How to Make PR Work For You

Here are the decisive factors you won’t learn in an online marketing course.

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I study successful entrepreneur Neil Patel’s insights a lot. His blog posts are great, and I always tend to share them with my colleagues because they provide tons of value. Gary Vee and Seth Godin are two other examples of influential business minds who’ve focused on marketing and made a big name for themselves. But while I’ve admired their work and taken courses and lessons inspired by it, one thing continued to bother me: Why wasn’t it working as effectively for my company? It was as if there was something these guys perfected that was still lacking in our marketing approach.

Eventually, I began to wrap my head around the answers, and now I’m going to share those secrets with you.

The PR Ingredient

Media relations is *the* secret ingredient of every success story. Many of us seek out SEO tactics to get a higher ranking on Google, or utilize social-media marketing to drive awareness and develop leads, and there are tons of success stories about people who got rich overnight with these methods. But comprehensive PR goes far beyond that. Successful campaigns can yield up to 200 times returns and establish your brand as a market leader. One of our clients got between 20 and 30 times more app downloads than the nearest competitor, and they were not even the first in their market.

Doing PR right is like jet fuel, and getting written about on top-tier outlets is super-important. It might take years for your website or blog to get millions of monthly readers, let alone be able to constantly produce such competing, high-value content. But if you manage to get covered on such websites (like, say, this one), you'll instantly see huge profits.

Here is another important part: People trust news more than advertisements. Ads are sponsored content in which you talk about yourself, while news is comprised of curated and researched pieces that reporters hand-pick in the best interest of their readers. Which one is more relatable?

Related: 5 Reasons Why PR Is Important For Your Startup

Write Inspirational Content

There's plenty of educational material out there on marketing, SEO and social-media marketing that helps us produce great technical content. But I began to realize that there are people whose emails and newsletters I actually love to read, monitoring my inbox and even my spam folder to make sure I never miss them. These are people who tend to be rich with achievements and write inspirational content.

One of the best places to start creating your own inspirational content is by sharing personal success stories, which immediately give you credibility with readers. If you haven't made notable gains in business just yet, you can still share peers's success stories to similar effect. The key is educating your audience on how what you do can work best for them.

Related: The 3 Wrong Perceptions That Everybody Has PR

No Shortcuts

I was kind of shocked to discover that a very famous marketing expert I'd been following for a long time had paid reporters to get into top-tier outlets, though it speaks to the fact that while PR might look simple, it definitely is not. If you just write a press release, blast the emails and hope for coverage, chances are you won't get any. Reporters have their own schedule and agenda, most of the time set by their editors. Unless you're Apple, they're not going to drop everything and prioritize your story.

Writing a compelling press release is very important. It should convey why your story matters, and not just from your company's perspective but that of your audience. Equally important is getting to know the reporters you pitch, beyond simply identifying their beat. Become acquainted with them in person, follow them on social media and treat them like human beings. Prove you've done your homework, and that you respect their time (and inbox!) and aren't sending them anything irrelevant.

This is a time-intensive route, but it pays dividends. The less ethical marketer I alluded to earlier clearly recognized the value behind top-tier coverage but opted for a shortcut. The problem is that, eventually, paid content backfires. The only ethical way to gain a similar upper hand is by hiring an outside PR professional with existing relationships and knowledge of the news industry. That creates a long-lasting effect that can also produce results across several other media outlets.

Now, time to make use of all this formerly secret information and go boost your business!

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