# Award Winners’ PR Toolkit 2023

Helping tourism businesses make the most of winning an award.

## Introduction

Huge congratulations on winning an Award for Excellence. As well as recognising the quality of your product, this win represents an PR opportunity — but only temporarily.

Media coverage won’t magically ensue: you’ll have to be proactive and tell the right journalists why they should cover your business.

Produced for those who are time-poor and not marketing professionals, this PR Toolkit advises you on how to secure and maximise the media coverage around your award win. It is split into four main sections covering who to contact, **what** exactly to say, **how** best to **say** it and **when** to say it. You can also read case studies from 2022 winners who have excelled in promoting their award. The final section focuses on potentially working with social media influencers.

Good luck in making the most of your fantastic award win!

“To me, the best pitches are the ones which 'get' the publication and the readership, sum up the idea in a snappy subject header and then expand – briefly! – on the idea in a subsequent paragraph.” Laura Millar, freelance travel writer and former Travel Editor of Metro

## Who?

Here is an overview of the UK’s many media outlets which produce travel content:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type:** | **Examples:** | **Audience:** | **Best contact:** |
| National broadsheet newspaper | The Times, The Guardian, Daily Mail | Readers with money to spend, generally 30+ | Deputy Travel Editor (if one) or Travel Editor |
| National broadsheet website | [theguardian.com/travel](https://www.theguardian.com/uk/travel), [telegraph.co.uk/travel](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel) | Readers with money to spend, usually more millennial than the print version | Digital Travel Editor |
| National tabloid newspaper | The Sun, The Daily Mirror | A wide readership and price range, with luxury less likely to feature. | Travel Editor. (NB: The Express, Mirror and Star share editors.) |
| Regional newspaper(*see below*) | Evening Standard, Liverpool Echo | A wide readership and price range | Travel or Features Editor |
| Regional magazine(*see below*) | Cornwall Life, Midlands Living, Round & About  | Visiting tourists, local residents | Features or News Editor |
| Travel magazine | Wanderlust, Suitcase, Condé Nast Traveller, Coast | Regular, affluent or niche (e.g. adventure) travellers  | Features Editor or Editorial Assistant |
| Lifestyle magazine | Psychologies, Prima, Sainsbury’s Magazine, Absolutely Mama | A wide range aged 30+, foodies, mothers, etc | Travel (if one) or Features Editor |
| Other niche-sector magazine | Horse & Rider, Cyclist, Breathe, The World of Interiors | Hobbyists or devotees of a specific activity, art, science or practice | Features (if one) or News Editor |
| Travel-trade magazine | Travel Trade Gazette, Travel Weekly | Travel agents (including shops and online) | Deputy News Editor |
| Travel website | [Adventure.com](https://adventure.com/), [Mummy Travels](https://www.mummytravels.com/), [LoveExploring](https://www.loveexploring.com/) | Avid travellers or niche travellers  | Features Editor (if one) or Editor |
| Lifestyle website | [Stylist.co.uk](https://www.stylist.co.uk/travel), [MarieClaire.co.uk](https://www.marieclaire.co.uk/life/travel)  | A wide readership, typically more millennial | Travel (if one) or Features Editor |
| Regional radio station | Island FM, Radio Borders, Lincs FM | Affluent, mostly 50+ local residents | News team |
| Travel podcast | [UK Travel Planning](https://uktravelplanning.com/), [Footnotes](https://www.cicerone.co.uk/podcast) (Cicerone) | Travel fanatics of all ages, sometimes niche | Usually the podcasters |
| Travel TV show | BBC World Service’s The Travel Show | Travel fanatics, usually 50+ and affluent | Series Producer |
| Local TV channel | BBC London, BBC East Midlands | Local residents, usually aged 40+  | News Editor |

