

Aligning PR to your BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

By **Julia Nekich**

SEASONED PUBLIC relations consultants know that plenty of careful planning is needed to ensure a PR campaign meets a business or brand's objectives. It's the aims and objectives of a business (or the business 'problem') that helps form the strategy and, in turn, drives the entire PR campaign.

There's no use securing media stories, speaking at an event, or putting on an event if it won't meet your objectives. For instance, if you're a female owner of an architectural practice and a mum, would you really agree to be part of a feature in a women's magazine about busy mums who do yoga, for instance? While this kind of story might appeal to you, would it really help meet your business objectives — which are probably to gain the attention of the industry, government, developers and home owners for the services you offer?

Why a PR plan is important: Running a PR campaign without a good PR plan would be much like running a business without a business plan. A PR plan should outline who you want to target, detail the strategy to be deployed, a timeline of PR activities, how the campaign budget will be used, and how it will be evaluated. Above all, the plan should reiterate what your aims and objectives are and how they translate into realistic PR aims and objectives.

What are your objectives?: Any well-formed and up-to-date business plan will have clear, achievable and time-bound aims and objectives for the business in a number of areas. It would also contain vision and mission statements. This should give you a good idea of who your target markets are, what perception you want them to have of your service or products, and where you want the business to head in the near future. A good PR campaign should align with a business plan like this — and the more you

share your business plan with your PR consultant, the better the PR outcomes.

Three issues to consider

There are three things to think about when aligning PR to your business's objectives:

Send the right messages to your target market and the media: Once you know what you want the PR to achieve for you and who your target markets are, develop five to 10 key messages to convey to your targets through the PR. These messages should be crafted to help meet your objectives but also in a way that will be accepted by media (ie, don't make them too promotional). Stick to them throughout the campaign. All press releases and media interviews would incorporate these messages to some degree.

Back up your messages: Your key messages will be more powerful or persuasive if you can back them. For instance, one of my clients' key messages (he is a property expert) is that he can help investors create profitable property portfolios and eventually not have to rely on their wages for retirement. He can back this message in two ways: he did it himself in his twenties, and he wrote a book detailing the 'how'. He gives this book away for free through the media and during his speaking engagements. That's pretty powerful and the response by the public has proved it: after one particular media story that promoted the book giveaway, consumers downloaded 9000 copies of the book from my client's website within a week.

Choose the right PR avenues: Let's go back to the female owner of the architectural practice. A loose objective might be to increase awareness of her services and work among home owners and developers. This might translate into PR objectives such as

securing editorial in homes, building and property media; and securing two industry speaking engagements within the next six months.

Her PR consultant would have developed a few key messages and compiled case studies that would pique the interest of these targets. Through which avenues would this business meet its objective? Possible PR avenues would include industry trade shows (for speaking and promotional opportunities — and yes, occasionally you can speak at these shows without buying a stand); industry networking events (again, for speaking); magazines, newspaper supplements, online media in the fields of interiors, property, developments, design and construction; property segments on TV (including pay TV).

Anything outside of these avenues — such as women's magazines — would fall into a 'B' list of PR avenues.

Following on from these three facets of a campaign, set some realistic timeframes for achieving outcomes. We're talking months, not weeks. And be realistic about what your budget can achieve. PR is a long-term strategy — particularly if you've never used PR in the past or are unknown by the media. Your PR consultant should be able to advise you on what's possible for your business in the first three, six and 12 months. ●



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