

## **PR for Marketers. The Guide. Andrea Bristol, Admire PR**

My view of PR is slightly different from most other industry professionals. Much of what I do stretches into the traditional marketing space due to my sales and strategy background. For many people, when they think of PR, they think only of press releases and getting into the press as editorial. While that is a huge part of what a PR person does, it's not the whole story.

My favourite definition of PR is:

Public Relations professionals help a business or individual **cultivate a positive reputation** with the public through various communications, including traditional media, social media, and in-person engagements.

They also help clients **defend their reputation during a crisis** that threatens their credibility.

### **PR Myths**

I asked some business professionals what PR means to them and have received some brilliant answers....

*"How others perceive me and my company, through others word of mouth"*

*"The coordinated effort to affect public perception"*

*"Letting people know what your business does"*

*"PR to me means proactive 'good news' output to either promote subtlety or combat negative press with a view to increasing awareness"*

*"A way to make good businesses more visible via clever mediums for success stories or notable wins"*

*"Public awareness of what you do, have done, or are going to be doing"*

*"The promotion of news surrounding a person or a business - sometimes good and sometimes not so good"*

*"A form of marketing"*

*"Getting exposure of your message for 'free' via existing media channels that are looking for interesting, topical stories that you can help create or piggyback onto"*

What is interesting is **everyone** said something slightly different - and yet they are all correct.

To me, this is the essence:

PR is building and guarding your positive public reputation - as a brand, a business, or as a business person.

I also believe...

EVERYTHING YOU SAY AND DO IS PR

PR does not have to be complicated but it does take effort and persistence. As PRs, we light the fire and keep it burning. Public relations is a deliberate and carefully thought out process, one that requires ongoing and sustained activity.

## **Marketing and PR - Where does it all fit?**

How does PR fit in with advertising and other forms of marketing?

One of the questions I'm asked most often is what the difference is between marketing and PR. PR is part of marketing; one of the tools you can use to market your business or product.

Marketing has countless definitions. In basic terms, it is the process through which products and services move from idea to the customer. It includes identification of a product/service, determining demand, deciding on its price, and selecting distribution channels. It also includes developing and implementing a promotional strategy.

I always tell people to think of the promotional part of their marketing as a pie, and each segment is the activities you will undertake to promote your product or service.

Traditionally, PR has always meant unpaid or earned media only. As a PR agency, our client's reputation and the quality of the story need to lead but I have a different opinion than many about where our industry is going. The media landscape is different now than when I started in PR eighteen years ago. Paid media now definitely has a place in PR (this is potentially an unpopular opinion), but our job is to promote and protect our clients' positive reputation and we need to use every tool available to us to do that.

When appropriate, paid-for marketing is often a valuable option. One example of this would be if a client wanted information to be seen by a specific target audience, then strategies such as social media ads may be the best option. There is, undeniably, a time and a place for everything, so paying for promotion is not always a negative.

PR activities can include:

- Editorial - news and opinion
- Product reviews
- Speaking opportunities
- Brand ambassadors / Influencers
- Sponsorship

Broadcast - TV and Radio  
Networking  
Awards

Wider marketing activities including:

Website  
Blogs  
Social Media  
Advertising  
Advertorial  
Emails  
Brochures  
Catalogues  
Direct mail (stuff in the post)  
Events  
Telemarketing

**How do you start to think about PR? Well, it's the same way you start all your marketing strategies.**

### **What do you want the world to know about?**

Write down any aspects of your business that you need to promote - these can be products, brands, people, events - anything you want the rest of the world to know about. Write it all down in any order at first.

When you have written it all down, you can think about a priority order depending on your business strategy over the year and what needs to be promoted each quarter.

Keep your list handy. As business events and opportunities crop up, you can add them to your list as time goes on. This list will help you decide where PR can help you.

### **Your Customers**

Now let's think about your customers - who are your current customers - are they the right ones? Are there other people you want to reach? Who are they?

Some people use Avatars and give their ideal customers names and identities. This can help in big teams or if you are a visual thinker. - so you can give your customer avatars names and draw pictures of them.

I tend to initially divide my customers depending on the industry sector then divide it down into customer characteristics. Some companies can divide initially on target job titles.

