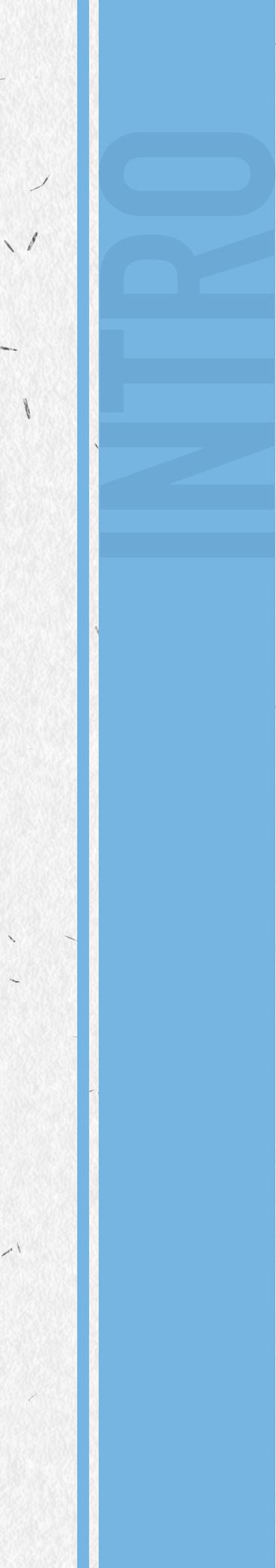


THE

REACTIVE PR

PLAYBOOK





Reactive pitching is a lot like playing in a sporting event: it's competitive, good offense is key and you need the right team around you. You can also execute the perfect play at the most opportune time, and the score still might not go your way.

Many PR professionals never take the opportunity to pitch reactively, as it's challenging to plan for and takes a certain expertise to execute. It can also be seen as risky, because reactive pitching often requires making a prediction, taking a strong stance or going head-to-head with competitors. However, reactive pitching is a tactic that secures coverage without having any news of your own and can result in highly-visible mentions that showcase your executives as thought leaders in a given industry.

In this playbook, we'll introduce three reactive PR formations brands can use to secure media coverage. Each formation takes advantage of something happening in the news, whether it be an emerging trend, a global event or a competitor announcement.

TRENDJACKING

Formation 1 requires first identifying an emerging trend happening in your industry before it becomes commonplace. It could be something you learned about in interactions with customers and prospects, such as a new buying pattern or industry pain point. It could be a topic you've read about a few times — like AI taking over jobs or technology killing work-life balance — that keeps coming up. It could be a combination of the two.

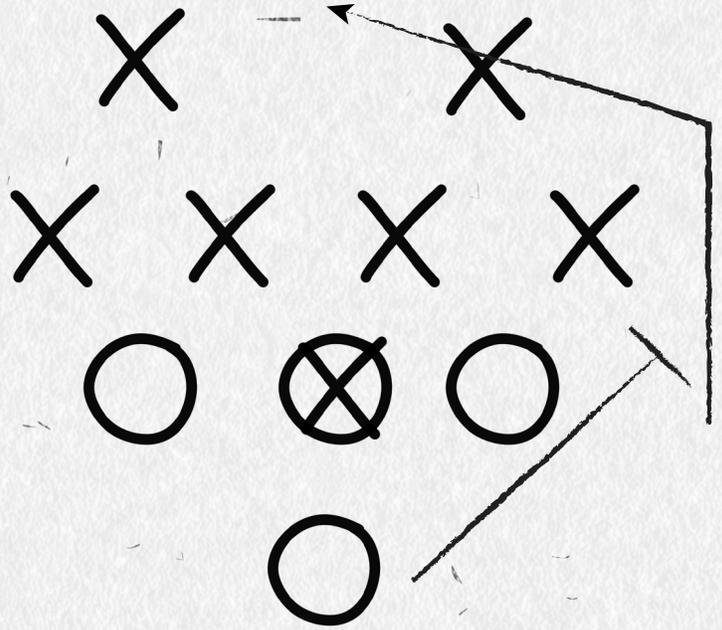
Either way, once you've identified an industry trend, look to thought leaders at your organization who can comment on it. What about the trend do they think is going to stop, start or continue? Do they think it's something to watch or a passing fad? (Either stance, as long as they're willing to stand firm, can be used in media outreach.) If your company has data that could relate to the industry trend, it can also be used with, or in place of, commentary from a thought leader.

