



## Managing Media Relations at New Scotland Yard

Remember Gerald Ratner? He was responsible for one of the biggest PR gaffes in UK corporate history. In 1991 Ratner was the Chairman of the largest jewellery chain in the world. With powerful brands like H Samuel and Ernest Jones he was the undisputed ruler of the high street jewellery market.

In April of that year, at an Institute of Directors Convention, Ratner stated that his stores "Sold a pair of earrings for under a pound, which is cheaper

Prior to the terrorist attacks on his City, the media and public had frequently vilified Giuliani for some of his policies. However, he emerged as an unexpected hero - his leadership, communication skills and ability to reassure a stricken people were admired throughout the world.

These two very different scenarios demonstrate the importance of effective communication, particularly in maintaining or creating a positive

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than a prawn sandwich from Marks & Spencer, but probably wouldn't last as long". He went on to describe a cheap sherry glass as "total rubbish".

In ten minutes the reputation of the organisation, a reputation that had taken years to nurture, was in tatters. Consumer confidence collapsed and the company was driven to the verge of bankruptcy. Ratner resigned, hundreds of people lost their jobs, household brands disappeared and the firm renamed itself Signet.

reputation. Indeed, our insatiable appetite for more information and news on demand, continually fuelled by the Internet age, significantly increases the need for the most effective corporate communications.

With this in mind, Solcara Spotlight enables the Corporate Communications Centre or Press Office to deliver rapid and consistent responses to enquiries relating to any kind of incident, event or crisis.

The first client for Solcara Spotlight was New Scotland Yard, headquarters of the Metropolitan Police, which operates one of the busiest press offices in the country, handling 500 to 600 enquiries, and at least one major incident, every day.

A few years ago, Sir John Stevens, former Metropolitan Police Commissioner, in a Special Notice sent to all members of the Met (and published on [www.met.police.co.uk](http://www.met.police.co.uk)) set out his plans for a more proactive relationship with the media and general public, concluding that a cautious approach can breed

Contrast this to the reputation of Rudolph Giuliani, former mayor of New York, whose 'stock' grew significantly in the aftermath of the tragic events of September 11.



suspicion and contempt, while an open approach will breed confidence and respect.

Solcara Spotlight helps New Scotland Yard to achieve this more proactive approach to stakeholder communications.

Bob Cox, Chief Press Officer at the Yard, outlines his policy, "We are open and honest in dealing with the media and respond to their enquiries within their deadlines as far as possible. We will tell the media things which:

**"the right information, to the right people, at the right time."**

- ▶ Are in the best interests of the public to know about
- ▶ Help to show the public the way in which the police go about their work
- ▶ Help to build public confidence in the police.

"However, in doing so we need to balance the policing benefit against protecting the rights of any individual or victim and ensuring the successful conclusion of any investigation.



"We use Spotlight to ensure that we consistently communicate the right information, to the right people, at the right time. London is a very busy place: it is the capital city; the seat of parliament; the home of the head of state; and the diplomatic centre of the UK.

When a major incident is taking place the international media spotlight focuses on our Press Bureau – we are the trusted source of information.

They demand instant responses to their queries. Spotlight allows us to easily record specific events and then link enquiries, responses and

all subsequent developments. This provides users with a 'thread' through which they can track an incident from start to end. They can also easily search and retrieve previous records quickly and efficiently should there be renewed interest in an old story."

All information entered into Spotlight is name and time-stamped. This precise and accurate recording of information not only ensures users can see who said what to whom, thereby ensuring consistency in communication, but enables the information to be used in court or tribunals should the need arise.

"Where confidence and trust is established there may be occasions when press and senior officers will feel able to talk to reporters on an 'off the record' basis – dealing with matters not for public disclosure, explaining reasons for maintaining confidentiality and specifying what might be published.

Within Spotlight, the unique colour coding of recorded details enables officers to differentiate quickly between categories of information. For example, "for offer" may be information that can be given freely to an enquirer, whereas "not for release" is strictly confidential information."

In recent years the work of New Scotland Yard's press department has been commended on more than one occasion for its professionalism and dedication in handling the national and international media. For example, during events such as the May Day anti-capitalist riots, the Ladbroke Grove rail crash and the Boxing Day Hackney gun siege the Yard's communication function was highly praised by PR professionals from within other forces and across other industry sectors.

Thanks to Solcara Spotlight, the chance of New Scotland Yard 'Doing a Ratner' these days is very low indeed.

## Solcara Spotlight - the benefits

- Online access ensures everyone at all locations, is on message
- Communicate consistently across brands, geographies & teams
- Prioritise high value press enquiries & activities
- Improve productivity by reducing duplication of effort
- Streamlined review, approval & publishing of press releases
- Monitor & analyse media coverage to assess the effectiveness of your communications; measure results & ROI
- Easily publish content from Spotlight to your corporate web site; audit journalist activity to measure interest
- Enquiry tracking - visibility over who said what to whom
- Journalist monitoring enables accurate targeting of messages
- Media list provides contact history & improves targeting
- Online briefing centre for spokespeople ensures that everyone can deliver a consistent message
- Ready to react prepackaged briefings simplify response & ensure consistency & speed

**Solcara**  
The Long Room  
Coppermill Lock  
Harefield  
Middlesex UB9 6JA  
United Kingdom

Telephone  
**+44 (0) 1895 820 950**

Fax  
**+44 (0)1895 820 955**

Web  
[www.solcaraspotlight.com](http://www.solcaraspotlight.com)

Email  
[info@solcara.com](mailto:info@solcara.com)