



How can you improve your corporation's public perception in the New Year?

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In the minds of your customers, your business and corporate image is already positioned. But what about those potential customers that might not know about your business and what you have to offer? This article, which is a follow-up to my last four columns addressing this topic, will describe some additional components that businesses and corporations might consider in selecting a public relations and communications program that's right for you. In this article, I'm specifically focusing on event planning and the need for businesses to consider employing the services of a professional public relations firm. As we enter a new year of uncertainty with regard to the economy, changing political climate and questionable forecasts for business and industry, it is becoming more critical that corporations and businesses consider all available options relative to promoting their products and services, and maintaining their competitive edge in the marketplace.

When employing a public relations firm to develop your special event or handle your marketing and public relations program, the agency you select should be willing to meet with you on an ongoing basis and engage in a working partnership with your company and top decision-makers. Good public relations campaigns rely on joint decision-making and the sharing of creative ideas.

There are several attributes that a good public relations professional can bring to the table in assisting your company to develop an effective campaign or special event.

- * They can discuss your goals with the program elements that you choose to implement both now and in the future, and formulate a plan to meet your marketing objectives;
- * A public relations professional can create and fine-tune a program to ensure it is effective and efficient;
- * They can help you to identify your key markets and other related resources that your company might not have considered relative;
- * Public relations professionals can prepare and execute all elements of programs, which are often too time-consuming for corporate managers and support staff.

A good public relations professional can also work with you to develop a reporting system to review and measure progress against mutually agreed upon goals. In addition, the professional you hire should automatically assume full responsibility (including all legwork necessary) for all activities associated with your public relations program. A professional agency should become an extension of your organization, working as part of your team, to ensure that you receive maximum and effective media exposure on all levels.

The public relations agency should exhibit as much commitment and excitement to your company as you have. You should receive total commitment and dedication towards achieving the desired goals. Your public relations agency should do whatever it takes to help you with your efforts. Your goals become their goals, and an effective partnership is employed.

It used to be that major corporations often felt that it was important to hire a large global public relations firm to represent their needs. That trend has changed. Many experts in the industry have now realized that with the introduction of the Internet, the same resources that were once only available to the larger communications firms are now available to smaller "boutique" firms. And these smaller firms charge a fraction of the price that the larger firms charge because their overhead expenses are lower than those needed by a larger firm. In addition, the principals of a smaller firm tend to have a greater understanding of their client's business since they are more accessible than standard global firms. Also, because of their size, a consistent person at the firm will deal with journalists on a greater frequency. In short, a boutique firm offers more personalized attention, greater accountability and cost savings.

A meaningful public relations campaign is cost effective and can prove to be very successful in building your business and its reputation. A public and media relations campaign should be seen as a vital management function to improve your business and position.

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