From there, review game film: Who's already writing about the industry trend? What are your competitors saying about the industry trend? Plays in this formation are most impactful only when a trend is new or emerging. Try the play too early and you won't have enough support to call it a trend. Try it too late and your competitor might beat you to the endzone.

Understanding what's already being said about a possible trend not only has the potential to help you avoid possible roadblocks when executing, but it also helps provide clarity about what media contacts to target and can help shape your messaging, ensuring you're saying something new and fresh.

PLAY 1.

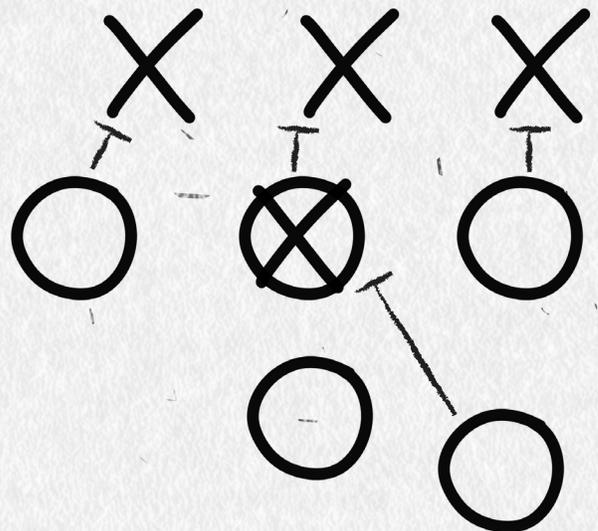
After identifying a trend and securing commentary from a thought leader, make outreach to the media contact(s) who write about the topic and offer new data or thought leader insights about the topic for a possible follow-up piece.



PLAY 2.

Make outreach to media contacts who have not yet covered the trend you identified. Include information from existing analyst reports, research studies and articles written by non-competing outlets as proof points to support the topic as a trend and offer additional data and/or insight about the topic from your company's thought leaders.

*You have options.
Look for any open receiver.*



IN ACTION

Adding New Data to NPR Conversation

The idea for 120Water, a comprehensive digital water-testing platform, was developed based on a trending news story: the water crisis in Flint, Michigan. As a March 2020 IndyStar article explains, founder and Indiana resident Megan Glover was concerned about her water following the crisis in Flint, Michigan, but realized, after some research, there were “no affordable options for her to ensure her water's safety.”

Knowing water quality was a trending topic that 120Water could comment on further, the BLASTmedia team regularly monitored media for articles about the topic of water quality in cities outside of Flint. In the process of media monitoring, BLASTmedia identified an editor who recently wrote about water quality for NPR's Chicago affiliate.