**Regional newspapers**

As this is such a practical target area for award-winners, we’ve listed the main regional newspaper publishers – although please be aware that this isn’t an exhaustive list, and some of your biggest local papers may be published by other companies:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Media group:** | **Examples of titles:** | **Website:** |
| Reach (formerly Trinity Mirror)  | Manchester Evening News, Liverpool Echo, Daily Post (Wales), Birmingham Mail | [reachpOur brandslc.com/our-newsbrands](https://www.reachplc.com/our-newsbrands)  |
| Newsquest (including former Archant titles) | Dorset Echo, The Argus, Oxford Mail, Ham & High | [newsquest.co.uk/news-brands](https://www.newsquest.co.uk/news-brands) |
| National World | Lancashire Evening Post, The Scotsman, Sunderland Echo, The (Sheffield) Star | [lep.co.uk](https://www.lep.co.uk), [scotsman.com](https://www.scotsman.com), [sunderlandecho.com](https://www.sunderlandecho.com), [thestar.co.uk](https://www.thestar.co.uk)  |
| Midland News Association (MNA) | Express & Star, Shropshire Star, Shrewsbury Chronicle | [mnamedia.co.uk/news-titles](https://www.mnamedia.co.uk/news-titles/) |
| Tindle Newspapers | Cornish Times, Mid-Devon Advertiser, The Forester | [tindlenews.co.uk/portfolio](https://tindlenews.co.uk/portfolio)  |

**Regional magazines**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Media group:** | **Examples of titles:** | **Website:** |
| Newsquest | The Living (e.g. Hampshire Living), retirement-lifestyle Prime series and ex-Archant titles including The Life (e.g. Cornwall Life) and Resident (e.g. Suffolk Resident) series | [living-magazines.co.uk](https://www.living-magazines.co.uk/); [prime-magazine.co.uk](https://prime-magazine.co.uk/);[cornwalllifemagazine.co.uk](https://www.cornwalllifemagazine.co.uk)  |
| Midland News Association (MNA) | Select Magazine, Shropshire Magazine, Gourmet Shropshire | [mnamedia.co.uk/](https://www.mnamedia.co.uk/magazine-titles/)[magazine-titles](https://www.mnamedia.co.uk/magazine-titles/) |
| Other smaller, independent publishers(print)  | Pride Magazines, LincolnshireEngine House Media, CornwallLoop, Yorkshire & LancashireRMC Media, YorkshireThe Yorkshire Dalesman, YorkshireRound & About, southern England | [pridemagazines.co.uk](https://www.pridemagazines.co.uk/lincolnshire/about)[enginehousemedia.co.uk](https://www.enginehousemedia.co.uk/)[looppublishing.co.uk](http://looppublishing.co.uk/our-publications/)[rmcmedia.co.uk](https://www.rmcmedia.co.uk/)[dalesman.co.uk](https://www.dalesman.co.uk/)[roundandabout.co.uk](https://www.roundandabout.co.uk/about-us/) |
| Other regional lifestyle magazines (online) | Index Digital, SE EnglandViva, Manchester | [indexdigital.co.uk](http://www.indexdigital.co.uk)[vivamanchester.co.uk](https://vivamanchester.co.uk/) |

Find as many local magazines as you can, trawling the staff page to see who publishes it and, hopefully, their contact details.

**Choosing targets**

That’s a lot of options, right? Don’t be overwhelmed; the important thing here is to select key targets.

Which newspapers, magazines, podcasts, etc. might your typical customer – or the customer segment you want to reach – be likeliest to follow? Those are the ones you should target. Rather than trying a vague catch-all tack, make personalised approaches to five or ten relevant, viable outlets. This is likelier to succeed, and will take you less time.

Bear in mind that national newspapers and lifestyle magazines will be the fussiest (and most besieged!), so you’ll often need to provide great USPs (unique selling points) to interest them. But we’ll discuss this later, in the **What?** section.

**Useful links:**

* [**pressgazette.co.uk/media-audience-and-business-data/media\_metrics**](https://pressgazette.co.uk/media-audience-and-business-data/media_metrics)lists the recent circulation figures of newspapers which release them
* [**rajar.co.uk/listening/quarterly\_listening.php**](https://www.rajar.co.uk/listening/quarterly_listening.php)has useful radio-station statistics, including local stations
* [**visitbritain.org/visitor-segmentation**](https://www.visitbritain.org/visitor-segmentation) has an overview of the main domestic tourism consumer segments as defined by VisitEngland

**Top Tips: Tracking down contacts**

1. Google the name of an outlet plus the relevant job title – i.e. [“The Times” + “Travel Editor”]. Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram can then help you check whether the info is up to date

