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Guerrilla Sales & Marketing

Use PR as Weapon Against Competition

Lori Turner-Wilson

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Editor's Note: This is the first in a two-part series.

With the rise in digital media and the advertising noise cluttering the marketplace, getting noticed by prospective customers has become increasingly challenging. Standing out is key in advertising – either through a highly creative or compelling campaign, or by the sheer volume of your messaging.

That creativity and messaging volume comes at a cost. Supplementing that advertising with public relations is a good way to stretch a limited ad budget and generate a stronger return.

PR provides an organization with exposure to prospective consumers, featuring topics of public interest covered by third parties – such as reporters or bloggers. This third-party endorsement is deemed by most to be more credible in the eyes of the consumer than a traditional ad; many believe it carries three times the value. If managed properly, PR strategies can be a powerful marketing weapon in the veritable war on your competition.

PR is most often used as a supplemental strategy to advertising and not a replacement strategy. Why? With advertising you can control the message. Through compelling imagery and copy, you can help your consumers connect with and gain familiarity with your brand. Most importantly, a well-planned media schedule will ensure you achieve the right mix of “reach” (the number of targeted consumers that have the opportunity to see your ad) and “frequency” (the number of times you put your message in front of them) to help drive consumers to make a purchase decision.

PR can come in many forms, such as bylined articles, media commentary, media interviews or even public speaking. When developing your strategy, it's vital to start with an assessment of your firm's assets.

Is the CEO engaging on camera or better suited for an off-camera interview with a print reporter? Does he most inspire others with his industry knowledge (making the case for a bylined column in a local paper or trade publication) or through his in-person story telling (a possible fit for public speaking or TV interviews). Play to your strengths.

Once you have a strategy in place, next you'll want to establish relationships with reporters and editors who influence the PR channels you're targeting. This starts with research.

Reporters like to know you've done your homework – that you know what industries they cover, the types of stories they gravitate toward, their writing style, etc. They want to see that you are thoughtfully pitching them individually, versus simply including them on a mass distribution of a press release.

This relationship must be two-way. Don't always reach out with a need. Support these reporters by making community connections for them



Lori Turner-Wilson

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when they're trying to land an interview. Send story leads that don't directly benefit your company. Be seen as a responsive resource.

Check back next week for more PR dos and don'ts.

Lori Turner-Wilson is managing partner of RedRover Sales & Marketing, www.redrovercompany.com. You can follow RedRover on Facebook and Twitter.

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