How Do You Solve A Problem Like Lead Pipes? Lessons From Cities Getting It Done

December 9, 2019

MONICA ENG

FROM **WBEZ91.5**
CHICAGO'S PUBLIC RADIO

▶ 14-Minute Listen

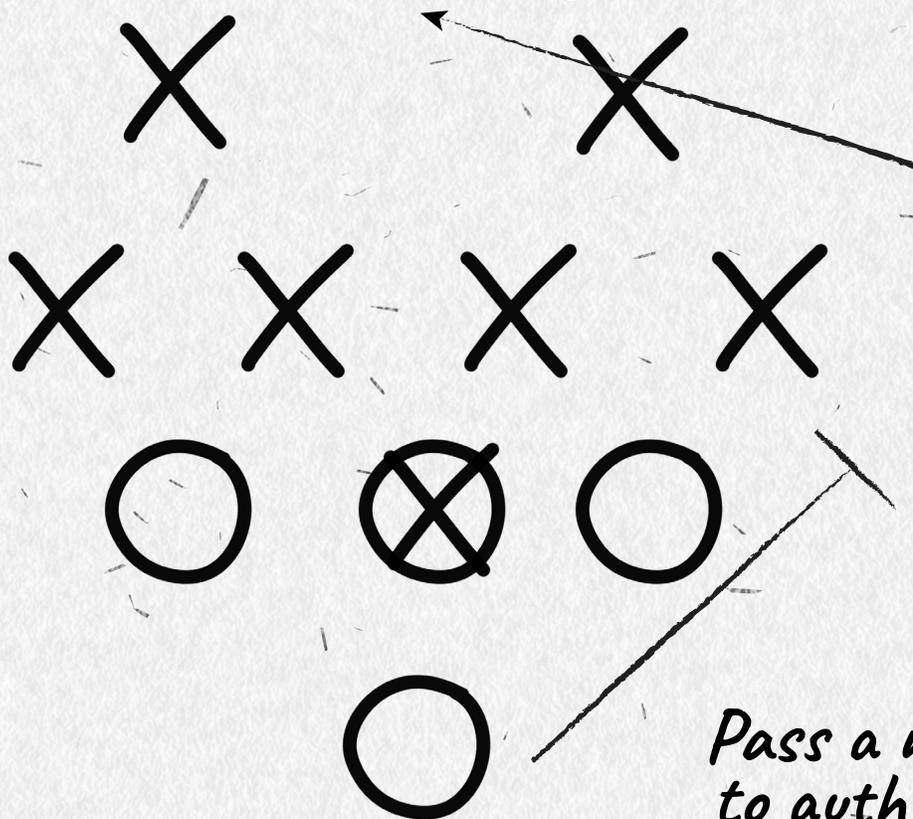
+ PLAYLIST



Rust Belt cities tackling their lead problems offer advice for Chicago on funding, public education and getting political buy-in.
Katherine Nagasawa/WBEZ

RUNNING PLAY 1

BLASTmedia made outreach to the editor at NPR who wrote about the issue of lead pipes and the quality of Chicago's drinking water. As part of the outreach, BLASTmedia offered 120Water, as well as 120Water's customer, Chicago Public Schools, as possible sources for a future story about water quality.



Pass a new source to author of NPR piece covering Chicago water quality.

BREAKING NEWS EVENT

For plays in Formation 2 to be successful, you need to move quickly. As a result, significant preparation — and possibly special teams, like social media — are required.

Begin by brainstorming possible breaking news events, as well as planned events that could have unexpected twists, and consider how these events might impact your industry. These should be events with the potential to monopolize industry news or the entire news cycle.

A few event categories to consider:

- News and events from the largest technology companies in the world
- Major weather events and natural disasters*
- Tragedy including war, death and epidemics*
- Major security data breaches
- Pop culture events like award shows, sporting events and series finales
- Holidays and observances



