

How You Can Leverage These PR Strategies to Build Your Company's Credibility and Trust – Even When Under Attack

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

Many people will tell you that public relations is about telling your story to the media. The truth, however, is that it's just as much about building relationships.

Of course, to be successful in public relations, you have to be able to build relationships with journalists and media contacts, but relationships with stakeholders and the general public are just as important. After all, the goal of public relations is to connect and resonate with a target audience – often your customers or stakeholders.

Public relations can be a fantastic tool to help businesses boost their profile, but one key function business leaders often overlook is its ability to help them gain trust, which they may not realize is the most valuable asset they have. Trust has a direct impact on several aspects of a business's success that are necessary for its bottom line – customer loyalty, brand reputation and employee retention, to name a few – and those qualities are what keep customers coming back time and again to a business.

That being said, trust is not given; it is earned. A business must earn the trust of its customers and stakeholders through

its actions and communication.

Related: How Public Relations Builds Trust and Credibility for Your Startup

Trust, honesty, authenticity and consistency

Businesses must understand honesty to achieve this feeling of trust from a PR campaign's audience. That's not to say companies should be 100% transparent, no matter the cost. There are certainly instances where revealing information is inadvisable, such as when it could put the business's IP at risk or incite panic.

However, businesses should never lie for any reason, as the consequences of being caught in a lie are often significantly more severe than those of getting ahead of the truth. Consider what happened to the founder of crypto lender Celsius, and who can forget the impact the Cambridge Analytica scandal had on Facebook? These examples highlight the very real (and severe) consequences that lying can have on a business and its leaders.

Another element essential to success in business communication is follow-through. Making empty promises is one of the quickest ways for a business to lose the trust it worked so hard to build from its customers. Even if a business leader makes a promise with every intention of delivering on it, if they fail, their customers will likely see it as a lie. This is why business leaders must be careful not to overpromise and ensure that any goal –especially those they publicize – is reasonable and attainable.

On a similar note, businesses must ensure they prioritize authenticity in their communications. Initiatives like corporate social responsibility can help a company's image

significantly, but only if executed well. For example, several scandals have resulted from companies making political donations that don't align with their messaging. When a business's leader says one thing but their actions demonstrate another, they will be seen as insincere and untrustworthy, which could carry over into other facets of their business.

Remember, consistency in messaging is key. Business leaders must ensure their voice and message are consistent across all platforms they use, from social media to public media appearances and internal communications.

It is often wise to designate a single spokesperson who will be the face of all company communications and route all inquiries through them. Multiple people can work behind the scenes to determine the message, but having a single spokesperson ensures that multiple people do not share different messages.

Related: [How to Turn a Crisis into an Opportunity by Managing Negative Publicity](#)

How to build trust through crisis communication

These principles are particularly important for businesses during a crisis. Crisis communication is an essential function of public relations, as businesses face all sorts of challenges that could threaten to derail them.

However, if leaders manage their communications effectively, they can emerge from a crisis successfully – perhaps even stronger. By maintaining honesty and transparency during a crisis, businesses can maintain their image of trustworthiness despite the situation they face.

Consumers and stakeholders also look for business leaders who are willing to take accountability. If a business has a crisis

response plan in place, it will already be taking steps to mitigate the crisis. When it comes time to share an update with the public, the spokesperson should share the steps that have already been taken and what will be done to prevent the crisis from reoccurring, which will help the business gain and maintain control over the narrative.

Business leaders should remember that trust is difficult to build but easy to lose. Sometimes, a single mistake can be enough to cause irreparable damage to a business's reputation, but more often than not, a business can overcome a crisis – it just takes time.

Still, certain mistakes are too big to forgive. If a business is found to have been lying about its crises, it will lose credibility, just as it will if it makes the same mistake repeatedly.

Nevertheless, businesses can thrive by using public relations tools and taking an approach that emphasizes honesty, authenticity and building relationships with all parties involved. This trust will grow into reputation, loyalty, and, hopefully, better profits.

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/growing-a-business/how-you-can-leverage-these-pr-strategies-to-build-your/484100>