

IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN TODAY'S BUSINESS SCENARIO



ABSTRACT

Public relations (PR) is the set of techniques and strategies related to managing how information about an individual or company is disseminated to the public, and especially the media.

Its primary goals are to disseminate important company news or events, maintain a brand image, and put a positive spin on negative events to minimize their fallout. PR may occur in the form of a company press release, news conference, interviews with journalists, social media posting, or other venues.

INTRODUCTION

Public relations is a common buzz-phrase in business language today, but too few industry professionals actually grasp its true meaning, and how to make it reap maximum benefits. First and foremost, PR is not the same as marketing, and it's entirely different than advertising.

Put simply, it is a strategic communications tool that, when done right, adds value to your company's image and reputation. But unlike advertising, you cannot pay for that particular value; instead, you build it carefully, using different tactics to get the most important messages out there.

I. Public Relations (PR) Meaning, Types, and Practical Examples

What Is Public Relations (PR)?

Every individual or entity operating in the public eye faces the spread of information about them or their practices to the public. While public relations is an industry unto itself, any attempt to portray oneself in a certain way to others can be considered a form of public relations.



Understanding Public Relations (PR)

Although not inherent in the definition, PR is often thought of as "spin," with the goal being to present the person, company, or brand in the best light possible. PR differs from advertising in that PR attempts to represent a person or brand's image in ways that will appear organic, such as generating good press from independent sources and recommending business decisions that will incur public support. Loosely defined until the mid-twentieth century, PR is one of the fastest-growing industries in the United States.

PR is essential to any company's success, especially when shares in the company are publicly traded and the value of a share depends on the public's confidence in a company or brand. In addition to handling media requests, information queries, and shareholder concerns, PR personnel are frequently responsible for crafting and maintaining the corporation's image. Occasionally, PR professionals engage in negative PR or willful attempts to discredit a rival brand or company, although such practices are not in keeping with the industry's code of ethics.

Types of Public Relations

Public relations is often divided into different agencies or departments. Each department is specifically suited to handle a specific aspect below:

Media relations is the emphasis of forging a strong relationship with public media organizations. A media relations team often works directly with external media by directly delivering them company news, providing validated content sources, and being accessible for public comment on other news stories.

Production relations is closely related to the direct operations of a company. This department supports broad marketing plans and is often related to specific, one-time endeavors such as the launch of a new product, a special campaign, or management of a major product change.

Investor relations is the oversight of the relationship between the company and its investors. This aspect of public relations handles investor events, oversees the communication of the release of financial reports, and handles the complaints of investors.

Internal relations is the public relations branch between a company and its employees. Internal relations pertain to counseling employees, ensuring all workers are satisfied with their working conditions, and mediating issues internally to avoid public disclosure of dissatisfaction.

Government relations is the connection between a company and related governing bodies. Some public relations departments want to forge a strong relationship to provide feedback to politicians, sway decision-makers to act in specific ways, and ensure fair treatment of the company's clients.

Community relations is public relations focused on brand and reputation within a specific community. The community could be physical (i.e. a specific city) or non-physical (i.e. the dog-owner community). This branch of public relations keys in on the social niche of the community to align itself with its members.

Customer relations is the bridge that connects the company and its customers. Public relations often involves handling key relationships, conducting market research, understanding the priorities of its customers, and addressing major concerns.

Many public companies have a separate investor relations (IR) department for dealing with communications to shareholders and analysts.

Public Relations vs. Other Departments

Public relations may overlap or be confused with other similar departments. Here's an overview how PR may or may not relate to marketing, advertising, or communications.



Public Relations vs. Marketing

Marketing is sometimes more squarely focused on driving sales, promoting products or services, and ensuring financial success. Meanwhile, public relations is sometimes more focused on managing the reputation of a company or brand.

Both departments may embark on very similar types of activities. For instance, both may interact with customers to garner feedback. From a more direct marketing lens, this information is used to better understand sales trends, product demands, and ways to generate more sales. From a more direct public relations lens, this information is used to understand customer satisfaction, ensure customers are happy, and make sure any dissatisfaction is managed quickly.

