



smart.
creative.
connected.



RESULTS
THAT COUNT.

REPUTATIONS
THAT MATTER.

Choosing Your Next PR Agency

PRSA – February 11, 2009

Making Heroes and Gurus



"Young people today need heroes—that's why I hired a P.R. firm."

The Benefits of Outside Counsel

- *Broad range of experience, resources*
- *Strategic thinking, expertise*
- *Different viewpoints, critical thought*
- *Creative culture*

The Benefits of Outside Counsel

- *Font of knowledge, new ideas*
- *Drives for results (tied to company plans)*
- *Senior involvement*
- *Flexible teams, bench talent*
- *Responsive*

The Benefits of Outside Counsel

- *Helping internal staff do more, faster*
- *Relationship-oriented*
- *Authentic, non-political counsel (mostly)*
- *Cost effective*

Steps in Choosing the Right Agency

- *Goals of the program*
- *Objectives*
- *Scope (local, regional, national, global)*
- *Target audiences, priorities*
- *Internal commitment*
- *Reasonable budget*
- *Partnership vs. vendor philosophy*
- *Establishing selection criteria, weighting*
- *Solicitation, first cut, proposals, interviews*
- *Final selection (gut and data!), negotiation*

What clients want from an agency

- *Strategic thinking*
- *Creativity*
- *Proactive client service, enthusiasm*
- *Critical, honest consulting*
- *Professionalism, integrity*
- *Responsiveness, accessibility*
- *Empathy, intuitiveness, industry knowledge*
- *Budget management*
- *Results*
- *Loyalty*

What clients *don't* want

- *Bait-and-switch selling*
- *Slow or tangled processes*
- *Hype, over-promising*
- *Long or repetitive educational curves*
- *Surprises in billing*
- *Passive, reactive service*
- *Staff turnover*
- *Lack of results, excuses*
- *Getting beat by their competition*

Context and reference points

- *Your previous agency experiences*
 - *What worked?*
 - *What didn't?*
 - *What was missing?*

Context and reference points

- *Selection criteria, request for proposals*
 - *Recommended strategic approach*
 - *Creativity*
 - *Agency history, experience, expertise*
 - *Reputation*
 - *Niche specialty*
 - *Similar clients, programs*
 - *Case histories*
 - *References*
 - *Size (and where you would fit on their roster)*
 - *Chemistry (gut)*
 - *Other (connections, professionalism, systems)*

Scoring Matrix



Criteria	Agency			
	A	B	C	D
<i>–Recommended strategic approach</i>				
<i>–Creativity</i>				
<i>–Agency history, experience, expertise</i>				
<i>–Reputation</i>				
<i>–Niche speciality</i>				
<i>–Similar clients, programs</i>				
<i>–Case histories</i>				
<i>–References</i>				
<i>–Size (and where you would fit on their roster)</i>				
<i>--Chemistry (gut)</i>				
<i>--Other (connections, professionalism, systems)</i>				
TOTAL				
AVERAGE				

Types of relationships



- *The agency as a plug-in department, staff*
- *The agency as a long-term strategic resource*
- *The agency as leverage to internal resources, supporting specific plans, projects, initiatives*
- *The agency as project manager (and implementer)*
 - *Special events, grand openings, product launches*
 - *Media relations projects, media tours, analyst tours*
- *The agency for crisis communications, issues management*
- *Various transmogrifications thereof*

Budgeting Options

- Annual budget
- Monthly retainer
- Time and materials
- Project
- Crisis
- Retainer plus success fees
- Partial fee, equity
- Indentured servitude

Types of financial relationships



- *Fixed annual budget or range*
 - *Bill hours, expenses as incurred (agency manages)*
 - *Bill monthly fixed retainer, plus expenses*
 - *Prior approval on overages*
- *Project budgets*
 - *Half at beginning as deposit*
 - *Bill as incurred, deposit applied at the end*
 - *Fixed price: 1/3 – 1/3 – 1/3*
 - *Billed as incurred, net 10 days*
- *Various transmogrifications thereof*

The client: start right to stay right



- *Have CEO commitment, involvement*
- *Clearly understand agency resources, mission, plan*
- *Understand with PR can do, and not do*
- *Have realistic expectations*
- *Determine desired results, means of measurement*
- *Establish internal processes, controls*
- *Think of the agency as a partner and extension of staff (they **want** you to win!)*
- *Contribute to the educational curve immediately*

The agency: start right to stay right



- *Understand the client business, plans, goals*
- *Match expertise to client needs*
- *Do your homework*
- *Set realistic expectations*
- *Build a team – internally and with the client*
- *Develop long-range plans, critical steps*
- *Establish procedures, protocols for planning, creative, approvals, measurement*
- *Be authentic*
- *Communicate consistently*

Good client behaviors



- Matching expectations to budget
- Setting realistic deadlines
- Responsiveness
- Clear communications
- Long-range thinking
- Trusting the agency and its professionals
- Taking creative chances
- Understanding that not everything works as planned!
- Be flexible, responsive and opportunistic (fast!)

Bad client behaviors



- *Setting unrealistic deadlines*
- *Sitting on materials submitted for approval*
- *Not calling the media back within two hours*
- *Focusing only on short-term results*
- *Feeling threatened (not invented here)*
- *Obstructing progress without valid reasons*
- *Playing politics*
- *Going ballistic when something doesn't work*
- *Treating agency staff like serfs*

The Chosen One!



The Value of PR

- PR works, invest in it to build image, reputation and goodwill that contribute to organizational success.
- “PR first, advertising second. This is the key to success in today’s marketing arena.”
 - Al and Laura Ries, *The Fall of Advertising and the Rise of PR*

Contact Information



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