



How to capture opportunities and make money by managing your perception in today's market

October 27, 2008 - Spotlights

Chances are, your business and services are already positioned in the minds of your audience. But, if you're not actively managing your perception in the minds of your audiences, than who is?

During my travels, I've noticed many different ways we as an industry promote real estate and investment opportunities to the public and our peers. There are numerous messages that don't stand out and lack creativity in their deliverance.

It seems effective and successful people or corporations hold a distinctive position in the mind of their target audiences and creatively reinforce that image continuously. We are operating in a very competitive global market and catering to a society overburdened by communications. Corporations are increasingly challenged by the need to set themselves apart. We need to take action and roll out stronger, more effective marketing programs in order to better communicate who we are, what we do, why people need to do business with us and most importantly, invest, rent or buy from us.

All too often, strategic marketing tends to be considered a "luxury item." When times are good, we're willing to spend money to promote what we do. When times are tough, we cut it out. That is one of the biggest mistakes we can make in business. Marketing should be considered an important priority of any business plan, during the good times and the bad. Companies that maintain their image through targeted communications strategies can survive downturns in the real estate market and enjoy the lion's share of business when the market improves.

A solid marketing program can accomplish several objectives:

First, developers and owners can communicate strengths to the real estate community, potential tenants and general public, while heightening awareness of specific projects, and accelerating sales and leasing activity.

Second, real estate and investment companies with a sophisticated, targeted public relations program that focuses on successful projects are able to develop and maintain visibility and are often the first to receive proposals for new business activity.

Third, in today's challenging financial environment, a strategic public relations program can play a major role in creating awareness within the financial community. A steady stream of positive messages can counter any potential negative attitudes held by the financial and investment community. In this way, public relations often helps companies obtain capital.

Finally, today, tenants seeking the best value for their dollars are choosing to locate in developments with strong owners, good management, prestigious locations, meaningful amenities and long-term stability. A successful public relations program can have a dramatic effect in determining which companies are perceived as quality players. This is critical because a tenant's perception of a project, development or an owner's reputation will be a determining factor in its decision to lease space. So, how do you develop a creative, strategic marketing plan?

Here are some basic steps to follow in order to capture the market from a public relations and marketing perspective:

Perform a Needs Analysis

An identification of what key audiences need to know, what they already know, and what they need to become aware of and understand;

Communications Audit

Communications currently used (in person, print and electronic) to communicate with key stakeholders as well as internally with the staff;

Identification of Marketing Communications

Program Objectives

Understanding what needs to be accomplished, and what steps must be developed to achieve your marketing goals;

Broad List of Audiences/Stakeholders

Engaging in networking opportunities is critical to expanding your audience and building upon those targets to receive your marketing materials;

Focused Message Development

You must develop a message that is both concise and effective since you often get only one chance to make an impression;

Core Marketing Communications Program

A core marketing communications program that supports all efforts and ensures that you receive strong, positive recognition.

Marketing Communications Tactics

Develop communications tactics that support your program and that you can implement. These tactics can include everything from continuous editorial contact and deliverance of stories to the media to newsletters and community outreach programs, effective networking, contact generation and advertising.

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