Public Relations vs. Advertising

Advertising is the act of garnering public attention, often through the use of various types of media. A company may want to advertise to promote a product, announce expansion into a new market for a growth company, or reveal pricing changes.



While advertising is the intentional act of trying to be in the spotlight, public relations is a more strategic and thoughtful approach about how a company should be interacting with internal and external stakeholders. Sometimes, it may be in the company's best interest in "lay low" and strengthen its relationship with the public by not being front and center.

Public Relations vs. Communications

Public relations and communications are heavily intertwined. Both involve portraying information outwardly in hopes of creating a brand, image, or relationship that fosters value. Communications may be a separate department within a company solely responsible for written or verbal comments issued internally or externally.

One potential difference between public relations and communications is the exchange of information. Sometimes, public relations is a one-way channel that imposes information in an attempt to have a more favorable public image.

Communications may be more rooted in the two-way functionality of receiving feedback and making changes based on information collected. In general, most companies will see overlap between public relations and communications.

Working in Public Relations

A career in public relations has no defined career path. An individual can obtain a degree in a number of different fields such as public relations, communications, marketing, journalism, broadcasting, or political science.

Professionals in PR must have soft skills including strong written and oral communication skills, the ability to solve problems, and the ability to think critically and creatively.

A career in public relations can take many different turns. Some aspects of public relations emphasize digital media; potential careers include content creators, social media managers, or digital artists. Individuals can specialize in an industry (i.e. finance) to emphasize working between a company and its investors. Individuals interested in working for nonprofit organizations may find the branch of fundraising overlaps many aspects of public relations.

Public Relations in Practice

PR also involves managing a company's reputation in the eyes of its customers. In a 2012 PR crisis, restaurant chain Chick-fil-A was forced to issue emergency statements with respect to its stance on same-sex marriage after a Chick-fil-A executive publicly came out against marriage equality. The statement stressed the company's "biblically-based principles" and its belief in treating "every person with honor, dignity, and respect."² It was an example of how companies must exercise good PR. Most major companies have a PR department or utilize the services of an outside firm.

A company often has multiple publics to impress. Internally, a company will want to present itself as competently operated to its investors and biggest shareholders, which can involve arranging product demonstrations or other events directed towards shareholders.

Externally, a company that sells a good or service directly to consumers will want to present a public image that will encourage genuine, lasting brand support, which extends beyond the somewhat knowingly specious goals of advertising.

This can involve reassuring customers during a crisis, such as when Target (TGT) offered an \$18.5 million settlement to its customers following a 2013 credit card hack in an attempt to restore good faith or the promotion of a lifestyle that would

make the company's product or service attractive.⁴ The company also generates PR to attract investors. In this respect, good PR is especially important for startups or rapidly expanding companies.

What Is the Primary Role of Public Relations?

Public relations often boils down maintaining the image of a company, individual, or brand. Public relations creates media, connects with external media, crafts public opinion, and ensures customers have a positive disposition towards the company's brand.



What Skills Do You Need for PR?

Public relation specialists often have strong communication skills. Their role is to absorb information, process how it may impact a company's image, and how to externally communicate to shift this image. Public relation specialists often forge relationships with many different types of people including key customers, government officials, and external media.

II. 5 Golden Benefits of PR

Every savvy entrepreneur is aware that public relations is an engine for growth, but it's vital to know what PR actually is, isn't, and how to maximize its potential.

PR is:

- A critical tool for managing how the public sees a particular company, how it feels about a brand and to maintain a positive image with customers, stakeholders, investors and media.
- Especially critical in times of crisis and adverse events.
- Entirely different than advertising or marketing. Done best, it's organic and authentic, making it arguably the most effective tool among the three for building brand awareness.
- A vital tool in, slowly but surely, reaching business goals and enhancing revenue.

