

Using PR Effectively



Public Relations (PR) covers a multitude of techniques and methods for raising your profile and publicising your offer to your target audience without paying for it.

In effect you have to create a story that the editor or media owner is prepared to treat as news.

There are also some very effective techniques for web PR through YouTube, blogs, Facebook, Twitter and other social media.

Viral Marketing is increasing in popularity.

This is where the product or brand you want to advertise is wrapped inside some form of entertaining or amusing media.

The most common is an e-mail containing a video attachment. The idea is that friends will forward it onto each other so the message spreads of its own volition.

Appearing on TV or radio has very strong impact.

The Choice

Virtually every business has definable target market segments and several common media through which to reach them.

Your company's marketing plan should define the most cost effective media to reach your target audience.

Most businesses use common routes like newspapers, trade journals, website advertising and directories. You need to research and decide on the best media and target publications for you.

Here, we will examine the typical costs of editorial versus the cost of advertising - how it works and the costs involved.

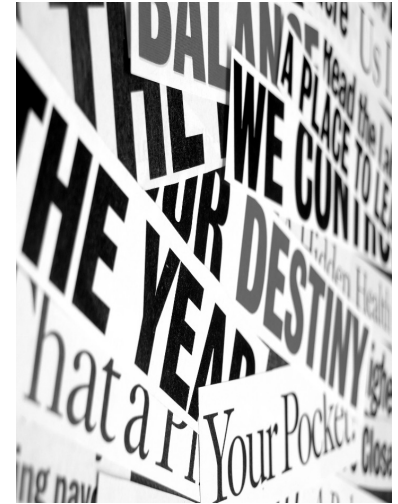
The cost of magazine advertising is far more expensive than editorial. With either, you'll need to select your publications carefully.

You will need to know the readership figures and obtain rate cards to understand the advertising costs and gauge the best return on your investment.



Advertising

Once you have set your budget and decided what size of advert you can afford, you need to create the layout.



You can do this yourself (if you have the relevant software and skills).

Sometimes you can get help from the magazine's art department.

Better still, use an agency or freelance designer.

You will need to decide on the copy (the written message), a call to action (response), and some imagery to create an impact and endorse your words.

The copy is critical because you have a very limited amount of space and each word must be chosen carefully for maximum impact.

Once your advert is designed in the correct format, you will need to submit it. Many publications run "feature stories" throughout the year and you may want your submission to coincide with one.

Check the publication's editorial feature list for the timing of articles that will complement your message.

Using PR Effectivelycontinued

What does it cost?

Costs vary, but as a very rough guide, a quarter page advert in a trade publication will cost around £500, a half page £900 and a whole page around £1,500.

For comparison purposes, let's say you advertise in 4 magazines with a quarter page advert, i.e., a cost of £2000 excluding any fees to produce the design.



Editorial

Editorial, in the form of a press release, works in a different way to advertising. It's advisable for you to aim to produce a series of interesting articles and news that can be released throughout the year.

Too many companies try to publicise all their interesting items in one big announcement and then have nothing left for the rest of the year. It is wise to plan at least the next three months' releases.

You will need to call each magazine and establish who the right editorial contact is for your article.

Take the time to introduce yourself and discuss the theme to ensure they would be willing to print it (they'll always reserve judgement until they've seen it) but ask for an agreement for the subject.

You then need to write it. This is where a good journalist, not a copywriter, can help make even the dullest of subjects sound more interesting.

The golden rule of PR is that it cannot be like an advertisement; it has to be written as a journalist would write it, so it should be factual, informative and contain no puff. It is not an advert.

Always include a picture, with a caption, to go with your article. It will endorse your story and the magazine will prefer it.

Once written and proof checked, you can submit to each of the chosen magazines.



Follow-up to ensure they have received it and to ask if they intend to run it.

Many magazines charge a colour separation fee of £75-£150 for pictures.

It must be a high-quality image, at least 300 dpi. It may be worth using a professional photographer to take a library of shots for this and future use.

How do the costs compare?

If you submitted your editorial to six magazines and four of them agree to run it, you would pay £300-£600 for the colour separations, plus the journalist's time (say £600), i.e., between £900-£1,200 as against £2,000 for the advertisement. You should also consider the coverage achieved as well as the saving.

Twice as much for half the price

The advertisement will only provide you with a quarter page. The editorial will give you far more, typically half a page and sometimes two whole pages with a good size photograph! In terms of magazine space, you can achieve £3,600 worth.

Free PR Review

Effective use of PR can be a valuable contribution to your marketing efforts and benefit your business in the following areas:

- Reach your target market
- Gain the validation and legitimacy of being featured in the news
- Establish yourself as an expert in your field
- Land more customers
- Sell more products
- Build and establish your brand
- Enhance your reputation

For a free review of your PR aspirations or existing media activity, please contact your local UKBA advisor.

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Next month: Online Lead Generation