

# BEYOND THE PRESS RELEASE:

WHY THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATIONS  
BELONGS TO **ANTI-PR**

A Strategic Look at the Shift from Traditional PR  
to Outcome-Driven Storytelling

## INTRODUCTION:

### THE COMMUNICATIONS LANDSCAPE HAS CHANGED—PERMANENTLY

The pace of communication has accelerated. Audiences are savvier, more skeptical, and hyper-attuned to authenticity. In this new environment, traditional PR methods—press releases, pitch cycles, staged events—are struggling to keep up.

But this isn't a takedown of PR. It's a look at how it's evolving.

The rise of **Anti-PR** isn't about being contrary. It's about being precise. It's about adapting communications to reflect what works *now*—measurable trust, strategic visibility, and narratives that move markets.

This whitepaper examines how and why brands are shifting from conventional PR approaches to outcome-oriented strategies rooted in performance, clarity, and credibility.



***THE RISE OF ANTI-PR ISN'T ABOUT BEING CONTRARY.  
IT'S ABOUT BEING PRECISE.***

## TRADITIONAL PR: WHAT IT WAS BUILT FOR

Traditional PR originated in an era when mass media had control and trust in institutions was high. The core approach relied on:

- Writing press releases for journalists to cover stories
- Hosting media events to attract attention
- Cultivating relationships with editors and gatekeepers
- Measuring success by mentions, impressions, and column inches

For decades, this was the accepted playbook. And it worked—because the rules of attention and influence were different.

But the dynamics have shifted.



**61% of U.S. adults  
say they rarely trust  
traditional media**

*(Gallup, 2023)*



**Journalists now  
receive an average of  
100+ PR emails per day**

*(Muck Rack)*



**Most press  
releases see  
no pickup at all**

*(Prowly, 2024)*

This is not a matter of failure. It's a matter of evolution. What was once efficient is now increasingly inefficient in an environment demanding speed, transparency, and direct audience connection.

## ANTI-PR: A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS MODEL FOR THE TRUST ECONOMY



Anti-PR emerged not as a rejection of public relations, but as a **recalibration of its purpose**.



Where Traditional PR was built around access to media, Anti-PR is built around **access to audiences**.



Where PR once prioritized coverage, Anti-PR prioritizes **credibility**.



Where PR chased visibility, Anti-PR drives **influence**.

It's less about abandoning the past and more about **realigning communication strategies to meet the demands of the current media ecosystem**—which is decentralized, always-on, and deeply human.

## Anti-PR vs. Traditional PR: What's Actually Different?

Component	Traditional PR	Anti-PR
<b>Objective</b>	Gain media coverage and awareness	Build trust, influence decisions, drive strategic outcomes
<b>Messaging</b>	Controlled, often cautious	Purposeful, bold, values-aligned
<b>Media Relationship</b>	Reliant on gatekeepers	Relational but not dependent—audience-first
<b>Timeline</b>	Quarterly or campaign-based	Ongoing, agile, and real-time
<b>Success Metrics</b>	Mentions, impressions, earned media value	Engagement, conversion, brand lift, long-term trust
<b>Format</b>	Press releases, pitches, events	Thought leadership, owned content, strategic collaborations
<b>Role of the Brand</b>	Passive (waiting for pickup)	Active (driving the conversation)



# WHY BRANDS ARE EVOLVING THEIR PR STRATEGIES

## 1

### Speed of Culture

Traditional PR processes can take weeks to months. In contrast, digital-first communications require brands to respond in hours—or miss the moment entirely.

Anti-PR operates on a real-time pulse, adapting messaging in step with trends, crises, and audience behavior.

## 2

### The Rise of Direct Influence

Audiences trust people—not logos. And they trust what they can verify. Anti-PR helps brands speak **with** audiences, not just **about** them, often via internal voices (CEOs, scientists, operators) and authentic partnerships.

- › **82% of buyers say they trust a company more when its leadership is active on public platforms** (Edelman/LinkedIn 2023)

## 3

### Accountability and Metrics

Vanity metrics are fading fast. Executives and boards increasingly demand measurable outcomes tied to communications efforts.

- › Anti-PR uses KPIs like **brand sentiment shift, cost per trust acquisition, and engagement depth**, not just “hits” or “reach.”

## 4

### Audience Expectations Have Changed

People expect brands to take stances, tell truths, and back up claims. Anti-PR doesn’t avoid this—it leans into it, using transparency and purpose as strategic assets.

## WHEN **ANTI-PR** MAKES THE MOST SENSE

Anti-PR is not one-size-fits-all. It's a fit for organizations navigating:



Rapid growth or  
scale-up phases



Emerging tech or  
misunderstood  
categories



Regulatory  
complexity  
(healthcare, AI,  
climate tech)



Brand  
repositioning  
or mission-led  
transformations



Industry  
leadership or  
category creation

In these contexts, standard PR tactics often fall short. What's needed is **strategic authority-building**, not short-term attention.

# CASE-INFORMED EXAMPLES

## HealthTech Startup

**Scenario:** Launching a new telehealth platform during a highly saturated market cycle.

**Traditional PR:** One press release + mass email to media list.

**Anti-PR:** Founder-led thought leadership on healthcare equity, real patient stories, expert panels, strategic LinkedIn activation.

**Outcome:** Earned credibility in niche healthcare outlets, sparked B2B partnership conversations, and improved onboarding trust rate by 40%.

