

Size doesn't matter when it comes to PR

By [Marie Yossava](#), issued by [Grapevine Communications](#)

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That's what we at Grapevine Communications tells SMEs who often have a value-add offering or service, but not the established confidence to understand that they have an important message to take to market. The perception of 'small fish in a big pond' can often intimidate smaller businesses away from investigating their ability to benefit from public relations.



When does a company go from being the new kid on the block to the next level of entrepreneurship that competes head on with competitors in the field?

Commonly misunderstood

Any company, no matter the size or capacity, can benefit from publicity but it is commonly misunderstood in business that PR is something that only large corporations have the budget for and the brand to carry it.

The power of PR for SMEs can assist in business growth and recognition. A great concept is only as good as the market's awareness of its need for your business offering. Many people do not know how to commercialise a concept and PR is one of the disciplines of marketing that help do just that.

Publicity helps take the message to market and inform target markets that the product or service is now available, differentiates your company from competitors, advises of the compelling reason(s) as to why they should be doing business with you and finally builds brand awareness.

Credibility

Unless the public (target markets) know you exist, how can they transact with you? PR coverage lends credibility to you, your business and the products and services beyond what can be gained with paid advertising. Advertising can take your brand so far while PR complements it and the overall marketing strategy.

Publicity also changes perceptions. Other organisations look up and start taking cognisance of the new kids on the block and realise they have a serious contender in the marketplace. Existing clients are assured that they are working with a recognised business that holds an opinion and is an authority within their field. Potential customers acknowledge that this company is no small fry (mickey mouse) outfit/operation and perhaps considers it as the preferred partner.

And how does the SME select a PR agency to do the job? Here are some tips.

PR agency selection tips

1. Take a look at the agency's history and past performance.
2. Read what previous clients have had to say and ask for case studies.
3. Take note of previous clients from your sector and investigate online and through archives for their coverage.
4. Ask, if you are a small business, how important will the account be to the agency and how will they assure them of the attention.
5. Ask the agency to identify media opportunities and how they are assured of getting coverage. How do they measure their performance? What guarantees are in place?
6. How do you charge - retainer or project fees, and which costs are included?
7. Remember - not matter how small, you need to allocate resources, not just funds, to regularly communicate and interact with your agency of choice.

Editorial is never guaranteed, but an agency which has established media relations and strong journalism skills will know what constitutes a news story and what does not. That makes all the difference.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marie is founder and managing member of Grapevine Communications, a communications consultancy that focuses on media relations and journalism skills. Her awards are a tribute to the efforts she has made as a woman founding and managing her own business. Marie is in the vanguard of new thinking, pressing the need for a re-evaluation of the industry. Her emphasis is on communication based on a more thorough understanding of the client/customer market, the fast moving trends in consumer demand and a thorough understanding of how the media works. Email her on marie@grapevinecommunications.co.za.

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