

Why PR is still important

 By [Heather Baker](#)

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The digital era has transformed global business needs - and agencies have responded in kind. We offer all manner of marketing services, from advertising to inbound to content marketing to SEO. With all these new tools at our disposal, marketing should be a cinch. And yet, it's seemingly more difficult than ever before to publicise the things that you want to be noticed, and equally hard to keep other stuff under wraps.



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Understanding exactly what media and messaging an audience wants to engage with is crucial, but getting it right is no easy feat. Some clients also argue that in times of economic uncertainty, it's better for a business to cut back on marketing and let the products and services speak for themselves. This may work to some extent, but good old-fashioned PR (with a digital twist) makes sure that they actually get heard.

Nonetheless, the perception of PR as one of the dark arts involved in the fake news maelstrom is overshadowing the real business benefits of good PR. Fewer and fewer people seem to know what it is or how it actually works. This causes obvious problems when it comes to measuring success – and conveying that success to sceptical clients.

So, where, in this new world and media mix, does PR fit? And is it still important? The short answer is yes. If you're in any doubt as to why it still works, or simply need a good memory jog, here are the main business benefits of good PR – and how to measure them.

Manage, raise, and improve public perception

With a blend of traditional and digital tactics, PR can help a company with no real public profile become known to its target audience. This can involve contributing thought leadership articles to international or national media, or training your employees to act as spokespeople and then putting them forward for interviews.

PR builds good relations with key media. These relationships are critical to raising brand awareness and increasing your reach.

Boost credibility

Positive and targeted media hits are also important to boost your credibility. The more strategic exposure you receive, the better your competitive position. A relatively unknown rival won't get nearly as much market interest.

This is because, beyond awareness, PR provides businesses with credibility: a known quantity feels safer, more reliable and hence more trustworthy than an unknown quantity. When relevant, well-respected media publish your opinion pieces, your business standing is immediately improved. Potential investors are more attracted to companies that have won multiple awards and a sales pitch is much more successful when the prospect is familiar with the business.

SEO

PR is increasingly intertwined with SEO. When you, for example, contribute content to an online publication, it will usually result in a followed link. This boosts your position on Google's search engine results page. Even if you don't get a link, a brand mention alone can help boost you towards a position in the top five.

This is a hugely valuable and somewhat under-discussed benefit of good PR. HubSpot research states that 93% of B2B buying processes begin with an online search. Users typically begin their search looking up a pain point they're experiencing and clicking on related articles. If your company hits the coveted #1 spot, it may well end up becoming the #1 market choice and gain new qualified leads. This has nothing to do with your superior products or services, but simply because you occupy the top spot online.

Measuring success

The above benefits are real and important, but quantifying them isn't always easy. This frustrates many CMOs and for them, PR is often ungraspable and unpredictable. When agencies report to their clients, they need to show them concrete results.

Coverage is, of course, an absolute priority – and volume speaks volumes. The more positive articles, interviews, and contributed blogs you have had published in relevant media, the better the metrics. At its core, PR's value lies in its ability to shine a light on the company and attract attention towards it. The best way to do this is to provide a sustained campaign of interesting and useful commentary.

The best feedback a PR agency can receive is that, through their actions, they've managed to make small companies appear bigger than they are, and that the people who matter have sat up and noticed them. PR is important because it makes sure that interesting people with interesting ideas get the platform they deserve to grow and improve their businesses.

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