Questions to ask include:

Where did they come from? (current customers)

Who are they?

Where do they live?

What are they interested in?  
What do they read?  
What do they watch on TV?  
What social channels do they use?  
Where do they work? Do they travel for work?

This is where you need to think about how you can reach people with information about your business and products. You need to think laterally.

I once held a PR strategy workshop with a client, and we realised that the customer they were trying to reach had a common mentality rather than a common job title. We realised their ideal client would be curious about learning certain things, so we started looking for events they would potentially be at.

For example, if CEOs of financial service firms in London are your targets, then thinking about what they might read on the commute to work is a good starting point. Then, think about other ways to reach your audience. What about travel? What magazines are available in the executive lounges at airports?

Have a look at these main PR and marketing tools and decide which is most appropriate for reaching your customers. You will potentially need to test things out and measure the results to discover the best approach.

Even if I am looking after just one aspect of PR for a client - all the other marketing activities they are undertaking need considering. Everything must work together. As a PR, I need to work with all the marketing functions of a business.

Often, there is a social media manager and a marketing manager in place when I become involved as part of a team. The key is to communicate between us and to integrate all the activities to make the most of all the promotional opportunities.

## **Preparing your marketing**

It is essential to prepare your marketing before you engage with a PR agency. For many businesses and individuals, involving a PR agency with your marketing strategy seems natural, but you must prepare the groundwork before beginning your agency process.

Take a look at your desired clientele, unless you provide information about your target audience then any specific targeted campaign is going to be virtually impossible to carry out. The more precise you are, the better a PR agency will be able to help manage your communications. The better they know your audience's needs, pain points, and requirements, the better they will be able to shape your message, refining and controlling your campaign until it is relevant to your target audience.

Detailing your campaign objectives is imperative to getting your working relationship off to a good start. There are a variety of reasons why PR can be used successfully in your business, such as;

- Generating product and brand awareness
- Creating consumer awareness
- Educating people and customers
- Increasing a company's revenue and profitability
- Raising awareness of new services and products
- Building brand loyalty and brand reputation
- Drawing positive attention to the company or brand
- Establishing company or brand identity and credibility
- Increasing the profile of key team members

Agree on your objectives with an agency and establish what your end game is up front to make things easier all round.

You also need to be very clear on your expectations for the pitch, the process, and the next steps. These include a budget for the campaign and measurements such as media monitoring and social media monitoring.

There is a myth that PR cannot be measured. PR is a form of marketing, so the results of PR can be measured. There are many methods of measuring PR strategies, including analytical tools such as Google Analytics. A very simple method is asking people how they discovered your business - word of mouth is often the most effective tool.

## **Getting Into the Press**

Getting clients into the press is what I spend the majority of my time doing. When thinking of the press, I'm talking about newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, blogs, podcasts, both on and offline. What follows are a few of the best ways I use with clients to help them gain press coverage.

### **News and Stories**

- Decide what media you want to get into. Buy a copy or read it online and check out what sections they have and what sorts of stories get printed. If it's radio or TV, then watch it or listen to it.
- It is essential that your topic is being discussed in the right areas. When you are looking into journalists and deciding who to reach out to, it is important that you check what their interests are and what they have experience writing about. Journalists will always have areas of expertise, so taking news of a book launch to a journalist who focuses on sports will not be beneficial. Looking at places like LinkedIn to see their recent work, as well as searching online for their recent pieces, will all give you an indication of their skillset as a writer.
- You need a story or a hook - that is appealing. You need a second opinion as what you find interesting is often very individual.
- Journalists have tight deadlines. The best thing to do is to call the publication and find out who you need to contact and how they like to be contacted. Many journalists prefer emails and probably won't appreciate you harassing them to see if they got your information.
- When you email, make it brief and to the point. Include all info within the email body if possible and don't attach huge files. I'm a fan of 'less is more'.



You can send a press release - I will come on to what that should look like. Do not attach PDFs and do not put images within the text. Make life easy for the journalist.

- Company and people news is good - genuine charity stories or amazing things your staff or clients are doing are also good. New products, new staff, new facilities, events, and awards are also great topics. Think outside of what you do as a business and look at what is going on in the community and what you can get involved in. Be current and topical. But bear in mind that if there is a huge national story, it may be harder to get your news into the press.

