

Shape your Image with a Public Relations Plan

Elizabeth Brown

Why bother with planning for PR?

Everyone knows that “PR” involves using the news media to publicize an organization or its products, right? When you have news, you announce it. If, heaven forbid, you should have a crisis, you address it. So what’s to plan?

In fact, many aspects of your business affect how you are perceived. So an organized PR program has many facets. To take charge of your image, develop a comprehensive PR Plan.

1. Set PR Goals in Behavioral Terms. The goal of public relations, according to the late PR guru Patrick Jackson, is to motivate, reinforce, or modify behavior. PR

activities should be designed to get someone to DO something (like buy more of your products); to NOT do something (like pass by your downtown shop in favor of the big new superstore); or to LET you do something (like open a branch office in their neighborhood). In drawing up your PR plan, then, state your goals in behavioral terms: what behavior must be initiated, changed, or sustained in order for your business plan to succeed? Instead of “to increase sales,” for example, your goal might be “to increase new business by 10%.”

2. Name your “Priority Publics.” It’s an axiom among PR pros that “there’s no such thing as The Public”; rather, there are a series of publics, and some are more important to you than others. To identify

which audiences to target with your public relations activities, ask yourself: Which groups of people can give me the behaviors I need for my business to succeed; or have the power to keep us from succeeding? Which subgroups among them are most likely to act in the way we want them to act? Within those, which are readily reachable, given our resources? In this way, you can narrow “the public” down to those segments that matter the most to you NOW: your Priority Publics.

3. Conduct Research and Analysis. In order to communicate effectively with your Priority Publics, you need to know something about them, their concerns and needs, their perceptions of you if any,

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