

# Is your business ready for PR?

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There is no question that brands can benefit from great media publicity, but before you embark on this journey, you should ask yourself the critical question: "Is my business ready for PR"?

Building a successful business in today's turbulent economic climate is a tough ask for even the most intrepid entrepreneurs. The business landscape has become a battleground, with growing numbers of small enterprises jostling for pole position amidst ever tightening corporate budgets.



So how do you get ahead of the competition and make your business stand out from the crowd? TV and radio advertisements can certainly offer value, but are well out of the financial reach of most. Social media can also get you noticed, but is the odd light-hearted Facebook post enough to get potential clients to take you seriously?

For growing businesses with limited budgets and unlimited ambitions, PR can be an enormously effective tool to help you expedite your enterprise's expansion.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself before you get started:

## Do I understand it?

Many business owners regard PR simply as a low-budget alternative to traditional advertising. But it's important to remember that PR achieves entirely different outcomes to its brasher marketing counterpart, building richer, lengthier narratives. It's a way to build relationships and connect with the people who matter. PR enables businesses to carve out a solid reputation within their given industry, reinforcing expertise and relevance by integrating key brand messaging with the news agenda. Remember, it's not a sales tool, so don't expect the phone to start ringing off the hook immediately. But if you're willing to exercise patience, the rewards down the line will be far greater.

## Do I have a story to tell?

Don't make the mistake of thinking the media is falling over their feet to tell your story. A brand new product or innovation might be breaking news within your business, but it's unlikely to be met with the same enthusiasm by journalists, who fend off plenty of press releases on a daily basis. If you want quality publicity, it's important to clearly identify your 'brand story', singling out a few key messages that help you to stand out from the crowd. If you've got a clear understanding of who you are and why your value proposition is more newsworthy than your closest competitors, you'll be well positioned to start grabbing those headlines.

## Do I have the time?

PR is a time-consuming undertaking, requiring plentiful hours of input from spokespeople to brainstorm article ideas, write articles, answer questions, etc. And it doesn't end there. Reputable publications – the kinds you want to be seen in – don't simply publish press releases word-for-word, preferring to conduct their own research and interviews in order to flesh out a story. Incredible opportunities can be presented with tight deadlines, and you'll have to be prepared to adapt your schedule in return for valuable exposure.

## Do I have an opinion?

If you want to become a sought-after expert in your industry, you're going to need to start voicing your opinion on the issues that really matter. Don't be afraid to shake things up and offer insightful and unconventional commentary on breaking news stories, you'll be clearly standing out from your peers and establishing yourself as a go-to information source for media. If you're a small business, this is a particularly effective way to position yourself as an industry pioneer.

## Can I afford it?

Whilst PR certainly is more cost-effective than other marketing alternatives, it does require a lengthier commitment if it's to be effective. If you want to see real results, you're going to need to budget with a long-term view in mind, making allowances for the development of strong media relationships. If you want to speed things up a little, you might want to consider a specialist PR agency, which is more likely to have plenty of established relationships with key journalists in your industry.

## ABOUT RONELLE BESTER

Managing Director at Red Ribbon Communications. With over 20 years of experience in PR and Marketing, Ronelle is one of the South African communications industry's most influential voices.

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