



Building Media Coverage for Industry Events

CMP Media LLC is a high-tech media company providing information to builders, sellers and users of technology worldwide. From 1995 to 2001, FS Communications managed media relations for many of CMP's electronics tradeshow and conference events, including the Embedded Systems Conferences (ESC). The series of annual ESC conferences represent the largest educational forum for engineers and designers working with embedded systems. Originally perceived as an event for "electronics geeks," the Embedded Systems Conferences did not initially receive wide media coverage. FS Communications helped change that by building credibility in the trade press and developing general media interest in ESC events.

The agency created a "news bureau" program to promote the electronics-related conferences to the trade press, gaining regular coverage in publications such as EE Times, EDN, and Electronic News. In 1998, the trade show marketing team determined that it could increase market share through publicity targeted at a broader, less technical audience. The challenge for FS Communications was to gain the interest of general media and business publications.

Since "embedded systems" was not a generally known term, we took a creative approach to reach this audience by focusing on consumer products that are enabled by embedded technology. By surveying exhibitors, the public relations team created a list of the most interesting "intelligent electronics" being demonstrated at the shows. These were the news hooks used to capture the attention of daily newspapers and television news producers.

The FS Communications program encouraged exhibitors to demonstrate "cool" end-user products in their booths. The agency also toured the show floor at the event in search of interesting end-user devices, evaluated and prepped spokespeople, and then guided key journalists to these booths. Information provided in advance by the exhibitors was used in pitches to encourage technology reporters at local television stations and newspapers to cover the event.

The success of this approach evolved into "The Innovation Showcase," which was devised for the spring 2001 Embedded Systems Conference at San Francisco's Moscone Center. As part of a formal program developed by the agency, exhibitors were invited to nominate interesting and unusual embedded system applications for a special display at the convention center. Submissions such as an Internet-enabled coffee maker and a music player the size of a stick of gum captured the attention of major news outlets such as CNN, Red Herring, the San Francisco Chronicle, U.S. News & World Report, Upside and Wired, among others.

In 2001, print and online coverage of the Embedded Systems Conferences included coverage in major dailies such as the San Francisco Chronicle, Boston Globe, and Chicago Tribune as well as numerous mentions in other local and electronics trade press

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publications. These included articles in EE Times, Electronic News, Electronic Buyer's News, Electronic Products, ZDNet News, and Software Development Times, among others, with a total of more than 19 million impressions. Broadcast coverage of the events appeared on television stations including CNN, KBWB, KICU, KNTV, Tech TV, and on C/NET radio. Other national media outlets attending the events and covering exhibiting companies included Wired, Investor's Business Daily, and Red Herring.

During the course of the six-year campaign, press registrations at the Embedded Systems Conference increased by approximately 50 percent. Increased media attention also had a positive impact on exhibit sales as the CMP Electronics Group Trade Shows became known as a key vehicle for press coverage.

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