

## **THE POWER OF PR**

In the current economic climate, your reputation matters more than ever before. How your customers, staff, suppliers, partners and community - in other words your 'publics' - feel about your business will be a key deciding factor in how you get through this challenging period.

Now is the time when trust in your business is paramount. Those who trust you will buy from you, recommend you, and help to promote you.

So how do you ensure your relationships with your 'publics', or stakeholders, are maintained and enhanced? When your priorities are highly likely to have shifted to maintaining sales at whatever cost, to have to turn your attention to activity that may not seem to drive immediate business can, to many, feel like madness. But... it isn't a case of dropping one to do the other; it is about finding a balance between both. In other words, maintaining sales levels using relevant and cost effective promotions, whilst ensuring your brand awareness remains high and, most importantly, positive. By succeeding at the latter you will ensure your business and its products or services are regarded in the best possible light, thereby enhancing the likelihood of ultimately converting sales.

By its nature, public relations takes time. To build real and meaningful relations with your stakeholders requires focus, effort and the commitment of both human and financial resources. PR can achieve great things, even if your budget is quite small, with well-executed initiatives having the potential to ensure a disproportionate return on investment. But you can have 'quick wins' in order to kick-start your PR programme. Outlined below are just a handful of ideas to consider ensuring you start to fully embrace the power of PR today.

## **TELL THE WORLD YOUR NEWS**

Now is not the time to be shy and keep your successes and business development news to yourself. If you have achieved something as a business then shout it from the rooftops. Perhaps you've just passed the 1000th sale mark, made a new appointment, become a member of an industry panel, launched a new service or worked on a charitable project. Whatever it is, let everyone related to your business know.

At Orchid, for example, we recently became the first Channel Island members of the highly regarded PRCA (Public Relations Consultants Association). This is an important step in our business development and reinforces our commitment to ensuring best practice as an agency and for our clients. We didn't keep this great news to ourselves. We told the media, put it on our website, included it in our email sign offs and 'twittered' about it with a link to the news on our website. We also emailed our customers using the opportunity to give them a business update and thanking them for their valued and ongoing custom.

## **KEEP YOUR PROFILE HIGH**

Serve as a resource to the media by providing comment on 'hot topics' of the moment related to your industry, supported by credible material. Once the media respect your opinion and the ease with which they can secure comment, they are likely to come back to you for further interviews. Be heard amongst your peers, and your competitors, by authoring contributed articles, speaking at industry events and issuing authoritative news releases.

## **INVENT YOUR 'SOCIAL' SIDE**

Embrace the power of online communication. Keep your website up to date and informative; consider a company blog and talk about something meaningful and of value; participate in business forums and message boards and send regular e-newsletters to your stakeholders updating them about how your business is handling the economic situation. Benefit from the immediacy of sites such as Facebook and Twitter to get your message out fast and drive traffic to your website or directly to your business.

## **WORK WITH YOUR COMMUNITY**

Being a responsible business that embraces the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) should be a core element of any business strategy and PR programme. Working with the community, and involving staff and customers in the process, will help present your business in a favourable light and enhance your credentials as an employer of choice – one who cares for the wellbeing of its staff as well as the community in which it operates.

Public Relations is so much more than free coverage in the local press. To be truly powerful it should help inform business decisions and play a strategic role on your overall development. To ensure your brand is built in a way that fosters and maintains positive relations with all those that come into contact with it will ensure the long term success of your business.

Orchid Communications is a full service PR agency that is passionate about building and maintaining the reputation of its clients. To find out more, please visit [www.orchidcommunications.co.uk](http://www.orchidcommunications.co.uk)