Many companies, however, are still not aware of how greatly they could benefit from PR — many more are unclear about creating a solid strategy.

A powerful image management tool

Public relations is capable of nothing less than making or breaking a business. Those who do it well will naturally reach a larger audience (without having to spend a fortune on advertising), and its early process is relatively straightforward: The PR team creates a specialized communication plan to build solid and loyal relationships with a target audience. Usually, this consists of releasing and distributing information about the company to the public — which includes prospective customers, stakeholders, investors and partners. Strategizing involves consideration of content, how to write it and which media to use for its distribution.

PR is more than just promoting a business

This family of strategized messaging is not just about promotion, it's about going in the right direction with storytelling, and via that process creating better brand awareness.

As well all know, nothing beats good press, but the story you tell must feel authentic and organic, qualities you typically do not get with advertising. A good PR team will promote the brand using editorial content in magazines, newspapers, news channels and blogs... thus getting third-party validation, and so audience trust.

Its five most important benefits

Which of the above categories to embrace depends on both goals and the type of message companies wish to get across. However, they all offer the same advantages.

- PR increases brand credibility: PR publicity is uniquely valuable because it generates brand credibility, but in order to do that, content has to be authentic and have informational or educational value — be genuine and honest instead of promotional.
- It attracts a target audience: A nicely written magazine article will do much more for a brand than an advertisement in the same media outlet. The reason is simple: it is the most effective approach to winning and retaining a target market. And if you use various outlets to get a message across, less time will be required to reach goals.
- It provides added value: To beat the competition today, companies need to find ways to stand out from the rest of the crowd, and PR is an excellent tool to do that — to put you in the forefront of a particular market niche by distributing genuine and valuable information to the public. With this value-rich messaging, you increase your visibility, personalize the brand, manage reputation and build solid relationships. You give, you get: the proverbial win-win!

- It will generate both short- and long-term lead generation: Boosted credibility and reputation inevitably results in new sales leads. Winning messages combined with well-crafted call-to-action components work in dependably profitable synergy.
- It builds brand image: The truth is, you cannot simply buy a positive image. Instead, you need to find an authentic way to build one to engage a target audience and turn it into customers. Public relations is a dependable way of doing that.

One last fact to keep in mind: You should not expect fast results, however professionally crafted your strategy is. These come with time, using a long-term and both goal- and detail-oriented process.



III. 7 Reasons Why Public Relations Is Essential For Small Business

Contrary to popular belief, a public relations (PR) strategy is not just for big corporations and high-profile individuals. Small businesses also need it to build a positive image in the marketplace and showcase their trustworthiness. It is instrumental in forging lasting ties with the internal and external publics of the organisation.

Small entities can easily get lost or forgotten in the crowd without the required public relations efforts. The smaller brands need to make an impact on their customers, suppliers, stakeholders, employees, and potential clients to enjoy high recall value. PR also aids in boosting sales and generating excellent returns at the time of putting up the business for sale in Brisbane.

Therefore, entrepreneurs need to include PR in their marketing efforts to ensure customers realise the worth of their brands and purchase products confidently. If you still think that PR is a wasteful activity that will eat into your marketing budget, read the reasons below to understand PR's value for small businesses.

1. PR is Cheaper Than Advertising



The ad spent for your business is a huge expense that is often wasted because the target audience might miss the paid campaign or not pay attention to it. On the other hand, PR is earned publicity because the media mentions the brand. Thus, the business owner can avoid paying a hefty amount for this type of promotion.

They either have to do something newsworthy that gets covered by the local media or have to maintain good relations with journalists to get their press releases featured in their publications or TV channels. Media coverage helps gain visibility and build the credibility of the business. Also, it costs a fraction of what the entrepreneur has to pay for airing a television commercial on prime time or placing a print ad in the newspaper.

2. Helps in Brand Awareness and Visibility

Small businesses do many things to stand out in the crowd and grab the attention of buyers. However, these marketing tactics can go unnoticed unless they have a broader reach. When an online portal covers the news about the business, it stays on the internet forever. So, customers searching for information about the brand can easily gain access to those articles and blogs.

