

The Meridian Group
EXPERTISE POSITIONING

The Meridian Group (www.the-meridiangrp.com) is a Pittsburgh-based investment banking, turnaround and Mergers and Acquisitions consulting firm specializing in middle-market businesses. The firm wanted to capitalize on a prestigious award from the Turnaround Management Association for its work with Columbus, Ohio, slipper manufacturer R.G. Barry Corp. between 2004 and 2006. The goal was to leverage the award and the work through the media as a means of heightening the firm's profile and highlighting its expertise.

The need

The firm engaged Hodge Schindler to develop a program that would spread its name and thinking through a variety of media channels. Meridian Group also needed consulting help revamping its Web site, which looked dated and did not provide a spotlight for its experience or thought leadership.

Our approach

Discussions with Meridian Group helped define the strategies: bylined articles, expert source quotes and pursuing award opportunities. Meridian principals identified three general topics for the media push – turnarounds, pension fulfillment and fraud. The team then narrowed the scope to articles on how turnarounds help troubled companies; how companies will meet federal requirements to fully fund pensions by fall 2008; and corporate bank fraud and how to identify it.

Hodge Schindler developed a list of appropriate publications and Web sites that focused on the three topics, including identifying editorial calendars where the stories would be a natural fit. We then began to position the media via e-mail and phone calls to gauge editor interest, whether in the form of bylined articles or features written by the publication's staff using Meridian Group as expert sources.

The outcomes

During the six-month course of the project, Hodge Schindler secured commitments for seven bylined articles:

- Commercial Lending Review – Fraud and how to recognize it.
- Secured Lender – Lending in a turnaround.
- Business Law Today – Fraud as it affects the legal end.
- ABI Journal – R.G. Barry turnaround story from a legal perspective.
- ACC Docket – Another spin on fraud.
- Journal of Structured Finance – Initially interested in R.G. Barry lending covenants.
- The Deal – R.G. Barry turnaround story as an acquisition alternative.

We also generated three expert source opportunities with other publications and submitted an application for M&A Advisor magazine's inaugural Turnaround Awards competition. Meridian Group was named a finalist in two categories, based on the R.G. Barry-focused application.

Meridian's R.G. Barry turnaround was also featured in Time magazine's June 4, 2007 issue, and Hodge Schindler is advising the firm on how to leverage that coverage over the remainder of 2007. We are also consulting with Meridian in ongoing fine-tuning of its new Web site to help the firm improve its Internet-based marketing efforts well into 2008.