## **New product launches**

- Start with what customers you need to see the product and where you can reach them (what they will read or look at).
- New products are interesting and are generally one of the easiest things to get coverage on. As long as the product is of great quality and works well, there is no reason why it shouldn't get featured. The warning here is that it will take some time to gain traction. Magazines will need to wait until there is space, so be patient and start to plan well ahead. It can take 4-6 months for products to be featured.
- Send short info about the product (50 words are fine - unless you are asked for more), RRP, where it can be bought from, and an appropriately sized image for the media. Print media will need high res images - it's good to have both, cut-out product images and lifestyle images available.
- Bloggers and magazines will often review new products, so make sure you have allocated a number of samples for review.

## Competitions and Giveaways

- Do you have the budget to give something away or hold a competition? This is a good way to get both in print and on an online publication. It's also a valuable way to create links to your social media. In general, the amount of editorial you receive will depend upon the value of the prize.

## Thought Leadership and Becoming an Expert

Asking the question 'What are you an expert in?' is often met with confusion and an unwillingness to answer. This deliberation is often untrue, as many professionals are experts in a specific area, perhaps without even realising it.

Being recognised as a leader in your field expands your scope significantly, drawing greater business opportunities and acclaim. In order to come to the conclusion that you are an expert, here are some questions you should ask yourself.

*What do you love doing?*

This does not need to be specifically business-related; you can still promote yourself and your business on the back of something seemingly unrelated. Anything that you are passionate about is going to be beneficial.

*What are you amazing at?*

Have you ever been told by a friend, colleague or acquaintance that you are exceptional at something? You must be assured that you have a talent that few could offer; it needs to be a skill that makes you stand out.

*What knowledge do you have that few other people have? What is your niche?*

Similar to what are you amazing at, what experience do you have to back up your claims of being an expert? This can be academic proof, years of experience, or anything to prove this passion for your chosen subject.

*Where can you share this knowledge? This could be the local paper, a blog, a guest blog, LinkedIn, a video, or an article in a trade publication.*

To become published, you need to be tactical in encouraging others to approach you. Most people who are recognised as thought leaders have extensive knowledge and experience, so you must possess both of these.

Moulding yourself into an innovative thinker is all about keeping yourself on the pulse of trends and new ideas. Directly involving yourself in important conversations will prove your passion for the subject, as well as your belief that you have something to share. There is an art in realising that you have something to offer, and becoming a thought leader is all about being unafraid to make your voice heard.

## **The Press Release**

This is a way of packaging information in an easy-to-read manner for journalists. Making the information readily available and digestible is key to gaining your reader's attention.

By definition, a press release is an 'official statement issued to newspapers giving information in a particular manner'. Whilst press releases are not just limited to newspapers now, they are still written statements that announce something of importance or provide information about a specific event. They are essential to reaching the media and spreading accurate information.

Writing a press release is an essential part of PR, and there is a way that I prefer to lay out the information so that journalists have everything they need. This involves the date on which the document can be released, so that it is given out in a timely manner, alongside a link or a call to action. It is imperative that the press release includes all the information necessary, and I always like to include a quote to include a different voice.

Another important aspect of a press release that you should include is a section for the editor's notes. This is the addition of extra context, clarification, or supplementary information. These could include an overview of your company and your contact details so that the recipient will be able to get in touch with you if they have any further questions.

Four Key Points To Include In A Press Release

- Date it can be released.
- A quote.
- A link or a call to action.
- Editors Notes

## **Blogging and Guest Blogging**

You may already have a blog - how well do you use it? People are often afraid of sharing their knowledge in case someone 'steals' it. If you can give some knowledge, it cements your standing as one of the best in your business. I'm not a weekly blogger myself - I'm too busy writing clients' blogs - but I do regularly update my own blog.

Writing a guest blog is an excellent way to share your knowledge online and on social media. A few LinkedIn shares can work wonders for you. Write a list of blogs you admire and see if they take guest opinions.

If you want some ideas about where you can guest blog then do contact me on social media and I will have a think for you.

