlets are looking for fresh ways to cover the impact of the coronavirus on small businesses and individual workers—sign up for

[HARO](#) (Help a Reporter Out) if you don't believe me. Maybe you've worked remotely for years and have productivity hacks that have helped you along the way. Now's the time to share them by pitching yourself to your local TV stations' assignment editors or news directors. Maybe your team's culture is one of your key differentiators. How are you maintaining that in light of social distancing? Maybe you're banding together with others in your industry to do business differently, or become less reliant on in-person customer experiences. These are all angles that business reporters in particular will be looking for during this time of economic change.

#### **8. Host a digital class.**

Yes, just like this one! Free, online classes are a great way to welcome new people into your community and build your relationship with those who are already in your online networks. Depending on where you live and what industry you're in, they might even generate news coverage from, say, the local business journal. When determining the content of your course, think about what purpose you serve in your business. How can you help support, educate, and entertain your audience while they are home with (likely) some extra time on their hands?

#### **9. Attend a digital class.**

Check mark here! You've already done this one. But, during this downtime to watch or attend as many virtual classes as you can. I promise, it is better than Netflix over the long haul. If you have older kids, this totally counts as homeschooling. There are so many free online resources, and even more popping up now because of the pandemic. It's a great way for you to learn new skills that you can apply to your business later.

## **10. Review editorial calendars for the rest of 2020 and plan your future pitches.**

Believe it or not, many news outlets plan their content six months to a year in advance. Especially when it comes to physical magazines, they start working on an issue months prior to its release. That means if you want to be covered for a story in September, start pitching now! You can usually find a publication's editorial calendar by Googling the name and the words "editorial calendar" or "rate sheet" or "media kit." If you can't find it, don't be afraid to ask an ad rep, especially if there's even a remote chance you'll buy ads someday.

## **11. Amp up your influencer connections.**

These days, most PR strategies include partnering with influencers who can share your product, service, or brand with their network. If you don't have a relationship with an influencer, it's highly likely a cold-ask for support will fall flat (unless you've got a giant budget, and few do right now!) Start cultivating relationships with influencers NOW who you might want to partner with one day. Respond to their stories. Send them messages about what you like about their content. Make sure they know who you are and that you dig their brand. Future asks are likely to go a lot better, particularly if you represent a nonprofit or startup that is planning to ask for free posts.

## **12. Look at refining your 2020 PR strategy—or start one.**

A PR strategy starts with identifying your business goals and then mapping SMART communications goals—meaning specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, time-bound. Then, figure out which strategy or strategies will truly move the needle and drive the sales or passive income you need to take your business where you want or need it to go this year. Don't get bogged down in tactics, but also don't leave out tactics,

especially if you are a procrastinator or someone who gets analysis paralysis when planning your next moves. Try holding yourself accountable for pitching four new reporters a week toward your strategy of getting national press to drive web sales.

### **13. Stop subscription creep.**

Okay, this one isn't directly related to PR, but if you could save even \$50 a month (and for most people, it's more) by closely examining what you are spending monthly in subscriptions that you may not be using, that is a potential PR budget. You could engage a media monitoring service like [Talkwater](#) or [Customscoop](#), or use the extra funds to host an event (keeping social distancing in mind, of course) that may be covered by the media.

### **14. Review your business and household budget.**

Now's your chance to know your numbers inside and out. Make sure you fully grasp exactly where your balance sheet and profit and loss are each month. This will help you plan for future marketing and promotional opportunities. If you've never carved out a dedicated line item for marketing and PR, now is your chance. Perhaps there will be money saved by not attending an event or two canceled due to the virus. Reallocate travel expenses to digital marketing and PR efforts.

### **15. Dive into your email list.**

Have you been putting off segmenting your email list? Are you unhappy with your email marketing provider but don't have the bandwidth to make an informed change? Or have you been pushing out generic newsletter content to everyone on your list because of a lack of time to properly segment your audience? Take some time to revamp your email content

and data so that you can start communicating with your audience in a more meaningful, relevant way.

***Bonus tip: Be like Disney+ and think outside the box.***

How can you rethink your current plans to offer additional value to your customers right now? Take Disney, for example. Their parks are shuttered, and they are losing money daily, but they aren't letting that get in the way from serving their audience. As the severity of COVID-19 began to spread in the U.S. and more families became confined to their homes, Disney released Frozen II on Disney+ a full two months earlier than scheduled so that families stuck at home could have something exciting to watch together. Did this drive an increase of some Disney+ subscriptions? Probably. But most importantly, it helped Disney secure an even deeper, stronger place in the hearts of the families they serve. Disney made its brand the hero of the day, becoming inextricable from the household memories being made during self-quarantine. This means families will think of Disney, trust Disney, and buy Disney the well into the future. How can you take that same out of the box thinking and apply it to your business?



# About Me

**Caitlin Copple Masingill** is a PR expert who helps women leaders shape and share their stories so that media opportunities fall into their laps. Her clients have been featured in publications including the *New York Times*, *Vice*, *Fortune*, *Forbes.com, Inc.*, *The Advocate* (the leading global source of LGBTQ news; ~6 million visitors), American Public Media's *Marketplace*, Arianna Huffington's *ThriveGlobal.com* (nearly 16,000 unique monthly visitors), *Cowboys & Indians Magazine* (300,000+ print readers), and bestselling author Mike Michalowicz's "Entrepreneurship Elevated" podcast, among others. She's the proud mama to 3-year-old Tollie, who is super fun to be quarantined with.



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