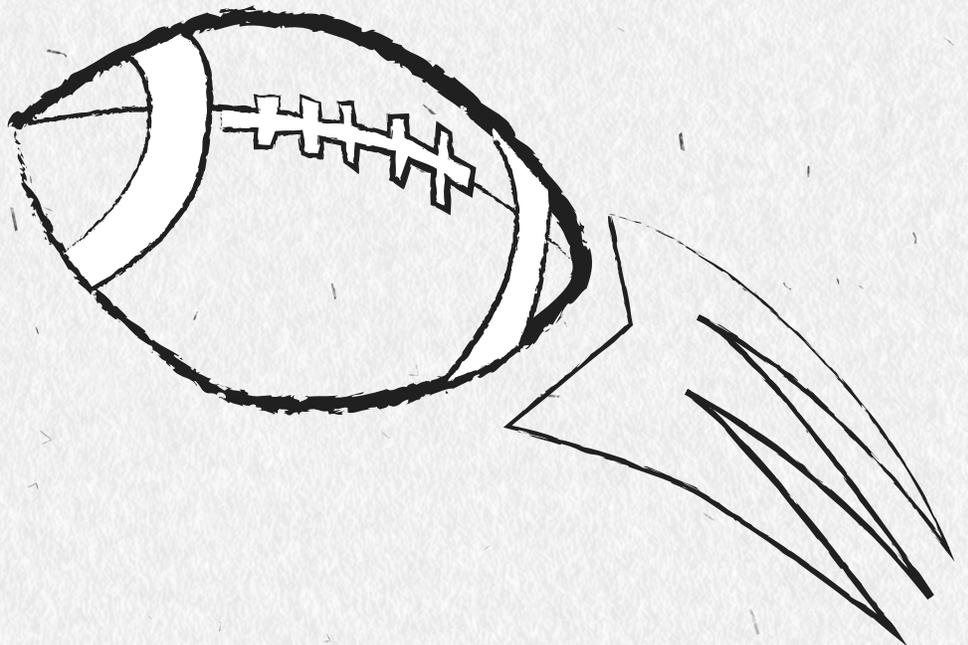
*WARNING

Some breaking news events — including natural disasters and tragedies — are **emotionally charged**. Reacting in a way that comes off as insensitive or seems like you are capitalizing on tragedy can harm your brand. Consult an experienced PR professional before moving forward.

Monitor the news for these kinds of events using Google Alerts, social media or social listening tools. Collect rumors and predicted announcement details and work with your thought leaders to gain their perspective on what they would say if certain scenarios happened.

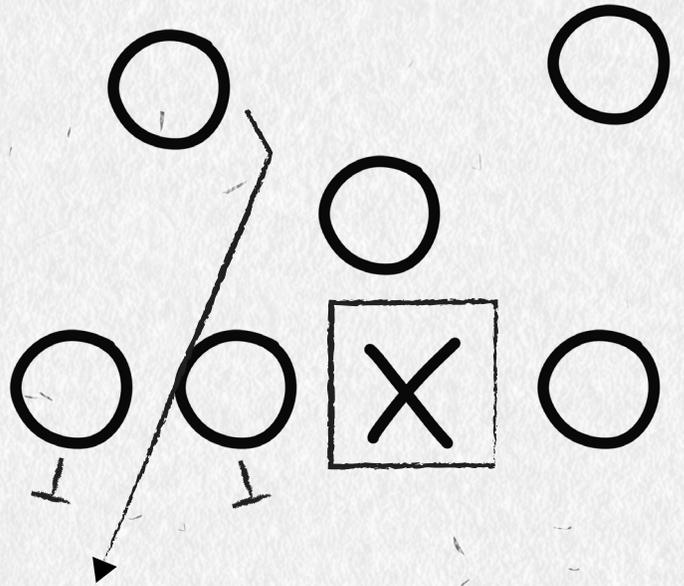
For example: What would happen if the lights went out at the Super Bowl? And, what could you say about it? If your brand focuses on event-venue disaster preparedness, your thought leader might be able to offer insights on what happened and how other stadiums could avoid a similar situation. (Or, if you're Oreo, you could plan a clever social media post about dunking in the dark.)

Remember, for this formation, speed is key. Come to the game with pre-approved commentary from your thought leaders or an idea of what they're willing to expand on through an interview. If you wait until the scenario occurs to develop a stance, you may miss your window.