2. Read or listen to the travel section/magazine/show/etc, and see what names come up

3. To get an email address, phone the outlet’s switchboard and ask nicely. Note that you may simply be connected, so have your idea ready to pitch orally (see the **What?** section)

4. Are there travel writers who regularly cover stories about your specialism (e.g. a family-travel specialist)? If so, try them. There’s a good chance that they’re a freelancer whose website lists their email address

5. Your local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) may have regional contacts. Their details can be found at [visitbritain.org/business-advice/find-local-support](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/find-local-support)

**Case Study #1**

**Charlotte Daniel, co-founder, Secret Meadows, Suffolk**

Award: Gold for Camping, Glamping & Holiday Park of the Year

Size of company: 1 full-time staff members, 9 part-time or seasonal

[secretmeadows.co.uk](https://www.secretmeadows.co.uk)

**How did you promote your award?** “I firmly believe that winning awards, whether local or nationally, is very important for standing out as a business. The VisitEngland award has attracted the most attention by far and saw us earn lots of column inches in our regional newspapers. We’re sure that high-quality photography has played an important part in attracting this, and various instances of national press coverage, over the years.

“To ensure that our images are high-quality, we’ve invested in professional photographers having first checked their case studies. Fees can vary widely but I have been lucky to unearth local ones with very reasonable rates. In our early years, when funds were much more limited, we also arranged a free stay for two photographers in exchange for their images.”

**Do you have a marketing tip?** “Connecting with online promotional listing sites (in your sector) can help to generate editorial, as some of these include press-targeting marketing efforts as part of their package.

“Having never outsourced any marketing, we’ve otherwise learned a lot through our own research — although we may explore working with a specialist for specific projects in the future.”

## What?

**Knowing your story**

“What’s the hook?” is a common question travel editors ask when they’re offered a story. A hook (AKA ‘peg’ or ‘angle’) is what makes a story idea newsworthy and noteworthy.

As an illustration, consider Las Vegas. If a big casino-hotel opens on the Strip it will be newsworthy by dint of being new. But it won’t be very noteworthy: there are already tens of places just like it. Equally, if there was a women’s-only casino-hotel which had been open for 34 years, that would be noteworthy (by being unique) but not newsworthy, as it wouldn’t be new.

But if a new, women’s-only casino-hotel opens? Now that would be a hook.

In this case, your award win is your hook. It has just happened and it offers a unique, independent validation of your offerings. It is newsworthy and noteworthy.

To boost your noteworthiness, consider what else is unique about your product? That’s what a Travel Editor or Series Producer will want to know. What are you doing differently to competitors? Distil these USPs into a few lines, and include them in your approaches to editors alongside news of the award win.

This gives you the best chance of earning precious coverage.

Now you know what to say, the **How?**section will tell you how to say it.

**Local or national?**

Local press – newspapers, magazines, radio stations – are the likeliest to give you publicity. They’ll be most excited about your award, simply because a local business winning awards is big news.

That publicity may simply be a short news story, or an in-depth feature or report. Again, specifying your USPs will boost your chances. “[Company name] wins award” isn’t as good as “[Company name] wins award thanks to unique new [product name]” or “Now award-winning, [company name] offers [local area or county]’s only [product]”.

National coverage is usually more desirable. Readerships will be bigger, and you’ll be reaching potential clients from further afield who are less likely to know about you.

Bear in mind, however, that almost every award winner will be contacting national travel editors – alongside numerous other people with numerous other stories. Getting noticed is hard.

Your best chance? Work out your USPs, as above, and then follow our **How?** section.

**Useful links:**

* [**innovateuk.blog.gov.uk/2016/10/12/define-your-usp**](https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20210728212329/https%3A//innovateuk.blog.gov.uk/2016/10/12/define-your-usp/) has digestible, general tips on ascertaining your USPs
* [**wanderlust.co.uk/content/5-tips-for-pitching-your-article-to-magazines**](https://www.wanderlust.co.uk/content/5-tips-for-pitching-your-article-to-magazines/) – advice from Lyn Hughes, the Travel Editor of Wanderlust magazine
* [**guide.saferoutesinfo.org/media/identify\_hook.cfm**](http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org/media/identify_hook.cfm) is a deep-dive into what makes a hook

**What can you offer?**

Some editors or producers may request to send themselves or a reporter to sample your wares, promising a big story or feature. Typically they’ll expect this to be provided for free in exchange for the publicity.

