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## Be A PR-Savvy Marketer

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Enhance and sustain the growth of your business with public relations added to your marketing strategy.

Whether you're an entrepreneur, corporate marketing executive, or nonprofit organization, basic public relations (PR) can dramatically enhance your presence in the marketplace, extend the reach of your advertising dollars, and impact your bottom line.

In today's fast-paced social media world, PR can greatly impact your digital marketing efforts as well. But what exactly is PR and how is it different than advertising? And do I need both? Absolutely!

The difference between advertising and PR may be boiled down to one sentence: Advertising is what you say about yourself and/or your products or services; PR is what others (third parties such as clients or the media) say about you—it's that simple. Both marketing vehicles set important perceptions about "you" in the marketplace; however, PR adds the necessary credibility factor to your marketing efforts that, as an end result, greatly impacts your advertising.

PR, which I label public relationships, delivers a positive, trusting view about you and your business to your relationship audiences. This trust factor is important, for people buy from whom they trust. According to Ries & Trout, two well-known marketing strategy gurus, marketing is not a battle of products; it's a battle of perceptions. And, during these economy-conscious times, sales will be better obtained by those companies who hold a reliable, financially sound, and well-managed, credible perception in the public's eye.

Progressive companies who utilize PR's full arsenal will not only influence the marketplace, but also sustain cost effective, positive exposure, regardless of the economy. By integrating a proper balance of PR in an overall marketing strategy, companies will maintain their public image and tap into periphery or secondary markets they otherwise would have overlooked.

There are strong benefits gained from a solid PR program. It's a powerful tool that is economical, credible, an image builder/rebuilder, and a lead generator. Typically, companies can't afford to have their ads reach out to more than their primary markets. PR via publicity efforts, as an example, can be directed at virtually all primary and secondary media/markets. This enables a company to saturate its target market, while obtaining a better, more viable economical marketing impact and sales picture.

An effective PR campaign accomplishes more than just pitching and placing informative articles in media. A good campaign extends the effectiveness of other promotional activities. For instance: If the public becomes accustomed to hearing and reading about you through the news, they will be more open to absorbing the content of your advertising. This piggy-back effect uses the effectiveness of PR to maximize the efficiency of your limited ad dollars.

On this note, because PR keeps your message in front of key audiences, it enables your ads to be more judiciously placed. As a rule, your ads should be repetitively placed in media that reach your target audiences.

In our current email and social media- driven business world, these days, few marketing reps want to make the inevitable cold call for client contact. Leads, which can be enticed through publicity, are a boon to any company's sales force. An inquiry at least provides an interested prospect, which is a starting point for the next step—the sales call! Also called "mood marketing," PR creates a positive environment so that the sale or relationship will

have a greater impact on your business.

Since PR is an evolving process, to achieve its benefits, as with advertising, certain vehicles must be employed on a continual basis. Although there are many more marketing/PR practices, your program should include at least the following basics:

#### The News Release

The most frequently used PR vehicle that communicates your "newsworthy please" news to the public through the media. This story can be used to publicize new projects, report on company achievements, announce developments, review your involvement with the community, and highlight new business. Publication frequency can prove quite valuable and show that your company is significant enough to be referred to continually by the press. Be sure to add your website address in order to attract search-engine media optimization.

#### Aiming the Release

The time, money, and energy your company spends to engineer a new project demands that you try to achieve optimal marketing media reach for each news announcement released. Market saturation should aim at both horizontal media (exposing audiences in all markets to your message) and to vertical media (reaching other publics with which your company does business). Trade journals, magazines, newsletters, virtual/traditional media, associations, and broadcast may also be considered for auxiliary audience awareness.

Research your media list with your PR firm prior news dissemination to be certain it's comprehensive. Make sure your story has an attention getting headline and target your news to the right media contact name. Also, please examine your story to ensure it is truly "newsworthy," or do not disseminate. And please, never ever give the "kiss of death" to the publisher or editor with such words as: "I advertise in your publication so you should print my news."

#### The Feature or Byline Article

Such articles may take the form of case histories, positioning statements, or "how to" training techniques. It's important for you and your PR firm to keep on top of applicable editorial calendars, which include online and social media. This research will keep you abreast of specific issues with in depth coverage of your market.

Additional credibility can be achieved if a company spokesperson writes the article and uses her byline. This research procedure elevates the stature of the writer in the eyes of the public and lends recognizable prestige to the author as a known expert in the industry. Additionally, an advertorial (an ad that is placed in the style of a story or report) may be used as an offspring of the feature and placed in applicable media and include a special offer. Advertorials can impact sales while delivering great information from your company!

#### Marketing the Article

Since publicity is truly earned and valuable, it is important to extend the life of the story's one-time appearance. To preserve the third party endorsement, reprints may be obtained from the publication. Reprints can provide extra mileage for the article as marketing leave behinds, direct mailers, proposal attachments, and powerful trade show literature. They act as prestige builders, conveying to the prospect that the editor considered your company a truly valued authority.

When added to your marketing package or press kit (a packet that contains business background information), the reprint offers profound, credible value to your burgeoning business. Reprints may also be placed as ads and inserted into a newspaper or chamber of commerce newsletter and mentioned in your ad as interesting information for a prospective client.

#### Crisis Communications

Because business continually affects wage scales, taxes, investments, and the community, today's public is more watchful of the local industry than ever before. Maintaining the proper profile with employees, the press, and the public is critical to any company's success.

For example, imagine one news release in a publication with a circulation of more than 500,000. Multiplying this by audience readability (aside from innumerable impressions in social media) may potentially equal millions upon

millions of impressions. Applying this example to an unfortunate episode at your company could prove disastrous.

How to publicly act instead of react by being candid, credible, and corrective in restoring your corporate profile is crucial. It's important to plan a step-by-step crisis plan within your organization to protect your image in the public's eye.

The key to the above strategies is to achieve the right balance of both PR and advertising within a comprehensive marketing mix plan. Really, credibility and sales brand identity are reasons enough for employing the expansive marketing reach of PR. It's a powerful marketing tool that can add power and cost effectiveness to your advertising regardless of the economic climate today and in the future.

Trish Doll is the owner of Publicity Works based in Bowmansville, Pa., an award winning, energetic, PR-powered advertising and marketing agency. Doll represents a diverse local, national, and international roster of clientele, offering PR-based marketing with breakthrough creative advertising. [www.publicityworks.com](http://www.publicityworks.com).©

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