Maintaining consistency across channels and generating relevant and valuable content increases exposure. Showcasing the brand's expertise via different online platforms makes the consumers perceive the business as a thought leader. It helps share content generated by users, which boosts visibility and exposure. Relevant contributions bring more likes and followers to the brand organically and make it popular quickly.

3. Mitigates Crisis and Bad Publicity

Every business has to bear the brunt of negative publicity or a crisis that can affect its image. Such situations arise due to negative reviews circulating online, internal disputes with an employee, disagreement with a business partner, litigation filed by a consumer, etc. If you purchase a business for sale in Brisbane that is reeling

under a crisis, you need to set up a PR team to reduce its impact on the brand's position in the marketplace.

Small businesses are not insulated from such crises and must be prepared to handle them. They should proactively put out their statement clarifying the stand of the organisation and respond to the questions that need to be answered. They must contact the affected party and get the problem resolved at the earliest. In case of negative reviews, they must politely reply to the users and try to quell the anger and discontentment.

4. Builds A Trusted Business Identity



A business needs to have a positive identity that extends a credible association to its products, services, and people. Customers start thinking highly of a brand that is in the news for all the right reasons, such as sustainability, ethical manufacturing, high-value proposition, great customer service, prompt resolution of complaints, etc.

The perception of the business is developed through reputation management which is an integral part of public relations. Thus, marketers need to monitor what people are saying about the brand. They need to pacify disgruntled customers at the earliest to avoid negative comments on social media and engage in conversations that help improve the image of the brand.

5. Aids in Customer Relationship Management

PR is all about maintaining a good rapport and long-lasting bond with the existing buyers. It helps small businesses retain their customers and increase their sales. Acquiring new customers is quite expensive. Thus, PR helps with loyalty management and ensures the expansion of the database through referrals.

Thus, businesses need to stay in touch with their buyers and keep them informed about the latest offers and products. They must be added to the mailing list and asked to subscribe to the newsletter to have all the information before others. Customising emails and direct conversations help in developing an emotional connection with the target audience that is hard to break.

6. It Creates a Far Bigger Impact

PR has a higher appeal than advertising because it is not an apparent promotion of the business. Customers rely on word-of-mouth publicity and online reviews about the products. They visit review sites and social media pages of the businesses to gather the response of the existing buyers and know more about their customer service experience.

If the brand gets mentioned by social media influencers without payment, it is bound to get more attention from the buyers than sponsored content. Product recommendations online can work wonders in increasing sales and generating leads. Thus, small business owners need to encourage ratings, reviews, and testimonials to get promoted by genuine users and influencers.

7. Attract Investors and Talented Workers



Small businesses need investors to fund new projects and expand their entities. PR plays a significant role in grabbing their attention because earned media helps showcase the expertise of the business and its progress. In addition, it maintains good relationships with customers, making investors offer to finance ventures.

PR helps establish a small entity as a stable organisation with a positive work culture and excellent ethics to attract a talented workforce. The best professionals are inclined to join companies that are reputed and well-recognised.

It is crucial to understand that building goodwill can take years, and positioning the brand with a reliable outlook is an ongoing endeavour. Thus, PR should be a consistent practice for small businesses to create a buzz around the brand and keep it relevant.

IV. Advertising vs. Marketing vs. PR: What's the Difference?

- Marketing, advertising, and public relations are often thought of as the same thing, but there are important differences for businesses.
- Small businesses can develop marketing and advertising campaigns that work together to enhance brand awareness and promote products or services.
- Public relations can help a small business establish and improve its reputation with the public.
- This article is for small business owners looking to build successful strategies through marketing, advertising and PR.

It's easy to get advertising and marketing confused, especially as a small business owner juggling all areas of your business. Understanding what differentiates marketing from advertising is crucial for setting the right strategies in place to grow your business and audience.

