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# PRactically Speaking **RGM** COMMUNICATIONS

Aug. 29, 2007

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**Roy,**

Welcome to **PRactically Speaking**, a way for you to gain practical insights and perspectives about business communications for the real world.

Share this with your friends and colleagues too, and let us know what you think.

Enjoy!

### **Can I Afford PR?** Knowing what you need and getting started



Money matters, especially for small- and mid-sized businesses. So, can you afford PR?

**The answer: Yes you can.** Any company of any size intent on sharing its story can afford public relations (PR). But the more important question for any business



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owner or executive is, "**Will PR support and strengthen my business goals?**" Before you take the leap and hire a public relations (PR) firm, ask yourself these questions:

1. Why do I need a PR agency?
2. What do I expect a PR agency to deliver?
3. Do I have an overall plan for marketing my company, products and services?
4. Is that plan written, defined and applied, and does it mirror your business goals and objectives?
5. What other marketing communications efforts exist at my organization, and can I measure their success?
6. How do I measure PR results? And does my agency even measure results?
7. Do I want a strategic communications program, or just a tactical "doer" to achieve specific results?

Now, as you begin your quest for the agency that's right for you, here's the bottom line:

- The "entry point" for many agencies is \$5,000 per month; smaller firms typically start programs at \$2,500 to \$3,000 per month
- Most agencies prefer a retainer agreement of 6 months to one year, with a 30-day termination clause
- Most do not provide "project" work
- Many (not most) use Sizzle to sell you a program, then have junior-level PR professionals do the work (all sizzle, no steak)
- Fees are typically formulated by estimating the number of hours by the number of personnel and their individual billing rates, plus variables such as "crisis needs," strategic counsel and others. Rates may be anywhere from \$50 per hour to \$250 per hour.
- Agencies often have specialties. If you're a business-to-business firm, don't hire an agency specializing in consumer accounts.

Please note, there are hundreds of PR professionals and agencies in the greater Dallas area, many of whom are high-integrity, high-quality experts. There are others who aren't that great. Choose carefully. **And remember, you can afford PR. Really.**

Find out how you can start an effective PR program. [Contact us.](#)

An interesting online discussion about PR costs and value, [click here](#). to see what one expert shares about the cost and value of PR.

## Getting Practical

### News & Views You Can Use

#### How to Select a PR Agency

- Find an agency that listens first, sells second
- Ask for a referral to a good PR agency. Avoid blind Google searches, "cold calls," and published "Top PR Agencies" lists. Find trusted resources you know and ask them if they have a good PR contact.
- Identify the agency that wants to help you achieve success, even if it's just a project vs. a long-term retainer
- Know your budget and stick with the project/program for as long as you can (PR is about consistent outreach over a period of time vs. short bursts of activity).
- Meet the agency principal and/or the team ready to work for you
- Make sure you feel a "connection" with the account supervisor/primary contact
- Know what you're getting and set expectations upfront; clarify "results" and what that means to you
- Seek an agency intent on hard work and creative ideas that Share Your Story to the marketplace.
- Find an agency with integrity, honesty and commitment to your cause.
- Make sure there's a roadmap or plan to your PR efforts so they complement business goals and objectives.

#### Educate Yourself

Check out some great background information at [www.prfirms.org](http://www.prfirms.org), or visit our Resources page, [www.rqmcomms.com/Resources.html](http://www.rqmcomms.com/Resources.html).

#### Why you care about editorial calendars.

What's an editorial calendar? Newspapers and magazines often produce editorial calendars--a schedule of upcoming story topics. By knowing what's coming, you can talk to editors and reporters about specific success stories and ideas. Often, reporters are working several weeks to several months ahead of the

publication date (as listed below), so it's important to contact them early. For example, the **Dallas Business Journal** includes these story topics for September and October:

Sept. 21 Residential Real Estate Homebuilders, Title Companies Health Care Heroes, 114 Corridor

Sept. 28 Women Owned Businesses, Minority-Owned Businesses, Highest-Paid Women Executives, Corporate Relocation Companies Corporate Expansion & Relo

Oct. 5 Law IP Law Firms, Audio Visual Equipment, Audio Visual Production Tech Titans

Oct. 12 Meetings & Conventions Event Planners, Caterers, Conventions, Trade Shows, Meeting and Exhibition Facilities

Oct. 19 Health Care HMOs, PPOs, Busiest Hospitals, Assisted Living Centers, Nursing Homes Las Colinas

Oct. 26 Shopping Centers and Malls Commercial Real Estate Quarterly

For the complete year of DBJ story listings, [click here](#).

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## Inside RGM Communications

**What's with branding lately?** Seems like every company struggles with Differentiators and Key Messages. August was the month of helping companies assess and articulate how they can improve the story of their strengths and success.

**Several clients and projects** came our way this month, including a Richardson law firm, a private school, some work for a civil engineering services firm and more.

**Ever heard of an all-weather, all-terrain sales guide?** A new book from a wonderful localite and sales expert is coming soon. I've had the privilege to help her with it. More to come.

**We authored an article** about marketing and communications for a newsletter produced by the [North Texas Enterprise Center for Medical Technology](#), based in Frisco.

## The CommsCoach Q&A

**QUESTION:** How do you know if something is newsworthy?

**ANSWER:** To be "newsworthy," a topic usually must be timely and have some impact on the reading audience. Often, "newsworthy" means sharing a story that taps into a current event, issue or trend. For example, RGM was able to get three clients in a *The Dallas Morning News* article to comment on the subprime mortgage impact on the local economy.



Thank you for reading this issue of PRactically Speaking.

We want YOUR FEEDBACK, thoughts, ideas, questions and constructive criticism. [Share those now.](#)

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