Can you afford this? If so, then it will probably be worthwhile – the bigger the coverage, the better the impact. You’ll never be given a promise of when coverage will come out, but you can request specifics regarding the story’s length or (if radio/TV) duration.

If you can’t afford this, it’s totally okay to say as much. Just confess that you’re a small business and that, as much as you’d love to, you can’t provide complimentary stays or experiences at present.

Ideally, be clear in your initial pitch – at the end, and just briefly – about what you can or can’t offer.

**Top Tips: Supporting materials**

1. Good photographs give you a far greater chance of publicity. Check our Asset Library ([assets.visitbritain.org](https://assets.visitbritain.org)) for supporting images that you can use

2. They should be high-resolution – anything over 300dpi

3. But you don’t want to clog an editor’s inbox with lots of large files! So paste one or two images amid your pitch (see the **How?**section) and then, ideally, paste a link to an online file-share folder (e.g. Dropbox) where you have saved the remainder

4. A photo of you clutching your trophy or certificate will help your chances for local media thinking of a news story

5. Also helpful are detailed PDFs about your product – perhaps ones usually sent to customers. Attach these (or stick them in the file-share folder) if relevant

“You’d be surprised how many PR pitches are commissioned on the basis of an excellent image, which can convey the essence of a story perfectly. Conversely, many great ideas are ditched because of a lack of good imagery.” Jane Knight, freelance travel writer and former Travel Editor of The Times

**Case Study #2**

**Linda Jee, founder, Horseshoe Cottage Farm, Leicestershire**

Award: Silver for B&B and Guest House of the Year

Size of company: 1 full-time staff member, 2 part-time

[horseshoecottagefarm.com](https://www.horseshoecottagefarm.com)

**How did you promote your award?** “It is highlighted in bold text on our website’s homepage, with the logo (provided by VisitEngland) following soon after. I want to ensure people know we've won it — because I'm blooming proud of it, and because the award firmly endorses what we do.

“For me, the most important marketing element is having a good website. This is your shop window, and vital.

“Ours was created through (the website-building platform) Wix. Someone set it up for me originally, but now I just tweak it myself; even though I'm not ‘techy’, this never takes up much time as it's so straightforward to accomplish. Having a website that is easy to amend yourself is cheaper and just better, I think — and if I can do it at 65, anybody can!”

**Do you have a marketing tip?** “We are also part of the Wolsey Lodges group, which itself does marketing and social media. They published a nice blog on their own site about why to go to Leicestershire which brought in some business to us. It’s well worth the yearly £450 that I pay for membership — and I’d definitely encourage anyone short of time for marketing to seek out equivalent opportunities like this.”

**How?**

Approaches can either be made by phone or email. Email is best: phone calls risk catching harried editors or producers at inconvenient times.

**5 ways to write engagingly…**

The best writing is chatty, succinct and to-the-point. You aren’t here to be lyrical – that’s the journalist’s job – but you do need to quickly capture attention. These tools help:

1. Have a strong, concise subject line – e.g. “Cornwall’s only owl sanctuary scores national award”, or “New for 2023: Sherwood Forest visitor centre earns national recognition” – and don’t try to be clever, nor use puns

2. Use questions in paragraphs. Why do so? Because it entices the reader to read on...

3. No preamble: mention your hook in the first line. An editor may just skim-read this line before making a decision

4. Keep paragraphs and emails short: long tracts of text seem daunting to time-pressed readers (as above, some good photographs help here, too)

5. Use alliteration (successive words beginning with the same sounds) – such as (and because) “it puts pace in sentences, making them fleet, fluid and fetching”.