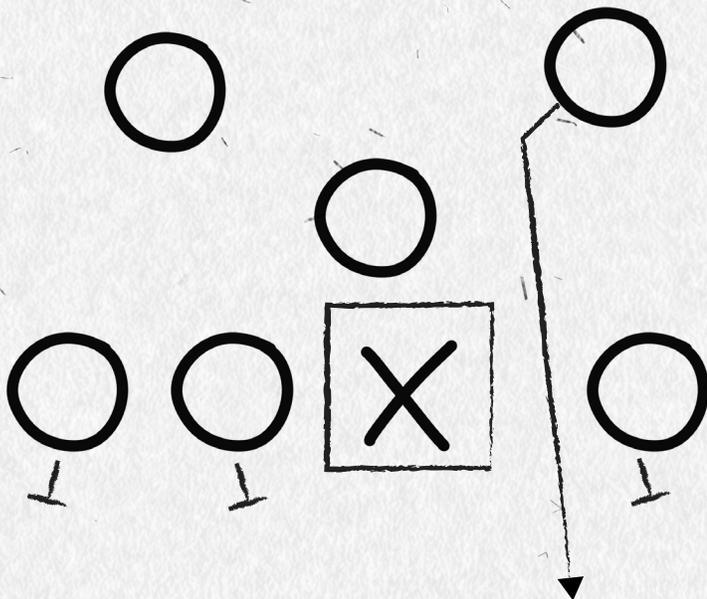


PLAY 1.

After the announcement is confirmed or the event occurs, make outreach to media contacts who already covered the event ahead of time. Offer commentary from your thought leader about the impact of what just happened in the form of a pre-approved quote, to increase the odds of being included in a story already in progress. You can also offer your thought leader as an interview source.



*Don't get called for a false start.
Wait for confirmation before
making outreach.*



PLAY 2.

After the announcement is confirmed or the event occurs, reach out to media contacts who cover similar topics but have yet to cover this event. Offer commentary from your thought leader about the impact of what just happened. In this case, you're not only offering a source, but you also might be the one breaking the news and be the lead in the story.

IN ACTION

Capitalizing on Apple's Big Event

Greenlight Guru, the leading quality management software for medical devices, partnered with BLASTmedia to develop a PR strategy that would, in part, help establish the company and its founder, Jon Speer, as a thought leader in the medical device industry.

One national news event watched closely each September is the Apple event, where they announce new products. The events are highly anticipated, and the announcements dominate technology news headlines. BLASTmedia's research of rumors-based articles, new hires and specs leaks ahead of the announcement pointed toward Apple announcing a new Apple Watch 4 with heart-monitoring/EKG capabilities, making the product an FDA Class 2 Medical Device — Apple's first product requiring FDA clearance.

Bringing the rumors and predicted announcement details to the client, BLASTmedia and Greenlight agreed there was an opportunity to leverage Jon's expertise in the FDA space. Using information uncovered during a story-mining session, BLASTmedia identified the Apple Watch was "cleared" by the FDA but not approved — a significant difference Jon could speak to in detail. The team decided upon a reactive strategy to offer clarification and perspective to journalists on the process of receiving FDA clearance and the difference between FDA clearance and FDA approval.

Leading up to the Apple event, the account team compiled a reactive media list based on top-tier tech and business writers actively covering the Apple rumors and predictions. The goal was to have a list of contacts ready to go once the rumors were confirmed at the event.

RUNNING PLAY 1

BLASTmedia made plans and gathered commentary in anticipation of the rumors being confirmed. After the Apple announcement was confirmed, BLASTmedia immediately made outreach to editors at top-tier consumer technology and business news publications who had covered Apple rumors, offering Jon's expertise in the medical device industry to explain the blurring lines between fitness trackers and medical devices.



Featured Article



How the Apple Watch changed the world

Three years later Swiss watches are still hanging on -- but for how long?

John Biggs @johnbiggs / 12:33 PM EDT • October 31, 2018

Comment



COMPETITOR NEWSJACKING

Your competitors are going to have news. Formation 3 takes advantage of that fact.

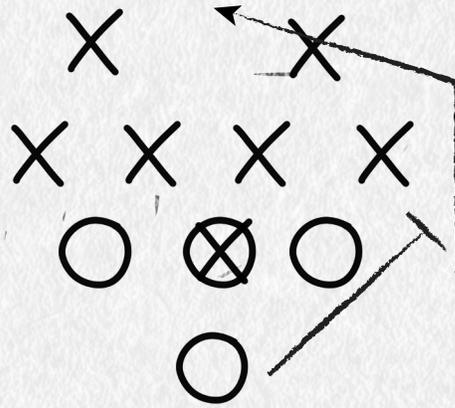
Consistent competitor monitoring is key to the success of any play in this formation. Scout your competition by monitoring their updates through Google Alerts, their social media channels, company blog or daily searches. When you see the news post or catch wind of an upcoming announcement, it's time for action.

