

Public Relations: What makes it successful?

 By Jennifer Stein

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There is one factor, above all others, that is key to making public relations successful - partnerships.



Source: www.pexels.com

Any PR programme, be it a once-off project, short-term campaign or long-term retainer-led relationship, needs to be viewed as a partnership between agency and client. If there is no true commitment to teamwork, collaboration and co-operation, PR will not deliver the results we know it can. It's that simple.

Add to that the client's commitment level to the PR process. Two vastly different experiences recently brought home in very different ways the absolute need for senior client commitment to the PR process.

One potential client, a CEO, is keen to engage but simply doesn't have the capacity or time he knows will be required of him in order to see results. He knows that his direction is key to the success of any PR output and he's not prepared to risk his or his organisation's reputation with a half-baked approach.

The other was during a pitch where there was a collective sigh of relief around the boardroom table, a clear (mis)understanding on their part that we would take complete ownership of the PR programme, one less thing for them to worry about

Investing time and resources

Any client thinking of working with a PR agency needs to be aware upfront of what's required to optimise results that strategic PR can bring. It's not about signing a contract or quote and expecting the process to happen spontaneously. It's about investing time and resources, sometimes a significant amount of both, or else you're wasting your money.

No one "has time". If there is support and buy in from top executives, then the process will work. If not, it won't. Making it known within the organisation that reputation management and PR is a top priority makes a huge difference in results. Things like keeping appointments with the firm and the media matter a lot. Otherwise, you may get negative press or none at all when you need it. It's an interdependent spoke of a wheel between the company, agency and media.

Success is also about an investment in knowledge sharing. Garbage in, garbage out. Input equals output. However you choose to frame it, agencies cannot work in a vacuum, nor can they manufacture content. Detail, context and relevance are absolute when it comes to developing content on behalf of a client, be it for a media release, pitch or thought leadership article.

We see the most sustainable success when senior executives are committed to and involved in the PR process. Whether they want to be the face of the company is unimportant here, and it doesn't mean they are the sole contact point between client and agency. Agencies work perfectly well with other personnel who have been tasked with handling PR from the client side. What is important is access to senior knowledge and insight about business strategy, challenges and opportunities, and using that insight to refine our PR and communications approach accordingly.

Ideally, a PR team should be treated as an extension of the executive team by sharing business strategies and forward-thinking. That is true partnership.

ABOUT JENNIFER STEIN

Jennifer Stein lives and breathes PR. With over 25 years in the industry she has extensive corporate and consumer PR experience across a number of sectors including automotive, IT, fast moving consumer goods, pharmaceutical, property, luxury brands and various services industries. Her areas of expertise include strategy, crisis communications, high level client service and counsel, project and budget management...

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