

Public Relations - A Key Tool In Successfully Launching a New Company or Product

By John Lonsdorf, President, R&J Public Relations

People starting a new business or introducing a new product today often ask me what one, single tool they should use to market their company. Many have been told there is only one way they should consider marketing it: the Internet.

The Internet has become a revolutionary tool for marketers, allowing them to reach untold millions in far reaches of the globe, and – better yet – to actually engage them in two-way interactions. There are also blogs and social media, where groups with similar needs and interests can form, allowing the marketer to educate and shape attitudes. I love the Internet as a marketing tool, and recommend that all of our clients incorporate a strong Internet component within their overall marketing programs.

Marketing a new company or product, however, can be likened to construction, or to a major home improvement project. I wouldn't dream of starting such a project with only one tool, no matter how useful or versatile it might be.

The successful launch of a new product, service or company requires a comprehensive look at all of the marketing tools at your disposal, as well as the judicious and skillful use of the ones that can get the job done most effectively and within the allocated budget. In today's fragmented and highly-competitive media landscape, that can be difficult.

Let's face it: most start-up companies, and many companies with a great idea for a new product or service, do not have the kinds of budgets that would allow for an effective advertising campaign. Not only that, most advertising has some degree of "waste circulation" – the readers, listeners or viewers - who would have no interest whatsoever in your new launch, but who you are paying to reach nonetheless. Batting .300 might make you a star in the major leagues, but can you really afford to pay 100 percent of the cost of an ad to reach only 30 percent of the overall audience?

That is not to say that advertising isn't a good idea. Good advertising, with hard-hitting, straightforward messages delivered in the right medium, is one of the best ways to get your story told as quickly as possible. An added advantage: your message is delivered exactly as you intended it, with



no outside "filter" added by journalists or editors.

But introducing a new product or service today requires more. It requires an effective public relations strategy. More and more, PR is playing a critical, often lead role in building awareness, generating buzz and driving media coverage to ensure a successful launch.

A good public relations strategy can almost immediately put your new product, service or company on the radar screens of those influential people and consumers that drive demand and fuel sales.

PR has many advantages:

- With PR, you can achieve a true multi-media approach. PR can get your story told on the Internet, in key magazines, on television and radio, and in newspapers – at a small fraction of the cost of advertising.
- PR can help to generate buzz and word-of-mouth around your launch.
- PR integrates well with advertising and promotion – making them more effective for you over the long haul.
- The best way to launch your product online is with a coordinated PR approach, one that gets buzz and coverage among bloggers and citizen journalists.

Need more proof that PR works? Procter & Gamble, the world's largest advertiser with over 400 well-known consumer brands, recently undertook an in-depth, 18-month study of its marketing tools and tactics. The result? P&G found that public relations, more than any other discipline, provided the best return on investment within the company's vast marketing mix.

Virtually every major business book on marketing in the past several years has touted the power of PR. In launching a new company, product or service, it is essential that you use all of the marketing tools and media that are reasonably available to you and which fit within your budget. A strategic public relations campaign can help you to do that, and should be at the top of your list.