

Why are you not getting published?

Are you frustrated with your PR teams because you feel you aren't getting the publicity and results you deserve? You are not alone -- this is one of the most common reasons companies are dissatisfied with public relations in the organisation.

Issued by [Livewired Communications](#) 21 May 2003

"There are a host of reasons you may not be getting published. First, you need to get back to basics," she says. "Have you set expectations for your PR campaigns upfront – with your agency or your internal department? Probably not."

According to Bührmann most companies launch headlong into PR without really looking at what they are trying to achieve, or knowing what they hope to gain from the campaign. Often there are serious gaps between what the agency thinks are good results and what you are expecting.

"You need to communicate clearly upfront about what your expectations are. Your agency will tell you whether they are realistic or not. Any good agency knows that over-promising and under-delivering is a sure way to have the campaign fail," says Bührmann.

"Furthermore these expectations need to be clear -- nothing vague like 'we just want to increase our media exposure'. That's not good enough. If you have vague expectations and have not agreed the deliverables upfront with your agency, it follows that you will be dissatisfied with your PR. This doesn't mean the agency has no responsibility -- of course they do. Don't let agencies get away with vague promises. Ask them exactly what the deliverables of the campaign will be."

The best course of action is to set the expectations together. This way there is no miscommunication or misperception of what you and the PR agency should be getting from the campaign.

MAKE SURE YOU GET MANAGEMENT/CEO BUY-IN.

Bührmann stresses, "Imagine what can happen if you set these expectations with the agency, but your top management has a completely different expectation."

"You need to get agreement all-round to ensure that everyone is on the same PR wavelength. Don't let management fob this responsibility off; they need to be involved right from the beginning. You don't have to take up too much of their time. Do a quick presentation on what your objectives and expectations are, and get their input and agreement. You will be doing yourself a great disservice if you ignore this part of the process."

"Once you have set the expectations and deliverables you now have something to measure. You have a way of seeing whether your campaign is working, analyzing why it is not, and adjusting it very quickly to ensure better results. This way everyone wins."

Bührmann adds that once you have clearly outlined your expectations and you are still dissatisfied with the results, there are a host of other factors that may be affecting the campaign.

Here are some common reasons you may not be getting published:

- Are you getting back to journalists who are on deadline? If you don't speak to journalists, you will not get coverage.
- Are your staff reluctant to talk to journalists because they "haven't had their media training yet". Journalists don't buy this. They think you are simply scared and this makes journalists wonder why you are scared. This can make a journalist think twice before using your press release.
- Perhaps your releases are just not newsworthy. Your agency and your people need to understand what is news and what isn't news.
- Perhaps the person being interviewed does not know what is going on in the rest of the industry. Not only will you fail to get published, this could be embarrassing for you and your company.
- Are you providing photographs or are you reluctant to be photographed? Having a good photograph and allowing your staff to be photographed can get you substantially more coverage.
- Perhaps your spokespeople do not keep appointments that have been setup with journalists – understand that a journalist deadline does NOT wait. This is a lost opportunity.

"Trying to find out why you are not getting the coverage you want is not an easy task. Work together with your agency to determine exactly what the reasons are and fix them together. Think twice before jumping to the conclusion that it is the agencies fault as there may be more to it that meets the eye," Bührmann concludes.

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