**… and 5 other press-release tips**

6. Some bold text or italics can look good – but too much risks making an email appear messy

7. Put your contact details and succinct company details at the end, perhaps under ‘Notes for Editor’, so it’s easy for an editor to glean more, or to follow up

8. Provide starting prices (or rack rates for a room) in the Notes to Editor section and briefly state what these include

9. Your email can either just contain a press release, begin with a personal note above the release, or disguise the release amid a personal email. The latter two tacks are better, as they demonstrate more effort on your part. Whatever you do, never attach the press release; attachments are tedious for time-strapped editors to open

10. The ideal length is about an A4 side, or 300-400 words. Any more constitutes waffle.

**Q&A: Images and award logos**

Q: What makes a good image?

A: Images should be over 300dpi and clear. They should be weather-appropriate (i.e. sunny for a beach). Above all, they should be appealing.

Q: How do I choose the best?

A: Trust your instinct. Put two or three distinctive snaps in the email or press release, then make clear that more are available in an online file-share folder.

Q: What about logos?

A: The relevant competition logo (e.g. VisitEngland Awards for Excellence) adds authenticity to your release, but if used it should be small: editors are interested in your story, not in a logo. The same applies to your company logo.

Q: Should I hire a photographer?

A: This could be a terrific investment. To save money, consider hiring a student photographer.

Q: How do I request photo credits?

A: If these are strictly necessary, make clear in parentheses after your online file-share folder link, and put ‘Must credit: “XX”’ in each image’s filename, replacing XX with the photographer’s name. For more guidance, see [visitbritain.org/business-advice/tv-and-copyright-licences](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/tv-and-copyright-licences).

**VisitEngland & VisitBritain marketing opportunities**

The VisitEngland and VisitBritain (VE/VB) PR teams work with domestic and international media and influencers to tell England and Britain’s stories through a programme of activity that includes media/influencer trips, media relations, events and content creation aligned to current target audiences and campaigns. This is supported by a digital Media Centre ([visitbritain.com/gb/en/media](https://www.visitbritain.com/gb/en/media)).

VE/VB’s teams will review all national award-winners to see which marketing and PR opportunities are relevant. In the future, if you have any noteworthy news which you think may be of interest to a domestic or international media audience, please share it with press@visitengland.org and pressandpr@visitbritain.org for consideration for possible wider publicity and integration across social and website content.

You should also monitor VE/VB’s integrated, nationwide campaigns such as the Escape the Everyday campaign to see if they align with your product and can potentially integrate into your own activity. Check [visitbritain.org/campaigns-opportunities](https://www.visitbritain.org/campaigns-opportunities) for the latest toolkit.

Consider, too, signing up to our fortnightly industry newsletter ([visitbritain.org/newsletter\_signup](https://www.visitbritain.org/newsletter_signup)) for the latest news about international market intelligence, partnership marketing opportunities or tourism events.

On the *‘I Love Great Britain Community’* Facebook group ([facebook.com/groups/LoveGBCommunity](https://www.facebook.com/groups/LoveGBCommunity)), global tourists share tips about UK places to see, stay or eat. Join the group and you can share your local recommendations.

**Case Study #3**

**Guy Wilson, founder, Pure Outdoor, Derbyshire**

Award: Silver for Ethical, Responsible and Sustainable Tourism

Size of company: 0 full-time staff members, 5 part-time or seasonal

[pureoutdoor.co.uk](https://www.pureoutdoor.co.uk)

**How did you promote your award?** “Awards are essentially a green light, a stamp of approval confirming that you’re a really good company. We were fortunate enough to have large stories about ours in the regional papers here. In general, I’m never one to go proactively seeking out media coverage, but I’m always happy if it comes along.

“It’s more important to me that we get the right message out – including about our charitable foundation and about the good things we can do. Those things are more important than growth for growth’s sake.”

**Do you have a marketing tip?** “As well as having that consistent messaging, I think it’s vital to make a marketing plan – and then to make sure you actually implement it, rather than just spend endless time planning.

“One thing we’ve done lately is refresh our marketing language. So, rather than an Instagram caption or Facebook post saying ‘Here’s some people having fun bouldering,’ for instance, it might be something more like ‘Here’s Abby learning to tie bowline knots so she can gain more climbing independence.’ We’re trying to sell what deeper benefits people will get afterwards from their experience with us, rather than just what activities they’ll do at the time.”

