

# The PR fire

PR is a vital tool in brand building. Publicity will get you the credibility and word of mouth needed to create a buzz about your brand. Al Ries, author of *The Fall of Advertising and the Rise of PR* says only PR can start the fire - marketing will fan the flames.

 By [Sally Falkow](#) 1 Sep 2003

## Building relationships

Getting publicity depends on making relationships with reporters and editors. And having something they want - a newsworthy idea or angle. Sometimes you have a new product, new packaging, a new direction or new research. But what if you have no current news - or the position you have chosen for your company or product is not "new news"?

It is the job of a good PR professional to make it newsworthy. The recent launch of the new Volvo in the USA is a perfect case in point. Another safe Volvo? Ho hum, right? Volvo has been positioned with safety for decades, so why should the media care about yet another safety concept car - let alone one they just covered last year?

## Making it newsworthy

CooperKatz and Company Inc decided it was their job to make the media care. They did, and it was one of the most successful media campaigns Volvo had ever done. They did all the standard actions required for a great campaign - what is the product, who is the target audience, which media outlet could be perfect for the idea?

They watched the TV segment they had chosen until they knew everything about it - who covers your kind of story, how do they like to cover stories, what kind of locations do they prefer and what kind of story angles get their interest? They pitched the campaign ideas to the client, got them excited and on board. Not only did they get Volvo's Safety Concept Car II (SCCII) featured on CNN's "Next@CNN" program, the TV footage was picked up by all the major network news feeds. TV hits alone exceeded 33 000 000.

On top of that, an intuitive decision to use the then- yet-to-launch Volvo XC90 SUV as the trail car during the tour proved an unexpected media draw. The surplus hits sparked such consumer interest that Volvo was given orders for 6 000 XC90s before they aired a single commercial.

## Work for consistency

Once you get an initial burst of media attention like this, consistency becomes key. There should be a media savvy professional either on staff or on retainer to pursue publicity opportunities on an ongoing basis. You need someone who knows how to deal with the media, knows what they are looking for and how to write a good press release.

If all this sounds like a lot of work - it is. Many company executives are so busy with their own full time responsibilities they do not have the time to develop media contacts. Having a media professional on retainer takes care of the problem. Meet with them once a week and strategize on how to keep your name

the forefront of your audience's minds.

## ABOUT SALLY FALKOW

Sally Falkow APR is president and co-developer of PRESSfeed ([www.press-feed.com](http://www.press-feed.com)), the social media news hub. Originally from South Africa, Falkow now lives in Pasadena, California. She is an adjunct professor for social media strategy and content for public relations at the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at USC in Los Angeles, California. She blogs at [www.proactivereport.com](http://www.proactivereport.com) and you can follow her on Twitter at [@sallyfalkow](https://twitter.com/sallyfalkow).  
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