



## 7 Tips for Effective Public Relations

### PR in the Mix

Public relations (PR) adds value to your overall business-to-business “marketing mix” of advertising, direct marketing, seminars, trade show participation, and special events. PR creates the visibility that's necessary to fuel all other marketing activities.

After all, a prospect will be more likely to read a direct email, attend a webinar, request sales information, and eventually purchase your product or service if you have achieved “top of mind awareness” from strategic media coverage in well-respected trade journal or online publications, or if the prospect recalls testimonial articles or feature stories placed on behalf of the company.

In today's wired world, advertising has long lost its credibility with b-to-b purchasers. PR builds trust and credibility; and offers a cost-effective way to validate a new product or service to the most people possible.

With Public Relations as a priority in the marketing mix, you create an opportunity to build the identity, awareness, and credibility needed to compete and succeed.

Based on our decades-long expertise in business-to-business marketing communications and PR, Markit Strategies offers the following seven tips for effective public relations programs.

### Tip 1) Be aware of the benefits

Public relations if done right can reach a large audience without the expensive cost of traditional advertising and marketing.

And it's not just about media exposure. It's about leveraging the important news that resonates with your prospect, and getting that information to them.

PR delivers significant benefits that include:

- Economical way to reach your target audience in masses
- Stimulates awareness of, and the demand for your company's products or services
- Strengthens your company image and perception
- Paints the picture of a company that is active and innovative
- Creates more credibility than traditional advertising
- Creates an advantage over your competitors that are not utilizing PR effectively
- Increase search engine visibility and organic rank results



## **Tip 2) Public Relations is more than a press release**

While issuing a single press release about your company is important, a press release is just one step in your campaign to secure media coverage and generate top of mind awareness. More important is that your efforts fully integrate with your marketing and communications plan, timetable, and budget.

The success of a public relations program comes from media relations - cultivation of strong relationships with the carefully-selected journalists and editors you want to cover your organization. Your goal is to create an ongoing dialogue between a news outlet and your spokespeople in an effort to have your organization discussed in a positive manner in a publication, blog, industry association or broadcast.

So move beyond a single press release. Think strategically when establishing key messages, building press contacts, identifying top media outlets, targeting reporters, and chasing those opportunities.

## **Tip 3) Make it newsworthy**

Be judicious when you reach out to the media, reserving media announcements for significant developments that resonate with your target audience.

Craft your message using the various tools of PR including media advisories, press releases, long-form articles and/or “case studies”; testimonials and other vehicles such as media briefings.

Consider messages that establish your organization and leadership as experts in your field. Sharpen your messages. Develop three or four core points that you want to communicate and stick to these in the release and interviews.

Give details of the news so the editor understands why it's important to his/her readers. When issuing releases or media alerts, follow industry standards in format and style.

## **Tip 4) Think strategically**

Any outreach to the media should support your overall marketing goals.

That's why it is key to determine in advance these goals– what are the key points to communicate? (Brand message? Quality of product? Affordability? Response to trends? Expertise? Other unique selling proposition?)

As noted earlier, a strategic approach to PR helps you place stories in the most appropriate outlets geared to those audiences seeking the information, including the demographic of likely prospects.

As an example, some companies set the goal of strategic media placements with an overall goal to enhance the company image, and create/reinforce a brand identity.



## **Tip 5) Consider Search Engine Optimization (SEO)**

PR helps optimize your online presence.

Your prospects are actively seeking information through a variety of types of search such as Google. There's also news search, blog search and search within social media sites.

Any time content related to your company can be searched, that's an optimization opportunity. Increasing awareness, increasing media placements and appearances on industry websites, blogs and portals makes it easier for people to find you when they're looking for information.

Your press releases, feature articles, case studies and by-lined articles will all help in raising your company in organic search engine results. Plus, when this content is designed with relevant keywords, the search engines will prominently display your information just as your prospects are actively seeking it.

It is especially important to use the appropriate news wire service, online newsroom and other distribution methods to optimize search engine results.

## **Tip 6) Tailor your Approach**

PR can support many of your marketing initiatives with the right approach.

For instance, in the case of trade shows, chances are the event is attended by top industry reporters. How can you maximize your opportunity to get coverage?

Should you drop off a pile of news releases in the press room? What about scheduling CEO interviews?

There are specific strategies to maximizing trade show PR efforts, including strategic pre-show announcements; managing the press room, conducting interviews at the show, media training for booth personnel and post show follow up.

When you look at how you approach PR, also consider how prepared your company is to manage a crisis. Do you have processes in place to best manage and reduce the potential for harm if a crisis should arise? Is a spokesperson readily identifiable in case of a crisis? What are your messages to employees, partners, local media, industry media, customers, shareholders, community members and others?

## **Tip 7) Think Big**

While PR can help you shape and articulate your company's messages, and create a complete game plan for getting those messages out to the media, PR is more than media coverage.

A comprehensive plan includes speaker placement, putting key spokespeople front and center at industry tradeshows and events.



Media training is also important, helping your company's representatives become effective and compelling spokespeople. When you are in front of the media, how you say what you say can be the difference between an effective sound bite or a wasted opportunity.

Industry awards and accolades are also part of an effective PR program, increasing your credibility and stature over your competition.

## **Putting it into Action**

As Shakespeare said, "Action is eloquence".

Now that you've seen what makes up an effective PR program, how can you put it into action? The key is to implement consistent programs that support and reinforce your larger marketing goals.

A tactical PR plan covers how you'll determine your key messages, and the best route to reach your customers.

An actionable plan outlines what media mix and tools you'll use to reach your audience.

Markit Strategies has a core team of PR experts to help your organization craft a tactical and strategic PR program. We don't pretend to be experts in your core field whereas we don't expect you to be an expert in Public Relations. To get your program started and receive a free needs analysis, contact Peggy Fenwick today at 734.516.6490 or visit [www.markitstrategies.com](http://www.markitstrategies.com).

## ***About Markit Strategies***

Markit Strategies and PR, LLC is an integrated strategic marketing and public relations provider. We can assist your existing marketing department, or supplement the services of a vacancy in marketing. We work with creative teams, IT and technology specialists, and other PR and marketing professionals to bring you a full range of services.

Markit Strategies and PR was founded in 2005 by principal Peggy Fenwick, an 18-year marketing professional experienced in automotive, software technology, supply chain, and professional services industries. Together with several of the industry's top marketing and PR professionals, the Markit team brings a heritage of working with small and medium-sized corporations at the highest level of decision making, and able to apply real world program development that generates results to a start-up or struggling organization. [www.markitstrategies.com](http://www.markitstrategies.com)