

How Do You Sing Your Praises? Advertising vs. Public Relations



By Dian Griesel, President, [Dian Griesel International](#)

“Don’t pay any attention to what they write about you. Just measure it in inches,” Andy Warhol once quipped. Perhaps this method worked for Warhol whose edgy and unique persona along with his infamy and uncanny ability to get stacks of free media coverage were key to selling his artwork. However, this may not be the best mantra for companies wishing to market their new products and attract a wider client base.

The question then is how do you make sure the things written about you and your company are the “right” things that move all of your goals and objectives forward with clear messaging, and not merely shouts into the void? Advertising is certainly an option. It can be a surefire way to get your message out there, but it usually comes at a high cost. Add up the creative talents required to envision and design campaign messaging plus graphics—along with the possibility that the chosen outlets targeted and/or ultimate results/response may miss, the true cost for an advertising campaign can be exponentially higher than originally budgeted. Making advertising an even more expensive branding option is this: According to a recent article in the Houston Chronicle, advertising has a fixed cost, usually based on a combination of the audience that will be exposed to the advertisement or

commercial, and the demographics of that audience. For example, a company wishing to attract higher-paying clients or eager to sell high-end products will often have to spend more upfront on their advertising campaign.

Public relations, on the other hand, has the potential to yield more coverage for both companies and products than one might have originally imagined—using that same original investment...or maybe even significantly less. Although much maligned, misunderstood and a budget often first cut, unlike advertising, which is purchased coverage and guaranteed placement at a set time and place, real PR is earned. It comes in many forms including television segments; articles in newspapers and magazines; or the opportunity to contribute a column to an online outlet, for example. Today it may also be digital coverage of an article that goes viral on the internet or is highly shared on Facebook or some other social media network. The power behind earned media placements and that of their new sibling social media is the inherently positive effect on readers and viewers. Why? Because people are simply more likely to trust and engage with quality information and rely on it when making purchasing decisions that comes from a respected third party outlet.

While many companies might feel more in control by paying for advertising, having a smart public relations plan in place will build undeniable credibility and go a long way in connecting you to your desired customers and partners in a wholly unique way. This holds true whether good times or bad, booming markets or busts.

Targeting the correct journalists and bloggers, and customizing your pitch to each respective media outlet is essential if coverage is expected. It takes time, planning and smarts to earn “free” media coverage and build brand advocates. If the internal resources lack time or skill sets, an outside agency becomes an essential line item in the overall budget.

Ignoring public relations and leaving it entirely out of your marketing plans will ultimately result in a significant hole in your branding and sales success. This holds true whether you are selling athletic wear, trying to book patients in a clinical trial, launching a new app, selling an expensive or inexpensive product to consumers or other businesses...or anything else imaginable.

While the cost for a good public relations program may initially appear on the expense side of the balance sheet, with a strong partner and a strategic multi-faceted plan, the results from greater brand recognition and heightened thought-leadership positioning are priceless additions that contribute to the plus side of sales for those companies that do it right.

In doubt? Call the advertising departments of some of your favorite publications. Ask them if their covers are available for purchase. I think you know the answer. And it is in this answer that the value of public relations becomes comprehensible and priceless. A cover story can be obtained only one way.

About the Author: Dian Griesel is a strategic visibility expert, an author of several business books on corporate communications and the president of Dian Griesel International, a public relations firm that delivers traditional, digital and social media visibility for greater engagement with desired audiences.