

Using PR effectively to generate leads

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Irrespective of the type of industry or the product, the market place has become increasingly competitive and will continue to do so. This makes standing out above the crowd in such a cluttered environment incredibly difficult, especially for startup businesses and entrepreneurs.



Image by 123RF

Public relations managers and marketers have to work hard and smart in order to gain exposure and coverage, ultimately increasing sales for these customers.

An effective communication strategy which embraces various media and which highlights different aspects of the business is what is needed to ensure both initial and long term success. Here are a few ideas on how startup businesses and entrepreneurs can use public relations to attract attention and increase their sales:

1. **Tell the market who you are and why it needs you or your product:** As a new player you need to tell the market why they would choose you, your product or why your services are different. Find different angles to highlight this point by interviewing the personalities behind the business, explain the uniqueness of what you do, explain how your business can make a difference to potential customers and talk about your vision for the future. Try as much as possible to find an angle that is newsworthy.
2. **Target Media with specific angles:** Using these various angles target each specific media type, even specific journalists who speak to a specific audience. This will result in a more focussed approach and attract interest from these markets. This approach is often more successful than sending out a general story that speaks broadly about the business or product offering.
3. **Work across all media:** Do not limit your focus to one form of media. Adapt your stories or communications strategy so that any form of media can utilise it. Whilst it is said that if a piece is good enough for print it will then work on radio too, it is also true that some angles are more suited to broadcast. If the owner of the business is dynamic and presents well, then use him/her on radio or television rather than just quoting them in print.
4. **Social Media:** Using social media platforms is cost effective and in many cases a free and easy way to build awareness around a business or brand. Content is also not as reliant on news values. Social media is a great way to highlight other coverage received – stories published, reviews received, case studies or new contracts awarded. Initially ask family, friends and staff to like and share with their contacts – this will help expose the business to new customers.

5. **Focus on reviews:** Seek help from other key and prominent players in the industry to align with your product. A third party endorsement is far more effective. Determine who your loyal followers are and partner with them in order to share your good news story. Research conducted found that almost 90% of respondents made buying decisions based on online reviews. Constantly promote good reviews.

There are numerous other ways in which public relations can be used creatively to generate business. Never disregard your idea of how it can be applied making sure to evaluate it critically.

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