**Useful links:**

* [**enterprisenation.com/learn-something/how-to-write-and-send-a-brilliant-press-release**](https://www.enterprisenation.com/learn-something/how-to-write-and-send-a-brilliant-press-release)outlines many more digestible release-writing tips
* [**help.dropbox.com/guide/individual/how-to-use-dropbox**](https://help.dropbox.com/guide/individual/how-to-use-dropbox)
* [**pexels.com**](https://www.pexels.com/), [**pixabay.com**](https://pixabay.com/) and [**unsplash.com**](https://unsplash.com/) contain free-to-use images. Ditto [**images.google.com**](https://images.google.com/) – having made a search, specify ‘Creative Commons licenses’ under Tools and Usage Rights.
* [**visitbritain.org/business-advice/market-your-business**](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/market-your-business) provides resources and guidance to market your business

Below is a proforma press release or email for the time-poor. The square-bracketed sections require your input. We suggest that you write your own release, though, if possible, in order to stand out. Whether you use your own logo, VisitEngland’s award logo, both or neither (see p16) is up to you.

**[Insert your geographic region]’s leading [insert business type] triumphs at national VisitEngland awards**

The [only/premier (delete as appropriate)] [insert business type] provider in [insert area], [insert business name] won the [insert award category] category at the prestigious VisitEngland Awards for Excellence 2023 awards presentation which celebrated excellence across the industry.

[Insert job title of award collector(s) in photograph] [insert award collector’s name] collected the award from [insert award presenter’s name] during a ceremony at [insert venue] on [insert date].

[Write a brief summary of your business, expanding on your USPs and range of offerings. No more than three sentences and four lines]

PASTE 2-3 HIGH-RESOLUTION IMAGES

“[Write a short, 1-2-sentence quote covering how long you’ve been in business, and mentioning any other recent awards – and any other USPs you didn’t get in above. Finish with a short sentence about how delighted you are to win],” commented [insert job title] [insert name]

[Write a starting or sample price for your experience, rooms or other service, and state what that includes. Finish with your booking telephone number and website]

ENDS

[insert date of release]

**Notes to editor:**

* More images, including award-photo ceremonies, are available at [insert file-share folder link]
* Please contact me on [insert phone or mobile] or [insert email] for further information
* Complimentary press-review experiences [are/aren’t (delete as appropriate)] possible depending on the ensuring coverage
* For more information about VisitEngland or the Awards for Excellence, please contact **Charlotte Sanders**, Senior Communications Officer, on 020 7578 1428 or charlotte.sanders@visitengland.org
* More information about the VisitEngland Awards for Excellence can be found at [visitenglandawards.org](http://visitenglandawards.org)

**Social media**

Using social-media channels is a great way to raise awareness of your award’s success. Channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok can be powerful tools for reaching and engaging with customers.

**Top tips on how to use social media to publicise your win:**

1. Follow your local awards’ competition organiser on social media

2. Repost anything that mentions your business, destination or category

3. Use the appropriate # (hashtag) and Twitter handles in all of your posts for both the local and national competitions (for the VisitEngland Awards for Excellence 2023, these are

#VEAwards2023 and @VisitEnglandBiz)

4. Announce being named a winner in real time

5. Congratulate other winners, including competitors in your category

6. Use images in subsequent posts with your awards logo

7. Post images of your trophy/certificate

8. Keep your tone upbeat and positive

For further guidance, read the social-media section in VisitEngland’s Digital Marketing Toolkit at [visitengland.org/onlinemarketing](http://www.visitengland.org/onlinemarketing)

**Example posts:**

We are so proud to be chosen as one of [region’s name] top tourism businesses [local awards hashtag]. Can’t wait to find out if we’ve won [category name] on [date of local ceremony] [local awards handle]

Delighted to be chosen as one of England’s top tourism businesses #VEAwards2023. Can’t wait to find out if we’ve won [category name] @VisitEnglandBiz

Wow – we’re national finalists #VEAwards2023! Can’t wait to see if we win [category name]. We’ll keep you posted @VisitEnglandBiz

We are chuffed to have won [gold/silver/bronze] in the [category name] category #VEAwards2023. Well done to all of the other finalists [handles of other category finalists]

Congratulations to all our staff and thank you to all our customers who helped us win [gold/silver/bronze] in the [category name] category #VEAwards2023!