If you are not a confident writer, consider having someone write for you. It's worth spending a little on this.

## **Opinion Pieces and Comments**

Is there a publication you love reading and feel you have something relevant to add to? It's list time.....

- Make a list of media you'd love to be in
- Include editor's names and contact details
- Check out previous opinion pieces to check what subjects they have used
- Call the editor and ask! Most editors are happy to have a good opinion article from an industry expert
- Consider letters to the editor. Even if your letter does not get printed, you have a great starting point for a blog or article

Journalists are often looking for comments to add to their articles. Take note of what journalists write in your target publications and contact them with a list of the types of issues you could comment on and then how they can contact you.

## **Speaking and Workshops**

Are you happy to stand up and talk in front of others? If you are not, is there someone else who works in your business that is happy to do this? It's a great way to get yourself and your business in front of lots of people at the same time.

A good way to start yourself off as a speaker is to attend networking groups, meet people, and perhaps do some speaking there to start you off. Go networking with the intention of building long-term relationships with others - you need to be in it for the long haul. Some people say networking does not work - but that's often because they go with the intention of finding business or a sale. Be a giver and be organised.

I always plan who I want to speak to before a networking event. Follow up with people straight away and book 1:1s so that you can get to know other people's businesses properly.

You never know where business will come from. Word of mouth is still the best PR and networking is a great way to start this off.

If you are going to have a go at public speaking, then make sure you practise with a small audience, it's also worth getting a coach to run through your talk with you, which is an asset that many people have found very beneficial.

Practice with any audio-visual and make sure everything is working properly. If you can get your talk filmed, then that can be useful for your social media.

If standing up on your own in front of an audience fills you with dread, consider whether putting on a workshop might be beneficial. You could join with another business person and run one together. Make sure you both have similar clients and that you can work together with ease. Practising is the most important step during the preparation process.

## Awards

Being nominated and potentially winning an award is invaluable because it will increase trust, public perception, and awareness.

There are so many awards that you can enter as a business or business person. Have a look at local ones as well as industry-specific ones.

- Check the categories and make sure you are eligible before you enter.
- Gather all the information you will need for the application - you may need company financial information and testimonials.
- Have something lined up for additional information such as a video and some blog posts you have written. Judging can be tedious, so it can help to have some further information in your arsenal.
- Follow the awards on social media and give them some love - even if you don't get nominated, you will gain some new followers.
- If you do get nominated, make the most of it. Get some interviews lined up, attend the awards, or send a representative who can collect on your behalf and make the most of the chance to network with some new people.

Often, with more notorious awards, you will not be emailed, but rather you will have to go through the process yourself. However, some organisations may email you first to let you know that you have been nominated, but you will then have to go through the application process yourself.

It is always important to look out for potential red flags when entering your business into any award. One indication that the award may not be legitimate is if you have to pay to apply. The majority of prestigious awards will allow companies to apply free of charge, but you may have to pay to attend the award ceremony in order to fund the event.

Before deciding to apply for an award, it is worth looking into how much coverage you may receive after being nominated or even winning. Good coverage is worth its weight in gold, so it is necessary that you look into how much traction your involvement with the award may receive.

Legitimate awards will always have a judging panel, so a lack of this could be an immediate red flag. These panels often have to read hundreds of applications, so first impressions count.

It is all about making the most of award nominations if you are lucky enough to be recognised for your work. But how would you go about appreciating your new accolade?

1. Share your nomination on social media to create a buzz, for example, with a countdown to the event.
2. As well as adding your nomination logo to social media platforms, you can also attach it to your email signature to share the news with customers and other companies you work with.
3. Taking advantage of press opportunities is essential. You may be the only business nominated in your county or town, so shortlisting can be enough to gain some press in a local newspaper. This could help to reach potential new customers who may be local.
4. One way of utilising your award entry, a piece of writing that would have taken a long time to collate, is by creating a blog post, celebrating your achievements and how far you have progressed in recent years.
5. Sharing the news in a company newsletter is a great way of shouting about your achievement to those with a previous interest in your business.
6. Connecting with other nominees to congratulate them is a perfect way of showcasing your comradery.