The differences between marketing, advertising and PR

Marketing describes how a company makes its audience aware of its brand and products or services. There are many different approaches to marketing, and it could be considered an umbrella term that encompasses both advertising and PR.



Advertising describes the practice of promoting products and services. Advertising campaigns appear in almost every medium, including on television, social media and billboards. Advertising works hand in hand with marketing, utilizing paid platforms to increase awareness. To successfully promote products and build brand awareness, organizations need to have strong marketing strategies with engaging advertisements.

PR describes the practice of cultivating relationships between brands and the public to organically promote brand awareness and customer loyalty. PR hinges on earned media coverage; businesses never pay for PR coverage, like they would to place an advertisement. It also involves controlling the narrative around news stories or managing brand crises as they arise.

What is marketing?

Although marketing encompasses a wide variety of business practices and goals, one simple definition from Merriam-Webster describes marketing as “the activities that are involved in making people aware of a company’s products, making sure that the products are available to be bought, etc.” In short, marketing spans a series of actions that vastly improve the chances that your business reaches its target market and audience.



Types of marketing

If the dictionary definition of “marketing” seems too broad, you may better understand what marketing comprises after familiarizing yourself with these common types of marketing:

Content marketing: According to the Content Marketing Institute, content marketing is “a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content.” In other words, this marketing approach focuses not on your products and services, but on developing and distributing online materials, such as blog posts, that educate your target market about your company and industry.

Inbound marketing: Through inbound marketing, your company creates experiences tailored to individual consumers. Such tools may include chat boxes on your company website that direct consumers to your customer service team. An inbound marketing strategy emphasizes attracting, delighting and engaging customers.

Social media marketing: Through social media marketing, your company uses social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to reach your target audience. Paid advertising on social media channels comprises a large portion of a social media marketing plan.

Digital marketing: This category includes all online marketing efforts. It includes social media marketing and many inbound marketing and content marketing strategies, not to mention all marketing campaigns focused on search engines, email and other websites.

Traditional marketing: Traditional marketing stands in direct contrast to digital marketing. Traditional marketing describes marketing campaigns executed through channels other than the internet: Print, broadcast, phone, postal mail and billboards are examples of types of traditional marketing.

Marketing communication: Marketing communication comprises many activities included in the other types of marketing. All marketing messages and media that your company uses, whether branding or advertising, are included in marketing communication.

Visual marketing: The images associated with your company, from your colors and fonts to your logo and photos, make up your visual branding. These visual elements are a key part of any marketing campaign. This instant communication makes visual marketing one of the most powerful tools for a business to connect with customers.

SMS marketing: Businesses use text message marketing, or Short Message Service (SMS) marketing, to deliver promotional messages directly to their customers' cell phones. Text message marketing is often used to increase brand awareness, generate returning sales, provide news updates, increase web traffic and run promotions.

Email marketing: Email marketing is a cost-effective way to market your products or services and reach your customers. Email marketing campaigns help businesses build trust with customers, increase website visits and ultimately draw more hot leads and sales.

What is advertising?

Advertising is a marketing subsector that involves your business paying for space on a billboard, website, magazine or elsewhere to promote your products and services. Although many companies will turn to an advertising agency to oversee their advertising strategy, you can successfully advertise your business without hiring an advertising agency as long as you understand the types of advertising and decide which methods might be best for your company.

Types of advertising

As you'll notice, there are many types of advertising whenever you go online, drive down the highway, or simply step outside.

Digital advertising: Digital advertising includes paying for ad space on social media, internet publications, mobile apps or other online spaces. The vast majority, if not all, of digital advertising is paid.

Traditional advertising: Traditional advertising includes advertisements your company purchases in print publications, on billboards or other outdoor surfaces such as bus stops, or via broadcast or postal mail. Like digital advertising, most traditional advertising is paid.

Ambient media: While digital and traditional advertising are the two dominant forms of advertising, ambient media has provided an interesting alternative for many businesses. Any unorthodox advertising method, especially one that encourages consumer participation or interaction, falls under this category.

