


## PR for SMMEs

Many entrepreneurs are unfamiliar and unaware of how PR can benefit their start-up business. There is a common misconception that start-ups don't need PR until they have made it to the top but you don't need to be a JSE listed company to benefit from PR.

 By [Lucinda Boddy](#) 19 Dec 2012

On the contrary, without PR it would take a very long time to gain such stature just by word of mouth. Constant media presence stimulates brand awareness and strengthens your company image. Increased visibility creates a perception that the company is active and adds credibility to your brand.

There are times when a company's reputation may come into disrepute. This is one of the biggest lessons to be learnt from bigger organisations, which are very visible in the public eye. This risk is not limited to mega organisations, however. Just one unhappy customer or even a disgruntled employee could cause a great deal of negative publicity for any company, regardless of its size.

### **You need to have a sound PR strategy**

This is why it's important, from the outset, to have a sound public relations strategy in place.

All too often, smaller companies take the PR function into their own hands, without sufficient understanding of the ins and outs of the profession, and in such cases, PR is simply not given the attention it requires.

Of course, for many smaller start-ups, retaining the services of a PR company may not be viable when cash flow is an issue. To this end, one can always negotiate smaller retainers or contact PR agencies that are themselves up and coming.

### **It's not just a 'nice to have'**

Smaller companies need to ensure that they are prepared when dealing with the media. Have all your information easily accessible - and rest assured that journalists will ask questions that you're not expecting you don't have an answer, don't pretend that you do.

Rather admit that you are uncertain, and ask if you can find out and get back to the journalist, making sure of course that you do revert to them. This is the benefit of using a PR consultancy - they are able to manage queries from the media effectively and ensure that all information is at hand.

Indeed, small companies need to be wary of pitfalls when it comes to building their brands and media relationships. Ultimately, it pays to invest in a PR company to handle media relations. PR needs to be part of your business strategy and not simply a 'nice to have'.

#### **ABOUT LUCINDA BODDY**

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