## **How Brand Ambassadors Can Help You**

First of all, let's start with who a brand ambassador (a.k.a influencer) is. Your biggest fan.

Someone who will "big up" your business and brand. There are 3 types:

- A genuine user of your product who spreads the joy of your company via word of mouth, social media, and blogs.
- An employee who is loyal, totally involved in the business and the brand and shares love.
- You, the business owner. 24/7, you represent your brand.

### Why do you need one?

Word of mouth is a brilliant and effective PR.

A brand ambassador who genuinely loves your brand is a fantastic promotional tool for your business. They will speak positively about you and your business to many people.

Others will often be more likely to believe someone else who speaks about you than your own advertising or marketing collateral - but only if the relationship is genuine.

### Who makes a good ambassador and where do I find one?

Ask your loyal customers if they want the opportunity to help your brand. You will need to give them something in return – a discount or a free product.

Keep an eye on your social media and see who mentions you or is active daily. Brand Ambassadors do not need to be famous people - but they do need to be good customers and active socially.

Bloggers can make excellent ambassadors, but again, I do want to reiterate how important it is that they genuinely like your product or brand. It's wonderful if someone well-known wants to support your brand, but the public is wise to a non-genuine promotion. It can be glaringly obvious when an influencer's partnership with a brand seems like a money grab, rather than platforming of a product or business that an individual really believes in.



In some companies, you may not be able to use customers or their stories but the people who work for you or are part of the company can be excellent ambassadors. Help your employees to become involved in the brand - share their stories, share their accomplishments, their hobbies, or charity fundraising.

I advise that you make sure you have an agreement in writing between yourself and your ambassador that details what free products/ discounts you will offer them and how much you require in return. Make sure this is detailed and the ambassador is aware of how often you expect social media mentions, whether you want to use their photo or expect them to wear your logo on occasion. It helps give your ambassador a script that they can use when they speak to people or when they are on social media; it's important that they reflect the tone of voice of your company and brand.

## **Putting it All Together**

## **Monitoring results**

Digital Media and Social Media are easy to monitor and there are increasingly better tools available that both pick up coverage and monitor its results. You can get measurements for aspects such as reach, engagement, number of shares, number of links, and value.

As a PR company, we have media monitoring that picks up digital, broadcast and print as well as social shares. We can then produce some detailed reports for our clients. You should always know exactly what response you are getting to all of your promotions.

**And remember...**

**Everything you say and do is PR**

**Useful Stuff**

## PR Checklist..... A quick recap...

- Who are your customers versus who do you want to be your customers? This can sometimes be two very different things.
- What do they read and watch and what are they interested in? This is essential knowledge to target your desired audience.
- What communication tools do you currently use to reach current and potential customers? This gives you a great indication of where you are, and where you could be heading. Recognising what you are doing at the moment and what you want to be doing in the future.
- What else could you add to the mix? Similarly to the previous point, what could you be doing to advance your current strategies?
- Decide exactly what you want to promote first. This gives you a starting point from which to progress.
- Make sure it's (product or service) easy to buy - do you have stock? Is the buying process easy? It would be incredibly detrimental to advertise a project that you simply do not have enough stock of. You must be planning ahead, thinking of how you can gain more product when your business begins to grow.
- Make a list of the channels you are going to use to promote it. This includes looking at your target audience and recognising where you are best going to be able to find them. Listing every possible route is an excellent way of targeting prospective customers.
- Prioritise what you will do first, and work together with marketing and social media to make sure the campaign is integrated. Collaboration is an important part of growth, especially for businesses and individuals. Working with marketing and social media will ensure that you are being promoted in every possible way.
- Staff training. Make sure everyone in your company is aware of what you are promoting and why and knows how to speak about your product and service. They will act as a spokesperson for your business, so they need to be knowledgeable in what they are promoting. Word of mouth is an important aspect of PR, and often hearing the excitement of an individual alongside proven knowledge in their product will be incredibly beneficial.
- Consider media training for staff and brand ambassadors who may get interviewed. This furthers the previous point that every member of your team needs to be clued up on what you are promoting. You need to be confident that when the camera - both metaphorically and not - is pointed at them, they will be able to perform under pressure.