Product placement: Many brands pay for their products to be emphasized in TV shows and films. If you ever watch a TV show or movie and see a character use a heavily branded product, you've experienced product placement.

Implementing advertising and marketing into your business

If you're still familiarizing yourself with marketing versus advertising, the starting place for any advertising and marketing plan should be a marketing communication plan. You should cover all of these areas in your plan:

- Budget
- Mission statement
- Branding and brand messaging
- Objective
- Short- and long-term goals
- Target market and audience

Advertising channel ideas

Facebook advertising: Facebook's ad platform is a powerful tool. A digital ad can easily be tracked, so you'll know quickly if your efforts are working. Facebook ads can be powerful when targeted correctly and created with engaging graphics and copy.

Google Ads: Google offers a measurable and flexible form of advertising through its Ads program. Google Ads is one of the digital advertising types that produce the most relevant search results and ads possible.

Local publications: Don't discount traditional advertising routes such as posting on a church bulletin, in a high school football ad journal, or on a local newspaper's

website if you're trying to expand awareness of your small business in your local community.

Marketing channel ideas

Email marketing: Despite the growing number of emails that flood consumers' inboxes every day, email marketing remains one of the most effective marketing channels. An email marketing service makes email campaigns easy and measurable. Read our Constant Contact review to see some examples of how this works.

What is PR?

PR remains a key part of the marketing process and is often far more cost-effective than traditional advertising. PR professionals build strategic relationships between organizations and their target audiences to build or enhance their reputation and create partnerships with the media to get more exposure for their clients.

"One of the most important things about starting a campaign is that having PR helps define the message of your company," she said. "The first question we ask is, 'Why are you doing what you're doing? Why do people care?' ... It helps fine-tune the message and keep it consistent."

How does PR differ from advertising and marketing?

Paid advertisements are the way a company represents itself. A PR campaign, on the other hand, creates unpaid, organic contact between a business and its audience to build brand awareness.

"PR is about third-party credibility," Simonian said. "This person is an unbiased person genuinely saying, 'I love this brand.'"

The goals of public relations campaigns differ by company, industry and initiative, but all rely on partnerships with journalists, influencers or community leaders.

"I think PR is creating the most positive image of your company that you can then share with the public," Simonian said. "Whether that's through traditional media or social media ... PR means getting your name out there and building your business's image."

1. Work with media outlets.

Small businesses often wonder if media outlets will be interested in covering them or mentioning their products when big brands are much better known. Many times, though, that lack of previous exposure works in their favor.

“I’ve worked on IBM, Toshiba, Coca-Cola – and I’ve worked with really small brands too,” Simonian said. “I think media outlets find small business more interesting ... they’re big fans of the ‘uniquenesses.’ For bigger clients, PR is more a matter of managing the press they’re already getting.”

Small businesses, by contrast, don’t already have a narrative or perception attached to their brand, which gives media outlets and influencers the opportunity to shape the story.



“It’s a lot more fun to help create that image and share it,” Simonian said.

2. Build relationships.

Whether you’re working with a firm or handling your PR on your own, focus your efforts on people who are already influencing your target customer.

“PR is figuring out ways to build relationships, whether it’s with a reporter or social media influencer,” Simonian said. “Look for people who have a lot of clout, and build that relationship. Help them to understand your message and how their followers can relate to you.”

3. Enhance your social media presence.

By engaging with followers and creating content that resonates with them, organizations can generate positive publicity without hiring a marketing or PR agency. Through social media, you can directly communicate with your target audience and build a following by engaging in conversation and providing unique solutions. For additional buzz, you can send products or host giveaways on your social pages.

CONCLUSION

Public relations is useful for any party that wants to have a positive public image. Most often, corporations and publicly traded companies will embark on public

relations. A company may have a different public relations team or public relations strategy for specific brands or products. Also, individuals such as celebrities or high net worth individuals may have private public relation teams. These teams are used to maintain a positive public image as well as handle media requests.

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