



Improving your corporate position through message and image building

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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? One way to develop or enhance your corporate image is by designing a successful public relations program that incorporates several communications components. 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 a plan to improve corporate image by identifying key spokespeople and the potential benefits of utilizing photos as another way to define and promote an effective image for your corporation.

The familiar saying, "a picture speaks a thousand words," is certainly true when businesses and corporations are considering marketing and promotions campaigns. An effective tool in promoting your business and services is securing placement of business pictures in the print or electronic media. Business photos have become important to newspapers, magazines and professional trade journals. The Associated Press has been quick in responding to this trend by transmitting business pictures over the wire. The AP Network reaches every major newspaper and most of the smaller daily publications throughout the country. Whenever print or electronic publications accept and transmit a business picture, the resultant use in space can amount to thousands of dollars if paid as advertising space. Because the business photo usually appears as part of the publication's "editorial" section, it has a third-party endorsement and is often better received by the reader than more commercial advertising. When considering submission and placement of a business picture, you should create a unique and very innovative photo image along with an informative caption that will encourage readers to act in some positive capacity. Business photos can be submitted to organizations such as the Associated Press and be placed in their online photo stream, which is distributed to a broad network of publications. To ensure that this practice is effective, you should work closely with a public relations firm who has a professional photographer with this type of media experience to create the photo concept, arrange the shoot, and select the proper photo for presentation to the national wire services and local media.

Another effective tool in promoting your business and services to the broader public is by establishing a Speaker's Bureau or appointing an official corporate spokesperson to present your message to the public. When businesses and corporations want to meet the media "head on" to roll out a new product or address a potential crisis within industry, it is best practice to rely on someone with expertise about the subject that you are publicizing or to spin the information to the benefit of the corporation. Developing a Speaker's Bureau with identified key staff who are both knowledgeable and credible about your business and corporation can be a valuable marketing tool

and compliment a good community relations program.

Lastly, another effective way to stay in touch with present and future prospects is through a corporate newsletter. A newsletter can keep readers and customers informed of new research, business developments, products, special offers and other interesting information. A corporate newsletter is a valuable communication tool for customers, suppliers and allied business associates.

Unlike a press release, a newsletter can be used to promote a product or particular corporate or business leader more in depth, and when combined with professional photographs and eye catching graphics, it can prove to be the type of communication tool that people hold onto for future reference.

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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