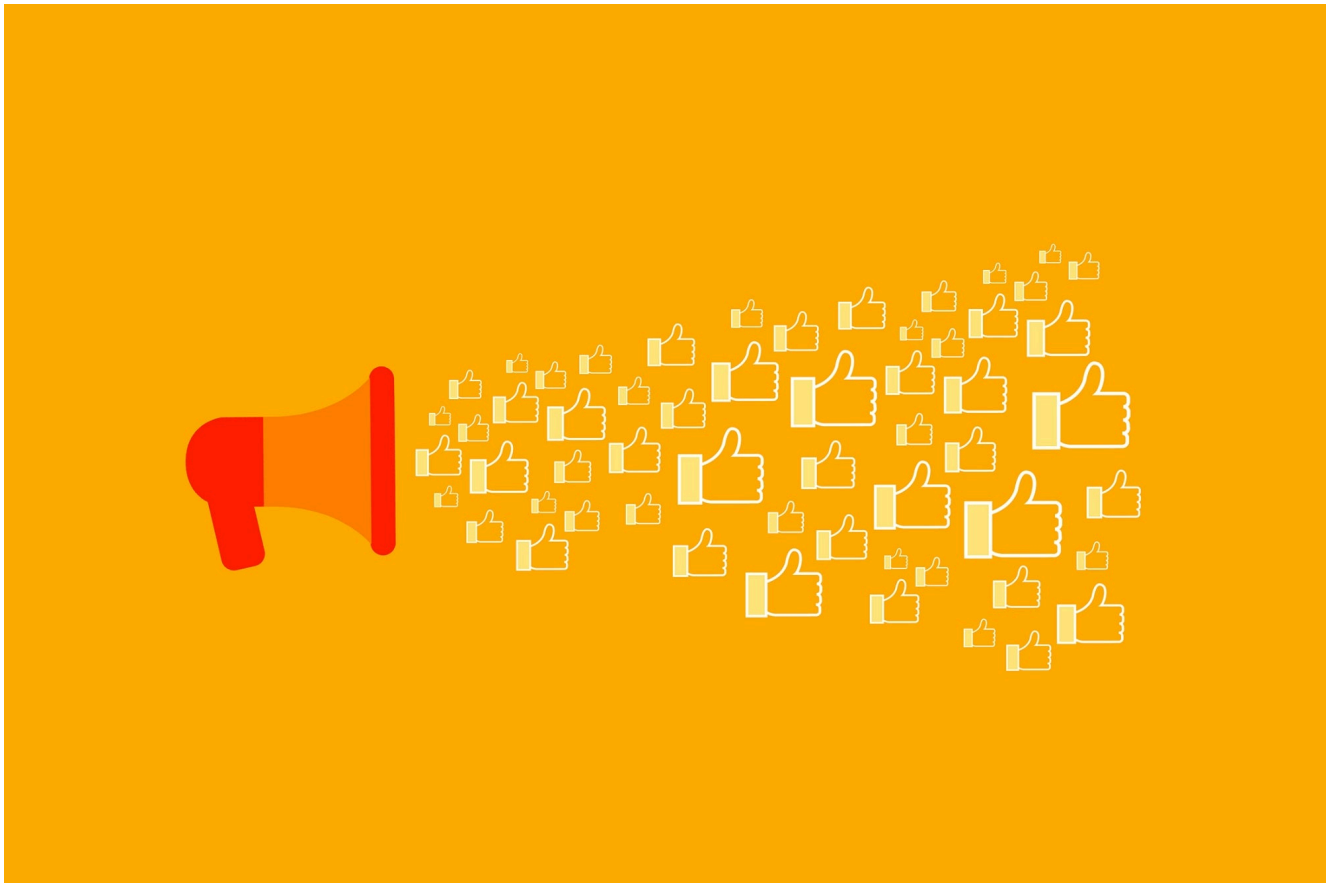


How to Earn Customer Trust and Boost Sales Without Big Ad Budgets



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For every one dollar businesses invest in public relations (PR), they earn an average of \$5.50 back in media coverage. For this reason and more, major corporations consider PR indispensable.

PR can make a big difference for companies and organizations of all sizes, however. As consumers' trust in traditional advertising and marketing has waned, PR has emerged as a vital part of strategic business communications. This is especially true at key moments in an organization's development, such as in the months before launching a new enterprise, product or service.

