

Is Your PR Strategy Really Working?

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Successful PR takes significant investments. These three signs can help you decipher if your PR strategy is making an impact on your business.

If you have made the choice to invest in public relations support, the most important thing, of course, is to first select the proper team or agency for your business. Not every agency or publicist that executes PR can garner extraordinary results. That's why you may want to do your homework and due diligence—PR takes significant investments in time, energy and resources—and find the right fit for your **brand**.

Second, you want to make sure the PR team you hired, whether in-house or external, has also set realistic goals for success. Every business will have different PR goals, but without pre-set goals, it may be difficult to measure and truly determine your successes. What are you looking for? Media exposure? Potential clients? Increased visibility? When it comes to public relations, both small and large companies want to know how, why and even when PR is working.

With that in mind, here are three signs, based on my experience in the field, that your PR strategy could be having an impact:

1.

You build credibility.

Consumers no longer buy goods or services at face value. They buy into stories, relationships and established **brands**. And all three are not made overnight. For example, take the practice of physical therapy. A privately owned physical-therapy practice wanted to stand out in an undifferentiated field. (Disclosure: This business, as well as others mentioned in the piece, are clients of my firm, LiFt Consulting LLC.) Members of the team understood the power of PR and shifted **advertising** budgets into a PR strategy.

Research and experience told them that in general, people did not understand physical therapy and they wanted to change the norm. First, their team invested in the development of their [physical therapy brand](#)—perfecting the company's colors, imagery and verbiage. Next, they wanted to share their story with the press; their PR goal was to build credibility using the

help of mainstream consumer media.

*Online surges can happen overnight and **social** media can be powerful if utilized correctly. Building content on your company's own **social** media is one thing—breaking your own news is another.*

—Laura Fitzgerald, owner, LiFt Consulting LLC

They researched what forms of media they wanted to be featured in by asking who needs to know about their business and who would find value in their story and method of physical therapy. Once answered, they developed a targeted media outreach list and tailored their story and message to each specific media outlet and audience. When a media outlet became interested in the company's story, they offered their physical therapy services for the most influential press, so journalists could see firsthand the difference in their method. Those who accepted the invite to receive an assessment not only heard the difference about the **brand**, but also felt the difference immediately.

In three years, the company has been organically featured and quoted in more than 50 national and local publications. It's not a stretch to think the increased visibility within the proper press outlets helped this physical therapy practice build credibility and ultimately attract new clients into their business.

2.

You see an online surge.

Outside the traditional approach of increasing search rank by posting news clips or articles about your product or services and providing valuable inbound links to your website, the online world is very capable of providing a visibility surge to your business. Most recently, a [bespoke tailor in Chicago](#) offered an exclusive sneak peak of one of its **designs** for a major sporting event to one of the most influential **Twitter** feeds in sports. One tweet resulted in a full-blown surge to its own **social** media and website, causing daily visitors on its homepage to jump from 13 to 172, and generated 158 clicks in one day (previous average per day was 18).

Online surges can happen overnight and **social** media can be powerful if utilized correctly. Building content on your company's own **social** media is one thing—breaking your own news is another. Think about it: Your followers already like you and your company enough to follow you. If you share exclusive, true news with only your followers, however, you are limiting your potential reach. In this case, the bespoke tailor understood its target, researched and found an influential sports leader on **Twitter** who was interested in sharing the fashion news with his own **social** media following (1 million+) *only* if it had not been shared anywhere else. The impact? Visibility by an audience of more than a million, versus the tailor sharing the news with a couple thousand of its own followers.

The surge not only affected visibility with potential clients but also visibility within key media influencers—causing an ancillary surge of additional media and ultimately more credibility builders.

3.

You establish relationships through emotion.

PR pros find it very interesting that some ads—full-blown paid pages in magazines or TV infomercials—now try to look like organic stories. Or, rather, public relations. We know consumers often want connection and emotion. In 2015, a successful hair salon in Chicago sought to connect with a charity. It didn't want to seem trite or trendy by partnering with just any charity; it wanted one that had meaning for its **brand**, team and clients.

As with all great PR strategies, we must start with research. The salon team had a very simple goal—connect with a charity. What made the biggest difference was connecting with the *right* charity. Time and time again we see companies partner with causes lacking connection to their supporting **brand**. In this case, the salon owner had battled MS for years, but this was the first time where he decided to partner with a charity. After much consideration, the salon owner realized giving back to the MS community that had supported him for so long had meaning for him personally, but also his supportive staff and clients.

In the past two years, the salon's team has helped to raise more than \$20,000 in donations for MS, while attracting new clients from unique places—clients who had family or friends battling MS or friends of friends who had a loved one working through their own MS story and struggles. While the primary goal was supporting a good cause, a strong emotional connection was made for the salon's **brand**, its employees and its clients.

There are many different ways to know whether your public relations strategy is working. Blending the art (credibility, buzz and emotional connection) with the science (online numbers, press impressions and press mentions) gives you a full, clear view of the return on your investment. By starting any program with well-defined goals and strong team communication, a true commitment to PR can be your company's long-term power play.

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