

Is PR actually relevant for my business?

 By [Terena Chetty](#)

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This is a question I come across quite often. It's not always asked this bluntly, but it is evident that many companies, especially small to medium-sized businesses, view public relations (PR) as irrelevant or offering very little in terms of tangible business value - and their scepticism is understandable.



Source: www.unsplash.com

Many people think of PR as only being applicable when it comes to political objectives or managing some sort of crisis. It generally isn't the primary go-to tactic for most companies when developing a marketing plan. In fact, even professional marketers often don't fully understand where PR fits into a B2B or B2C consumer landscape. The truth is, when used effectively, PR can offer immense value to businesses both big and small, across virtually any industry.

To take a step back, let's look at what sets PR apart from other marketing activities. Firstly, it centres largely on earned media and visibility. This means that instead of paying for advertising space, the content needs to be interesting, relevant and newsworthy enough for the media and public platforms to choose to showcase it without receiving payment to do so. This includes content such as news or opinion articles, interviews and speaking engagements. As opposed to most paid advertising content, it's less about solely or directly 'selling' a business and more about discussing a related issue.



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It also entails positioning a brand in the desired way, including building a thought leadership profile by emphasizing what makes a person or organisation an expert or leader within a certain field. While some elements may entail paid placement (such as wide-scale distribution of a press release), the fact that most PR content is unpaid helps it to earn more credibility (versus paid advertising). It is important to note, however, that PR does not replace any form of paid advertising. Instead, it works hand in hand with other activities, such as digital and traditional marketing, as part of an overall communications strategy.

For example, a company that offers accounting and tax management services can get great reach through a paid advert. Publishing an article explaining a new development in the industry and outlining the consequences of non-compliance can then further highlight the need to use professional tax processing services, and drive the urgency to do so. Additional PR activities could also include a company spokesperson discussing tax issues on a radio or television interview on a reputable media platform. The resulting content of all activities can thereafter be distributed to a wider audience through paid advertising activities, such as paid social media posts on the brand's business pages. Interesting and high-quality thought leadership content generally performs well with target audiences, helping to boost the engagement and reach of a brand. 2020 statistics show that 70% of marketers are investing in content marketing, demonstrating that they recognise the significance it holds.



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PR helps brands connect to various stakeholder groups in a way that resonates with each audience segment at different levels of complexity. For instance, the way an organisation communicates with their industry regulators or potential investors differs vastly from the way they speak to the public. PR is also invaluable when it comes to crisis management, including mitigating the negative impacts of a crisis on a business in both the short and long term. Furthermore, it is a great way to highlight other activities or news about a brand over and above products and/or services. This includes showcasing positive impact stories (such as Corporate Social Responsibility projects), an achievement (such as winning an industry award) or helping to change perspectives about a subject that may be misunderstood or negatively perceived.

As a communication tactic, PR may be slightly more complicated to grasp and successfully execute as opposed other more well-known marketing activities, especially as it requires creating and maintaining trust-based relationships with the media. It can also do more harm than good if the content used is intentionally misleading or aims to incite harmful reactions by the audience. It is therefore imperative to consult or use the services of professional PR practitioners who are familiar with the requirements and nuances related to thought leadership and PR communication. Even companies with in-house marketers or an advertising team will find value in collaborating with PR experts, particularly as part of an integrated strategic communications approach.



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In the current market landscape where consumers are demanding more authenticity, transparency and connection from brands, every business should analyse the potential offered by PR when it comes to brand positioning and its contribution to achieving key business objectives. The shift towards increased PR activities has already begun, with the global PR market value expected to reach over \$90bn in 2022. PR can certainly offer a competitive edge and provide a much-needed

boost for companies keen on taking their brand to the next level.

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