We are proud to announce that we have won [gold/silver/bronze] in the [category name] #VEAwards2023! It couldn’t have gone to a more hard-working team!

(plus a photo of the team smiling/cheering with trophy or certificate once received)

**Case Study #4**

**Vicky Ashdown, Senior PR Officer, Chester Zoo, Cheshire**

Award: Gold for Large Visitor Attraction of the Year

Size of company: 630 full-time staff members, including 17 in marketing and PR

[chesterzoo.org](https://www.chesterzoo.org/)

**How did you promote your award?** “We issued a press release as well as posting on our social media channels. We then dropped the ‘large visitor attraction of the year’ message into other releases.

“A big focus of all our marketing efforts involves building up a great relationship with our local DMOs (destination marketing organisations). As they want businesses in their networks to be as successful as possible, these DMOs are always really approachable, helpful and interested in any news — such as award wins — you might have. Keeping them updated always leads to new and unique opportunities.”

**Do you have a marketing tip?** “Be relevant! Don’t try to be all things for everyone; find out what insights and stories will make your target audiences tick, and then deliver compelling content that you know will connect with them on a deeper level.

“With limited time and funds, I think it’s important to make sure you remain laser-focused on your most valuable audiences, concentrating on relevant messages that will cut through and always staying consistent to your brand values.”

**Awards logo**

Make sure that VisitEngland or your local competition organiser send you the correct logo for your win as soon as possible. This year’s win is unique to you, so you should be making the most of it!

**Top tips on how to use an awards logo:**

1. Display it prominently at your business – consider putting it on a sign to gain maximum exposure. (You may also receive either a certificate and/or a trophy – display those in a prominent location too)

2. Put it in a prominent position on your website – ideally in the header or footer so that it appears on every page. (If your website includes multiple locations/properties, then the awards logo must only be displayed on pages relating to the specific, award-winning location/property)

3. Add it to your email signature

4. Use it on any printed materials – leaflets, brochures, headed paper, adverts, posters, etc.

5. Use it in social-media posts

6. Do not modify the competition’s logo in any way. Use the version which will give the best contrast from its background, rather than placing the logo over images or colours that could make it illegible.

7. Embed a hyperlink into any digital versions of the logo, linking to a press release or the official winners’ list

8. If you are lucky enough to have received a number of awards over the years, avoid the temptation to display every single logo. As a rule of thumb, display the most significant and/or most recent ones.

* Do use the version of the logo that will give the best contrast from the background
* Do not stretch or alter the logo
* Do not angle the logo in any way
* Do not alter the logo’s colours
* Do not place the logo on images or colours that will make it illegible

## When?

**When to make your approach?**

There is no exact science to this, only common sense. Just avoid Monday mornings – editors arrive to lots of emails – and that dead time known as Friday afternoon.

Although anything in-between is fine, Tuesday mid-morning might be the best time of all: most inboxes will be calm, and no-one yet has the sense of the week’s time running out.

Most weekly travel sections produce their content about a week ahead, and often plan a month or two ahead. The same applies to radio shows and TV channels. So time-sensitive ideas based around an anniversary, film release or seasonality – i.e. outdoor pursuits – should be sent 3-6 months in advance of the relevant time for the best odds of success.

Monthly magazines’ travel sections are written 3-6 months ahead of publication, with issues also coming out a few days ahead of their stated month (e.g a September issue published on August 29). So allow for even more advance notice if contacting a monthly magazine.

“Ease is key. I need approaches to have all the information I require (dates, prices, links, images) and to leave enough time for me to research the story, pitch it and wait for editors’ response. Frustratingly, I often receive invitations or releases relating to events happening in just a couple of weeks. Ideally, these should be coming 3-4 months in advance.” Lizzie Pook, freelance travel writer and novelist

**The art of chasing**

Sent a personal pitch to an editor or producer? You’re perfectly entitled to follow it up should no response be received. You can couch this by citing a desire to make sure they received the email, or just be honest: say that you want to give them first dibs, but will – quite reasonably – otherwise take the idea elsewhere.

