

Digital PR Target List Checklist

A working checklist to build, vet, and maintain a digital PR contact list that earns replies instead of bounces. Pairs with the full guide: *How to Build a Digital PR Target List That Doesn't Waste Your Time*.

STEP 1 · DEFINE THE BEATS, NOT THE INDUSTRY

- ☐ Wrote down the 3–5 specific story angles our brand could plausibly earn coverage for
- ☐ Matched each angle to a realistic journalist beat (not a generic industry label)
- ☐ Confirmed each beat has active, recent coverage — not just a category that sounds related

STEP 2 · SOURCE CONTACTS FROM LIVE SIGNALS

- ☐ Pulled competitor backlinks from the last 6 months and logged the outlets/journalists
- ☐ Ran date-filtered Google searches for “best [category]” and “[category] roundup”
- ☐ Tracked journalist bylines across job moves, not just outlet names
- ☐ Checked trade newsletter mastheads for named editors
- ☐ Noted any relevant podcast guest appearances
- ☐ Set up at least one HARO-style query platform (Connectively, Qwoted, Featured, JustReachOut)

STEP 3 · TIER EVERY CONTACT

- ☐ Tier 1 — Active beat journalists (individual, high-touch pitches only)
- ☐ Tier 2 — Roundup / “best of” page owners (checked last-updated date)
- ☐ Tier 3 — Adjacent bloggers and smaller creators
- ☐ Tier 4 — Resource and directory page owners

STEP 4 · VET BEFORE ANYONE GOES ON THE LIST

- ☐ Recency — published on-topic in the last 90 days?
- ☐ Reachability — verified current email (not a guessed pattern)?
- ☐ Page health — roundup/resource page is actually indexed and ranking?
- ☐ Editorial independence — not a thinly-veiled sponsored-content mill?
- ☐ Prior behavior — has this contact linked to newer/smaller brands before?

- ☐ Anyone failing 2+ checks moved to a “revisit in 90 days” list, not deleted

STEP 5 · BUILD THE LIST WITH A SPINE

- ☐ Tracking sheet or CRM set up (BuzzStream, Pitchbox, or a structured spreadsheet)
- ☐ Columns include: name, outlet, specific beat, tier, verified contact, last published date, last contacted date, response status, and personal notes
- ☐ List size is right-sized (40–75 well-vetted contacts beats 1,000 unverified ones)

ONGOING · QUARTERLY MAINTENANCE

- ☐ Dropped contacts with 2 bounces or 3 ignored pitches in a row
- ☐ Re-checked roundup pages for freshness and promoted/demoted accordingly
- ☐ Added anyone new who covered a competitor in the last quarter
- ☐ Re-verified email addresses before the next outreach push