



Five Tips to Find a PR Superstar Who Gets Your Company in Front of Prospects

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By Brad Chittim, Chief Scribe, Write Concepts, Inc.

I'm introverted, pensive and love to make my living writing copy for businesses. So it may come as a surprise to you to learn that flashy, talkative, outgoing PR people are some of my favorite folks. The simple reason is that they make my work look great. It never ceases to amaze me how a good PR professional can deliver phenomenal value for their pay. And value in my field means getting stories published that showcase our clients' products/services in a highly credible way.

As an example, I collaborated with a go-getter PR woman at a high-tech company. She worked with a publication to secure a product review placement. Having written a case study featuring the same end user, I was tapped to write the review for them.

Through her efforts, the piece was published in a trade magazine that tailored to her company's target-market customers. Had her firm purchased the equivalent column inches in ad space, it would have cost much, much more. And it would have lacked the credibility an end-user testimonial garners. Instead, her company received a 1,000 percent return on the funds invested to create and place the piece.

In my years as a copywriter working with PR folks, I've found three very important qualities your PR professional needs to deliver superstar results for you. Performance that is consistent, garners quality press coverage—and lots of it.

Tip #1: Choose a professional with the gift of gab. Because successful PR is not for the shy or timid, it's critical that the person you work with be outgoing, secure and conversational. The top performers I've noticed have a warm personality and a dash of flair. They balance creativity and showmanship with the fundamentals of PR success. These qualities are invaluable as your vocal advocate picks up the phone to pitch your firm's story. They're also essential to create and maintain relationships with relevant journalists—a crucial element for success.

Tip #2: There's no substitute for experience. I've noticed that the PR professionals that perform above average and who have built a cracker-jack reputation for themselves, often have 10+ years of hard work behind them. It's possible for someone with fewer years to amass that experience but they'll really

have to be go getters. After a decade, a professional will have mastered the fundamentals of their field and be able to think strategically and execute tactically. Also, if they're still at it after a decade, they are likely to be doing what they love. And that passion will shine when they talk to others about your company.

Tip #3: Industry expertise is not optional. Superstar PR people deliver super-hero results in their areas of expertise. So if you're a high-tech company selling telecom products, you won't want to hire someone from the music industry—no matter how hip and cool their presentation may be. That's because each industry has its own challenges, issues, hot-buttons, buzz words and mindsets. Moreover, the record-industry PR person will simply lack the relationships and trust that a high-tech industry person will have already established with journalists in your target market.

So now that you have a framework for the type of person you're looking for, how do you go about finding such a person?

Tip #4: Use associations & networking to uncover the PR diamonds. To find the best talent, a great place to start is with the Public Relations Society of America (www.PRSA.org). Find the local chapter nearest to you and dial up the PRSA Chapter President. Ask them: Who are the top three to five PR professionals at [insert your need here—e.g. product launches, press releases etc.] in the [insert your industry here]. If your company has national or global reach, and you have the budget for it, you will want to find the tip-top professionals in your industry. Try the New York, Los Angeles and Chicago chapters of the PRSA.

Another outstanding resource to find PR people who deliver is to ask business associates for referrals. Contact vendors and partners in your industry and ask which agencies/people they use. Does a competitor do a particularly great job of getting good ink in your view? Do some research to find out who *they* are using. The same applies for other companies who are getting the types of coverage you want to achieve for your own firm.

Tip #5: Screen & Meet several prospects face to face and solicit a written proposal. After calling your list of three to five prospects, and screening them for the gift of gab, their years of experience and industry expertise along with other qualities you've selected, invite the ones that meet your standards to lunch or your office. Test their knowledge. Ask them about trends in your industry. What PR strategies would they suggest you use to accomplish the goals you've shared with them?

Then have them submit a written proposal. The proposal should define the scope of work you discussed, what your goals are and how they can help you achieve

them. You may be tempted to judge the proposals on price, but I encourage you to consider value. People who deliver star results consistently will cost more.

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