Whether to follow up an impersonal press release is more questionable. As before, it might well be that the editor has seen your release, not been smitten and deleted it; but you have less right to a reply if it wasn’t sent personally. Chase, and you risk only causing long-term annoyance. But that is more concerning for a PR professional: if such media contact is rare for you, then it’s probably worth the risk.

Wait a week before chasing, unless you’ve reason for extra haste. Chase by email (never phone) with courtesy and not even a whiff of an accusatory tone. Reply to your initial email, and say something breezy like “I know you get 75,633 emails a day, but your readership fits our product so darn well that I’m following up to maximise my chances. Here’s my idea again...”

You can also monitor if your release has been used online by using a tool such as Google Alerts.

**Useful link:**

* [**thefreelancersyear.com/blog/following-up-editors-guide**](https://thefreelancersyear.com/blog/following-up-editors-guide/)is intended for fellow freelance journalists, but equally useful from a PR perspective

## Working with influencers

Another potential way to leverage your award win via social media is by building a relationship with a local or national Instagrammer, vlogger or other influencer. But how to go about this?

The first trick is to identify the right person. Follower numbers are important – anything over 5,000 on Instagram is good, for example – but equally so is the right sort of content and engagement, and also the right platform for your product and target clientele. If you’ve carefully chosen an influencer that you reckon is a good fit for your brand, chances are they’ll think the same.

Be clear, courteous and professional: despite the common perception, the best bloggers aren’t blaggers, and nor are Instagrammers or vloggers. They are proud and professional. Given that, and given that you don’t want disappointment down the line, it pays to be open about your content expectations from the start.

Unlike journalists, reporters, editors or producers, influencers aren’t employed by a salary-providing company. So most require payment for their work.

It’s easy to feel aghast at this: “they want a freebie AND payment?” But it makes appreciable sense when seen from their side. Before making an approach, have an idea of what you can pay for the content you expect, bearing in mind its expected worth.

If you can’t host an influencer for free, consider organising a tempting event – perhaps a sample of your product – and inviting one or some to that. That may lure them out to produce some initial content, which in turn will help you to measure their impact.

**Useful links:**

* [**olsenmetrix.com/views/a-guide-to-choosing-the-right-influencers-for-your-brand**](https://olsenmetrix.com/views/a-guide-to-choosing-the-right-influencers-for-your-brand/)contains more advice about choosing the correct influence
* VisitEngland’s Digital Marketing Toolkit at [**visitengland.org/onlinemarketing**](http://visitengland.org/onlinemarketing) offers more guidance on working with influencers

## Additional commercial opportunities

**TXGB**

Launched in partnership with VisitEngland and VisitBritain, TXGB is a digital platform that brings together tourism businesses to drive sales and boost productivity by connecting the market in a new and unique way.

Accommodation, attractions, tours and events can reach new customers through a broad range of distribution channels and unique campaigns, brought together in one digital platform.

Trying new channels and reaching new customers has never been easier. Opt-in or out of any of the distribution partners, whether that’s your local destination website; UK-based domestic distributors such as the VisitBritain Shop, AA rated Trips or Love to Visit; new global opportunities like 0% commission Google Hotel Ads and Google Things to Do; or international OTAs in harder-to-reach markets.

Signing up is free, with no set-up or additional monthly subscription charges; and pay nothing until you get an online booking. Connect your booking system or use the free inventory loading software TXLoad to share live availability and pricing. For each online booking, you pay TXGB a 2.50% + VAT booking fee along with any distributor commission due.

To get connected visit [txgb.co.uk](https://www.txgb.co.uk/) and click on the **red Get Started button** to complete a quick two minute application.

**VisitBritain Shop**

Featuring an ever-expanding range of new, unique and trusted bookable experiences from over 400 UK suppliers, the VisitBritain Shop lets you connect your business to the wider world.

A multilingual and multi-currency e-commerce platform, the Shop provides access to a consumer audience in over 94 overseas markets, and also allows international or online agents to obtain instant access through trade rates and a global affiliate programme.

It is open to UK-based attractions, single-day tours or experience providers. To find out more, contact product@visitbritain.org or go to [visitbritainshop.com](https://www.visitbritainshop.com/world/en).