

## The Ten Commandments for Finding a Great PR Agency



### #1 Thou Shalt Question The Value of Public Relations

You know what happens when you assume. At the start, question Public Relation's value and validity. Compare PR cost to PR value. Assess your overall mix of marketing methods, i.e., your Web site, direct mail, advertising, trade shows, etc., and figure out how PR can maximize these efforts. Integrate and communicate.

### #2 Thou Shalt Decide "The Why" Before "The What"

Diving into a PR program just because your venture capitalist or investors tell you too isn't best. Figure out why you want PR and be honest with yourself. Is it to increase sales, credibility, awareness? Is it to stroke your ego, or piss off your competition? Ask why. Consult with smart advisers to determine your need for strategic PR. Think WHY first.

### #3 Thou Shalt Run From Google, Directories, Listings and Ads

When it comes to finding the "right PR agency," most companies seek PR services by doing a Google search or find the latest Dallas Business Journal Book of Lists to review the Top 25 Listing of PR Agencies. Don't. Well, don't do JUST those things. Anybody with a checkbook can get a Google listing or run an ad. Any agency (many of whom I suspect "exaggerate" their annual billings) can get on the DBJ list. Follow the next Commandment for the best result.

### #4 Thou Shalt Tap Your Trusted Resources

Referrals rule. Referrals rock. The trusted resources in your life are friends, family, neighbors, church

members and others you know you can depend on. Ask them who they know. Ask them who their friends may know, or have used for PR. Your best sources will offer personal introductions.

### #5 Thou Shall Not Confuse "Ad Agency" With "PR Agency"

For that matter, don't confuse a PR agency with a marketing firm, a Web design firm or a creative services firm. These creative disciplines vary greatly, and it's a RARE species to find a company that is good at conceptuials, graphics and "pretty stuff" to be really good at PR and media relations (and vice versa).

### #6 Thou Shalt Not Be Wowed by Sizzling Presentations, High-Powered PR Vice Presidents, Armani Suits and Promises, Ad Nauseum

Sizzle minus steak is just a bunch of steam, dirty water and grease. Don't grime up your aspiring PR success by flirting with Sizzle. Go straight for the Steak.

### #7 Thou Shalt Compare and Contrast

Talk to at least two PR agencies before you decide. Get to know the agency, its team, approach and style. Visit the agency's site. Invite them to visit your firm, and see who shows up. Request conversation vs. presentation.

**#8 Thou Shalt Know What You're Buying**

Make sure the agency you choose provides a list of defined, explicitly specific deliverables before you start, then hold the agency accountable every month. Be sure you know what you're paying every month, including the monthly amount, plus any expenses such as phone calls, facsimiles, copies, news wire fees, etc.

**#9 Thou Shalt Mutually Agree on PR Expectations Upfront**

Before the PR program begins, make sure you (the client) and the PR team set realistic expectations, mutually agree on them, and write them down. This eliminates surprises, excuses and other relationship obstacles. It keeps everyone focused, grounded and intent on achievement.

Expectations to consider include:

- **THE TEAM.** Who is working on my account, by name and title, and what percent of that time per month is the account supervisor vs. the junior account executive or intern?
- **FAST AND SLOW.** Expect ebbs and flow during the PR program. There are months that are incredibly busy and over-budget/over-hours, and months that are more quiet and sometimes under-budget/under-hours. Keep track to make sure the budget/hours even out, long term. My experience? They usually even out, in favor of the client.
- **CONSISTENCY.** Consistent face-to-face dialogue, and consistent reporting of activities and results (not just activities). Weekly, monthly and quarterly reports are most common.

- **QUALITY WRITING.** Make sure your PR team includes a good writer, someone who can be creative, but also takes pride in spelling and grammar, and the use of AP Style (a journalism writing style).
- **MEASURABLE RESULTS.** Make sure there is a way--some way, any way--to measure "success." Agree on them. And hold everyone accountable.

**#10 Thou Shalt Enjoy Thy Program**

Enjoy your PR efforts, successes and relationships. It's exciting and fun to communicate, talk with reporters and see yourself in a published story. It can change your business and your life. Enjoy the process, the people and the potential to share your stories, strengths and successes.

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