

Marcommments

Tips on marketing communications

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Six Common PR Myths

If you believe these, you're limiting your company's communications success

Following are some common myths about PR.

Below each myth are explanations about how the PR process *actually* works.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us (see phone and e-mail information at end of article).

Myth 1: PR doesn't help sales

Many communications efforts are very sales-focused—and rightly so.

In the long run, your PR, advertising and marketing efforts should lead to more sales or prevent your company from losing existing sales because of changing consumer preferences.

But, just because all your press releases and media clips

don't have 800 numbers and the phrase "Act Now, Limited Time Offer!" that doesn't mean they're not helping sales.

People know when they're being "sold" through advertising, but the beauty of having the media cover your product or company is something called a "third-party endorsement."

Readers think, "Hey, this article in the paper says ACME company is doing a great job. The paper has no reason to exaggerate ACME, so it probably is good."

Share those articles with your prospects, along with your other marketing communications efforts, to give a broad picture of your abilities.

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MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS, PUBLIC RELATIONS, COPYWRITING
AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

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Myth 2: It’s too hard to control the message with PR

Yes, it’s challenging to get the media to report on exactly what you want. By contrast, with advertising, you’re buying the space in the publication, and you determine what is used and when it runs.

You also need to buy the space for your ad, and that can run into thousands of dollars. And, you’ll have to run your ad several times to ensure the largest number of people see it.

Add to that the cost of designing and writing the ad, and advertising can become an expensive proposition—all for the right of controlling your message.

I’m not knocking advertising. It’s a vital part of marketing communications, but understand complete control of your message comes at a price (literally, what you spend, and figuratively, because people are more suspicious of ads).

With PR, you’re only paying

for the time of your professional—not placement.

Myth 3: The media never get our news right

For the most part, news the media report is as accurate as the background they get.

Some of the companies that complain the most about bad coverage are the ones with few, if any, clearly understandable background materials to distribute.

Good background information and prompt responses to media inquiries are especially important for daily papers as well as radio and television.

Their deadline pressures are more intense than for monthlies, which often have a fact-checking department.

Myth 4: We already post plenty of news releases

Many organizations do a pretty good job of regularly posting news releases, but that’s not enough to get media attention.

Releases need to be sent to reporters who cover your news, and you’ll need to follow up with

them to make sure you gave them what they need.

Some of the companies that complain the most about bad coverage are the ones with few, if any, clearly understandable background materials to distribute.

As with any “sales” call, pitching news to journalists is an ongoing endeavor. You rarely sell your company’s product or service to every prospect on the first call. The same is true of PR.

Myth 5: We already know a couple of journalists

Having a relationship with journalists is certainly a good thing, but you need more than one or two contacts.

Also, you don’t need to have an “in” at every publication or TV and radio station. You need to know what makes good news and be able to pitch it to journalists you’ve never met in all your potential geographic markets.

As with sales, if you’re doing PR only with people you personally know, your market is too small.

Myth 6: PR takes too long to show results

PR can take a while to show results, especially if your target media are weekly or monthly publications.

These media chart out what they cover weeks or months in advance, and your new PR has to get in line behind everything else already scheduled for review.

For example, if you want to get in a monthly publication for December, you’ll need background materials (which will take a few days or weeks to prepare) and pitch to the right journalists in early September at the very latest.

The nice thing about this lag is that even after you finish your PR efforts, weeks or months later you might still get hits in the media. ❖

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