



HOW PUBLIC RELATIONS SUPPORTS YOUR MARKETING GOALS

Let's help demystify what Public Relations is, and how easily you can utilize it to benefit your club/resort/campground. Defined by the Public Relations Society of America: Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.

Simple and straightforward, this definition focuses on the basic concept of public relations as a communication process, one that is strategic in nature and emphasizing "mutually beneficial relationships."

As a management function, public relations also encompasses anticipating, analyzing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes and issues that might impact, for good or ill, the operations and plans of the organization.

Just like any other form of marketing, a public relations (PR) campaign should have its own plan within an organization's marketing plan, with a marketing calendar that will guide you, help budget related expenditures, and be an evaluation tool when determining effective marketing methods.

We often think of PR simply as getting one's name or company name printed in various publications. While this is good and an integral part of any good PR program, effective PR can take many forms. Marketing is made up of many,

many things working together from many directions all toward your target market. The more of these things that your target market hears and sees, the easier it is to sell your product or service.

Here are examples of ways to get your name out:

1. Events: These can be open houses, celebrity visits, clearance sales, "meet the owners" events, media FAM (familiarization) trips, or other events that give you a reason to invite customers and prospects to your place of business. The most important invitee of all for effective PR is the media. This includes newspaper reporters/editors/photographers, and similar titles from radio and TV stations, and online and social media bloggers/tweeters/instagammers, along with freelance writers. Meeting people from the media also gives you a reason to follow up later, which helps you establish good relationships with those that control the news and features. Related to an event is the press conference. These are usually held to introduce a new product/program, provide a response to a situation, or handle anything else that's extremely newsworthy.

2. Fact sheets, newsletters and brochures for customers and

prospects: This almost sounds more like part of the marketing plan vs. the PR plan, but these marketing tools can be tailored to support PR and one-time situations (like a Skinny Dip, Bare Buns Run, etc.) and enhance media relations. Add members of the media to the distribution list for these. And invite media to your business.

3. A PR firm: You can make your company seem more newsworthy and media-friendly by hiring a PR agency/sole practitioner. This doesn't have to be done on an ongoing basis. There are PR professionals who will work with you event-by-event or project-by-project. This should only be done if it's part of your overall plan and the budget is in line with your company financials. Within your industry

or locale, governing bodies may have a PR firm or in-house PR team you can work with too. Such as the Chamber of Commerce, Visitor and Convention Bureau, State Tourism Office, etc.

4. FAQ development: Radio and TV people, believe it or not, sometimes have trouble selecting topics to fill their airtime and finding good people to interview. A radio or TV interview opportunity might arise in the near future, so take some time now to prepare yourself. Compile a list of answers to anticipated questions or questions that make your point. These FAQs can also be included in your media kits, posted on your Web site and distributed when meeting with customers and prospects.

5. Speaking engagements: Nothing gets the word out more than the spoken word. When you speak to a group, you are the center of attention, competing with no one for share of mind. You're also in a situation where you can best communicate your marketing message. Speaking is a great form of PR. Many times the speaking engagement is publicized ahead of time, and sometimes the media will show up at such events. This increases the likelihood of post-event PR. This is all synergized when you are an expert on a particular subject.

As you can see, PR can be more than just writing and distributing a press release. A planned approach that utilizes many different methods will increase your probability for success and generate the kind of PR you want for your business. Make it part of your plan!