

PR 2020: Brand awareness or coverage call girl?

Public relations is a vague term for an industry of different services, specialities and personalities. I've been in the industry for 20 years and I still haven't quite figured out how to explain to people what PR is.

 By [Sasha Kupritz](#), issued by [TenacityPR](#) 16 Mar 2020



Image source: [Andrea Flacquadio](#) via [Pexels](#).

The dreaded 'what do you do' question hangs over my head whenever I meet someone new. Sometimes get away with saying 'PR', but often I elaborate with an explanation: "I build companies reputations through relationships with the media."



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Which is a half-truth at best. PR is so much more.

Getting to grips with my own industry

I thought some research would help, so my first stop was Wikipedia, where I learnt that Ivy Lee, the man who turned around the Rockefeller name and image, and his friend, Edward Louis Bernays, established the first definition of public relations in the early 1900s. The official definition was,

“ *A management function, which tabulates public attitudes, defines the policies, procedures and interests of an organisation.* ”

Yet even Lee, the de-facto inventor of PR, admitted later that he had never been able to find a satisfactory phrase to describe what it was he did. Seems not much has changed in almost a century.

In 1948, historian Eric Goldman noted that the definition of public relations in Webster's would be [“dispute by both practitioners and critics in the field.”](#) ... “As one of those practitioners, he's right. Seventy years lat

and I absolutely dispute the official definition. Why? Because it's vague, and for that reason, anyone working in a communications role is defined as PR.

Originally PR was associated with awareness and media relationships while launching a logo is associated with marketing. In a world where content is king, giving the logo a personality is part of the process, which consists of mostly PR.



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Where to from here?

A century later and the debate rages on. When I entered the PR industry, the key focus was on media, journalists and coverage. At the time social media was in its infancy, but digital was already establishing itself as a reliable source for information and coverage.

PR, before social media, is defined as classical because it focused on the harder to lobby media – print, radio and broadcast coverage. Building relationships with journalists was key and content was king. Today we need to understand a much more diverse landscape, from influencers to what's trending on social media and why.

There are so many specialities branching off. PR is no different. Listing everything we do in one category just creates more confusion, and most definitely dilutes what other industries think we do.

As an earned media specialist I have always dug-in my-heels that traditional PR cannot be paid for, until now as owned media platforms, media partnerships, and sponsorships have become part of the everyday media mix which lends itself perfectly to brand building.



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Designing and launching a logo is one thing, keeping the conversation consistent and building the brand's voice, that is still key to PR as coined in the 1900s, however now we have a new tool kit full of different skills and stunts.

I still believe in what I do. I've seen the results for myself countless times. PR will always be relevant because maximising coverage in the target media and public creates brand awareness.

Brands need to be telling their stories more than ever with so many people having so much power to shape a brand's story FOR them on a mix of media channels? People want to know the brand and the values behind the brand?

As I've highlighted, PR professionals have the insights and experience to build and maintain a company's brand, but consistency is vital. Building a brand consists of awareness all year round. While classically

trained, media relationships and creating awareness are my specialities, but for as long as we define ourselves as PR, we simply pigeonhole our services into a limited number of categories.

ABOUT SASHA KUPRITZ

I am a qualified communications professional with a career track record in public relations of more than 20 years. During this time I have focused on media and client management. My experience includes brand development, corporate and consumer PR, FMCG, creative campaigns and activations. "Sasha is able to pitch stories and angles which are newsworthy and align with the client's core marketing messages." Brendan Seery
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