## FinTech Firm

**Scenario:** Needed visibility with enterprise buyers, post-Series B.

**Traditional PR:** Coverage in a top-tier business publication.

**Anti-PR:** Built a multi-month narrative arc around financial literacy and the future of open banking, delivered through owned content, partner amplification, and expert commentary.

**Outcome:** 3x engagement from enterprise leads and a 22% lift in share-of-voice within the fintech category.

## A STRATEGIC EVOLUTION—NOT A TREND

The term "Anti-PR" is intentionally provocative—but the framework behind it is deeply pragmatic. It's about **meeting the moment with the right strategy**.

Traditional PR still has a place. But the brands redefining categories, winning trust, and driving market momentum? They're using a new playbook—one built on agility, authenticity, and alignment with business outcomes.

*THIS ISN'T OPPOSITION FOR THE SAKE OF IT.  
IT'S OPTIMIZATION FOR THE SAKE OF EFFECTIVENESS.*

### IN SUMMARY: KEY TAKEAWAYS

- › **Communications are now a trust function.** PR strategies must adapt accordingly.
- › **Anti-PR bridges visibility and credibility** by emphasizing authenticity, authority, and measurable impact.
- › **It's not PR vs. Anti-PR.** It's about choosing the right tool for the objective—and understanding that the objectives themselves have changed.
- › **The future of communications belongs to brands willing to lead, not echo.**

Too often in the PR world, six months can go by with one or two stories with PR firms telling clients "we need more information" or "we're working on it."

To Karla Jo Helms, the Founder and Chief Evangelist for JoTo Public Relations, this is intolerable and an unfortunate turn that this has become "normal" in this industry. Our approach is very much an "**anti-PR**" approach.

## PR NEEDS TO BE REDEFINED

The Current Standard	The Anti-PR Position (JOTO)
Status quo	<b>Disruptive</b> , do-what- it-takes attitude
Self-important	Interested and <b>obsessed</b> with results
Over-promise, under-deliver	Known for <b>results</b> , deliver those results
"We're trying" smoke and mirrors	The know-how to produce stellar results
Mostly presenting themselves as one big impersonal machine	Presenting this with a human side and the hands-on guidance, with Karla Jo's expertise in Crisis Management and history as an innovator, disruptor and <b>restless CEO who is never satisfied with "OK"</b>
Firms focused on their own greatness	Focused on the client's greatness and getting that known in the world
Grandfathered techniques	Techniques originated in crisis-management and applied to everyday PR
Reactive	Proactive
Apathetic "We are a scandal" standard operation 24-7	Unlike TV dramas, we don't wait for some scandal to pull out all the stops to get you the press and continual coverage you need. (Actually we consider it a scandal if you don't get press.)
They focus on one hit	We focus on continuous press (that aligns to the marketing research we've conducted)

## PR NEEDS TO BE REDEFINED

As Karla Jo states: "The PR industry has lost touch with reality, resting on past accomplishments and failing to deliver the results today's companies need.

*"IT'S SIMPLE: THERE'S WAY TOO MUCH 'SMOKE AND MIRRORS' IN THE PR WORLD AND NOT ENOUGH DELIVERY OF RESULTS.*

"We exist to change that standard and revolutionize how PR is not only perceived but in terms of measurable ROI. As a business owner, I know every dollar must work hard for my company so I share that sentiment with our clients."

## CRISIS AVERTED

We come from the Crisis Management side of the world, where time is not a luxury. We apply all that we learned in Crisis Management to give every client the kind of results and exposure they were seeking in the first place.

Unlike TV dramas, we don't wait for some scandal to pull out all the stops to get you the press and continual coverage you need. (Actually we consider it a scandal if you don't get press and respond accordingly.)

No excuses. No smoke and mirrors.

We convert PR from a "necessary evil" to "an integral part of your growth strategy" clients and CEOs rely upon and gladly report to their stakeholders.

OUR MOTTO:

**"PR ISN'T THE ANSWER. RESULTS ARE."**

## ABOUT JOTO PR

After doing marketing research on a cross-section majority of 5,000 CEOs of fast-growth trajectory companies and finding out exactly how they used PR, how they measure it and how they wanted the PR industry to be different, PR veteran and innovator Karla Jo Helms created JoTo PR and established its entire business model on those research findings. Astute in recognizing industry changes since its launch in 2009, JoTo PR's team utilizes newly established patterns to create timely PR campaigns comprising both traditional and the latest proven media methods. This unique skill enables them to continue to increase the market share and improve return on investment (ROI) for their clients, year after year—beating usual industry standards. Based in Tampa Bay, Florida, JoTo PR is an established international public relations agency. Today, all processes of JoTo are streamlined PR services that have become the hallmark of the JoTo PR name.

## ABOUT KARLA JO HELMS

Karla Jo Helms is the Chief Evangelist and Anti-PR Strategist for JoTo PR.

Karla Jo learned first-hand how unforgiving business can be when millions of dollars are on the line—and how the control of public opinion often determines whether one company is happily chosen or another is brutally rejected.

Being an alumni of crisis management, Karla Jo has worked with litigation attorneys, private investigators and the media to help restore companies of goodwill back into the good graces of public opinion—Karla Jo operates on the ethic of getting it right the first time, not relying on second chances and doing what it takes to excel.

Karla Jo has patterned her agency on the perfect balance of crisis management, entrepreneurial insight and proven public relations experience. Helms speaks globally on public relations, how the PR industry itself has lost its way and how, in the right hands, corporations can harness the power of PR to drive markets and impact market perception.