Touch base with your CEO for perspective regarding the possible impact of the competitor's news on existing customers and the marketplace overall. Is this good or bad for customers? How will the competitor's news impact the industry overall? What should others in the industry know about what's happening?

Like other formations in the Reactive PR Playbook, competitor newsjacking requires you to move quickly. This is especially true if you don't hear about the competitor's news until the day it is announced. CEOs may be hard to pin down quickly. If you sense this could be an issue for your organization, you might need a back-up quarterback for this formation. Work to identify an alternate thought leader — possibly another member of the C-Suite or a senior product manager — now who can act in the CEO's place in the event of major competitor news.

PLAY 1.

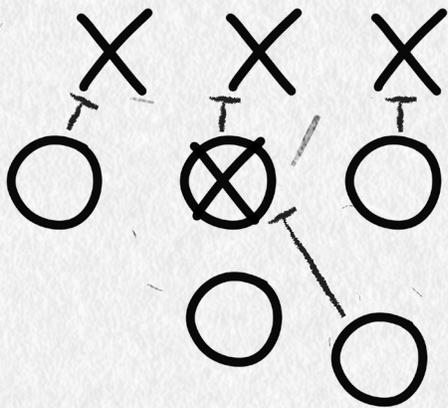
With insights from your CEO in hand, draft an executive quote inclusive of key messaging for the brand. Make outreach to media contacts who covered the competitor in the past — and thus were already familiar and more likely to cover the announcement — offering them the executive quote and the opportunity to speak to the CEO for more commentary.



Time the hit up right to avoid pass interference.

PLAY 2.

After speaking with your CEO, draft and publish a blog post attributed to the CEO and with the full written perspective, including the possible impact on your existing customers, if any. Make outreach to media contacts who covered the competitor in the past — and thus were already familiar and more likely to cover the announcement — linking to the blog and offering them an interview with the CEO.



TWO-POINT CONVERSION

After successfully running play #1 or #2 in this formation, try for a two-point conversion. Monitor for coverage of the competitor's announcement and reactively pitch those covering the news, offering a quote from your CEO as industry commentary with a unique perspective to round out any follow-up stories.

IN ACTION

Newsjacking a Dominant Industry Player's Acquisition

SaaS company Mediafly provides a mobile sales-enablement solution to new business leaders. The company's competitor and dominant industry player, Seismic, acquired SAVO, another company in the sales-enablement space. The acquisition suggested these two well-known competitors would likely dominate industry headlines. However, it also provided a new opportunity for Mediafly to increase mindshare and add value to the conversation.

With the understanding that target media outlets would likely cover the news, BLASTmedia knew they could draw on existing media relationships and reactive pitching experience to hijack the momentum of this competitor announcement. In doing so, the SaaS PR agency could insert commentary that increased brand awareness and positioned Mediafly as a thought leader, but the team had to move fast.

Within days of learning of the forthcoming acquisition, BLASTmedia advised Mediafly on how to leverage the news from a company marketing perspective and organized a reactive PR campaign. The goal was to secure a share of voice for Mediafly in the conversation surrounding the acquisition, giving the company visibility to Seismic and SAVO customers and partners.

As the cornerstone of this reactive campaign, BLASTmedia recommended Mediafly quickly get perspective from its CEO regarding the possible impact of the acquisition on existing customers and the marketplace overall.

RUNNING PLAY 1.

BLASTmedia drafted an executive quote for Mediafly's CEO inclusive of key messaging and what the acquisition news meant for the sales enablement industry as a whole, as well as for both of the competitors' customers. As soon as the acquisition news went public, BLASTmedia made outreach to marketing trade, sales trade and local media contacts who covered SAVO or Seismic in the past — and thus were already familiar with the companies and more likely to cover the acquisition.