The problem with traditional advertising and marketing

Research has shown that customers today are much more skeptical of advertising and marketing campaigns than their predecessors. According to a December 2024 report from YouGov, 53% of survey participants said ads are a waste of time, and 52% said they don't trust TV ads.

The distrust is particularly marked among members of the younger generations. A Connect by Live Nation survey recently discovered that only one in four of these customers say they trust brands. Instead, they want transparency, authenticity and realness.

Luckily, PR offers exactly that kind of transparent, authentic and honest approach that today's consumers crave.

Related: How to Master Public Relations and Build Lasting Trust in a Changing World

PR's unique approach to strategic communications

PR can disarm the cynical and build trust with target audiences. Instead of paying to put self-interested messages in front of people, PR earns the media's attention by offering legitimate value to readers, viewers and listeners.

PR professionals have many different strategies for attracting this media coverage. Much of it comes down to staying on top of the news cycle, having an in-depth understanding of clients' areas of expertise and building relationships with journalists and editors. Publicists then combine these factors to create opportunities to shine the spotlight on their clients.

For instance, when a hurricane has just ravaged a community, publicists understand that many members of the public will be worried about the prospect of losing their own homes in another such event. The publicists can take advantage of this opportunity by offering to allow journalists to interview their clients who specialize in insurance. This gives the client a chance to explain how homeowners can best protect their property before a storm.

While the client never explicitly promotes their own insurance products in their commentary, the fact that they are willing to take the time to be helpful and offer guidance reflects well on them and their company. Being featured in the media also enhances their search engine optimization (SEO), which means search engines are likely to rank them higher in online search results.

This is just one example – the important thing is that talented publicists understand how to pique the media's interest in their clients at any given time.

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Why PR makes a difference

This sort of media appearance or mention – often called “earned media” – is very different from a promotional ad. It offers education, knowledge, expertise and goodwill toward the public, not an attempt to sell something to them.

Yet, PR is also an effective way to promote clients' products and services. The company's valuable advice and ethical behavior create a positive connection with viewers. Doing PR fosters trust, which can pay off when members of the audience seek to purchase a relevant product or service later.

Indeed, according to the Edelman Trust Barometer, survey respondents identify earned media as a better way to win their

trust than any other kind of marketing. As the same study also reports, industry experts are trusted more than any other source, including peers, celebrities, and influencers.

The combination of authority and empathy is a winning one. That's the combination PR offers. As a result, studies show that PR has a positive impact on the bottom line.

ALSO READ: [How You Can Leverage These PR Strategies to Build Your Company's Credibility and Trust – Even When Under Attack](#)

PR buoys the bottom line

A 2020 survey showed that, after hearing about a product on a podcast, 64% of listeners visited the company's website, and 55% ended up purchasing the item. Meanwhile, 70% of those same people said they fast-forward through ads.

According to research and advisory firm Forrester, companies that garner earned media can generate as many as 20 times more leads than those that only pay for advertising.

As these numbers show, PR buoys businesses at any given time. Yet there are also key moments when it's even more important to do PR.

The right time to do PR

Studies indicate that PR makes a particular difference at certain times in their development. Doing PR in the months leading up to the launch of a new product, service or business helps the enterprise take off better than advertising.

My own experience bears out these conclusions. For instance, one of my PR agency's clients – an anti-aging wellness center – was worried that no one would show up to their grand opening. We reached out to influencers based in his community and sent media advisories to local news outlets and the

Chamber of Commerce, which promoted the event on its own social media accounts. This created buzz, and as a result, the grand opening was packed with people, many of whom booked appointments.

Again, this is just one example. Basically, PR introduces people to new products, services and businesses more effectively than advertising because it mobilizes third parties that are considered more trustworthy than a brand would be itself.

PR delivers results

While every company stands to benefit from cultivating trust with consumers, doing PR is particularly important for new companies and businesses that foresee launching new products or services in the coming year. For the best results, be proactive and start well in advance. This will give your PR team time to strategize, do market research, and create the key connections necessary for optimal outcomes.

Major corporations engage in PR because it delivers results. That's why businesses of all sizes should do so, too.

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