

Why use public relations?

Newspapers, magazines, television, radio and the internet are all very powerful media. They influence the way we think through the way they present information.

The same subject can appear good or bad depending on how it is presented in the media.

And because few of us have the time or inclination to carry out our own independent research, we tend to base our opinions on what we see and hear in the media.

This is why forward-thinking organisations use effective PR – public relations – to shape their image and how they appear to the world.

What is public relations?

Public relations covers a wide range of activities, including events and face-to-face activities, although many people think specifically of press relations (or media relations) which aims to obtain coverage in the press and media.

Public relations is one element of the wider marketing process and all these activities achieve the best value when co-ordinated as a single, managed communications programme.

PR can bring your organisation to the attention of a much wider audience – for the right reasons. It can:

- highlight your success
- position you as an influential player
- attract new sales enquiries
- achieve specific business goals

PR can deliver your message to the people who matter – at a reasonable cost.

What is the secret of effective public relations?

Like most business activities, there are few genuine secrets, but a real need for sound management and common sense.

Providing you understand the general rules, apply your imagination and use concise, clear writing, PR can be a powerful addition to your array of marketing tools.

What are the basic rules of public relations?

- Know your objective and ensure every action works towards achieving it.
- Target your audience – send press releases to journalists you know are interested in your line of business or topic.
- A story worth telling sells itself – journalists and editors will want to publish it for their audience to read.
- Tell the truth or you could get caught out – badly.
- Check and double-check details. You don't want to attract great interest, then lose it because the wrong phone number was printed.
- Little and often is better than one big press release. The more often your name appears in the news, the more likely people are to remember it.
- Be prepared to talk to journalists who are interested in your story – it's too good an opportunity to waste.
- Measure your success, so that you learn what works best for you and your business.
- Know the rules and when to break them, because you stand out from the crowd when you're different. They are there to guide us, but to innovate we may need to break existing rules and create new ones.
- Be natural — be yourself.