Seismic to Acquire SAVO Group to Extend Sales Enablement Market Leadership

By Ameya Dusane

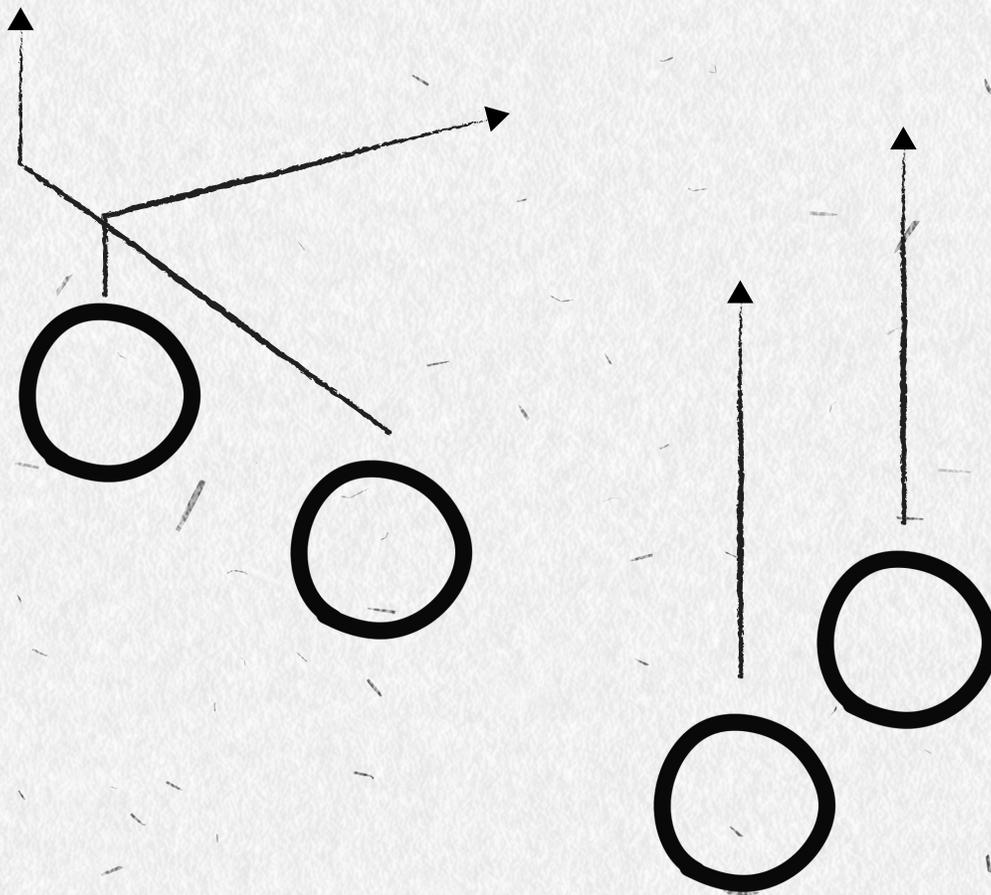
May 08 2018 | 05:32 PM | 3 Mins Read |  [Read Mode](#)

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TWO-POINT CONVERSION

In the days following, BLASTmedia monitored for coverage of the announcement and reactively pitched those covering the acquisition, offering the quote as industry commentary with a unique perspective to round out any stories.



DOES THE TWO-POINT CONVERSION WORK?

Yes! As a result of running competitor newsjacking play #1, combined with the two-point conversion, Mediafly's CEO was quoted in all but one piece of industry coverage surrounding Seismic's acquisition of SAVO. This play can also be applied to other formations, as long as the story you're reacting to is significant enough to drive multiple articles and as long you offer a new perspective.

POSTGAME ANALYSIS

Reactive pitching isn't for every PR team. Even with preparation and knowledge of the game, some PR pros — and leadership at the brands they serve — aren't going to feel comfortable under the lights of a big stadium.

However, if your team is willing to make a prediction, take a stance or go head-to-head with competitors, you can score meaningful media coverage.

READY TO GET YOUR HEAD IN THE GAME?

We want to be part of your team!

Contact us to learn more about how BLASTmedia uses reactive pitching to secure media coverage for our SaaS brands like Greenlight Guru, Mediafly, Smartling and more.

