

How effective is your marketing and PR?



The rules of engagement have changed...

In recent years we have seen a massive social and economic shift away from corporate brand dominance towards a more collaborative, conversational approach. People want to build relationships with their suppliers, and demand a highly personal service. This is evident in the way that social media has come to play such an important role in communication, first in the personal sphere and now more increasingly in the business arena.

So where does this leave traditional communication channels such as the specialist industry press?



Around a third of editorial posts have been cut from the media industry over the last decade – which is a huge proportion. But this has mainly impact consumer publications - the trade press has retained and, in some cases, increased its importance as a route to market, allowing brands to communicate with a target audience based on professional interest and skills.

Within the plastics and packaging industry, we have seen the best publications go from strength to strength, while at the same time offering readers more ways to engage with industry issues, product updates and one another. In many cases circulation figures have increased.

The rules of marketing may have changed, but the principles remain the same.

What do successful companies have in common when it comes to marketing?

- A meaningful and relevant proposition benchmarked against competitors.
- A distinctive brand identity which reflects their values and supports long term business objectives.
- A focused marketing strategy in place, which is regularly monitored against targets.
- High quality marketing literature that is consistent with the brand identity.
- A contemporary website that is designed and written to engage visitors and convert leads.
- Participation in online marketing supported by a prominent search engine ranking.
- Communication with customers in a way that adds value and measures satisfaction.
- The benefit of third party media endorsement and credibility.

Waking up to the opportunities...

The plastics and packaging industry as a whole has marketed along traditional lines for many years, only recently stepping up in terms of building relationships, using the web effectively and making the most of the trade media available.

As a specialist trade agency in commercial and industrial PR and marketing, we are seeing many more brands competing for authority within the plastics and related sectors. Also this doesn't just apply to big brands. In fact smaller manufacturers, service providers and distributors have got what the big companies want: the potential to have a closer relationship with the customer, local knowledge, greater trust and flexibility.

So if you think you're too small for PR, or that your website is not important, think again.

What can PR deliver?

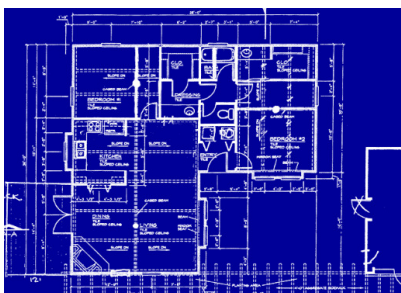
An integrated, targeted and relevant PR campaign will deliver a significant return on investment by:

- Significantly raising your profile and awareness of your products and/or services.
- Generating qualified leads from people that are actively seeking your type of business.
- Showcasing your achievements through press coverage, awards and testimonials.
- Creating a positive and professional impression of your brand.
- Serving as a useful resource for existing and new clients, therefore increasing loyalty, credibility and status.
- Helping you communicate with customers, through a blog, newsletter and/or social media.



What does PR actually consist of?

Each PR campaign is tailored to the brand's business goals and particular strengths, however in the plastics and packaging world, the kind of methods you would most likely consider using include:



1. STRATEGIC PLANNING to make sure that your company is positioned in the best way to take advantage of the changing market and defend against competitors.

Without a clear idea of where the company sits in the market, and where it's going, any attempt to implement a measurable marketing campaign will by definition fail.



2. Feature articles in the editorial part of the magazines **THAT YOUR CUSTOMERS ARE READING**. This could be plastics and packaging, HVAC, electronics, FM, engineering, construction and many more sectors besides. As trade PR specialists there are few trade journals we don't already know and currently work with.

3. CASE STUDIES in the projects sections of your target press. These are invaluable opportunities to showcase best practice and invite your satisfied customer to do the sales pitch for you. We have consistently found, across most industry sectors, that case studies are the most effective way to build your reputation and convince customers that you are the best supplier for the job.



4. WEBSITE OPTIMISATION that encompasses the search engine position (eg Page 1 or 21 on Google), drives traffic to the site and monitors the visitor levels, and makes sure that when customers do find you, they want to stay and have a look around.

5. CLIENT COMMUNICATION can involve printed or emailed newsletters, regular blog entries, an email marketing campaign, direct mail or key account planning. We work with clients to review the techniques, frequency and approach to take to achieve the best results.

6. CRISIS MANAGEMENT is not something most firms want to think about, but depending on your size and sector, it may be a good idea to have a plan in place to deal with negative publicity. We can create a strategy to help manage issues such as damaging rumours and product failures. Good press contacts, client management and a proactive response are the keys to preventing a problem from escalating.

7. EVENTS present opportunities to shine before a captive audience – and considering the expense of exhibiting, it's surprising that so few firms make the most of it. If you're taking a stand or partnering another exhibitor, make sure you're in the show guide, that your press pack is ready, that you have something interesting going on at your stand, that you've used preview articles in the press to hook people in – as well as direct mail and an incentive scheme of some sort. In short, cover all the angles to secure the best possible return on investment.



PRETTYGOOD

Basic principles of PR...

PREPARE TO SHARE

Capitalise on the wealth of experience and expertise within your business. Words such as 'service' and 'commitment' have been much abused and will not achieve cut through. Instead, share some of your knowledge with existing and potential clients through communication, promotion and PR – they are more likely to buy from a company that:

- Offers proof of its capability and attitude towards customers.
- Generates goodwill by championing the sector/clients.
- Is endorsed by journalists through editorial press coverage.

ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL

Your marketing strategy should stem directly from your business objectives, and be just as specific. If your goal is to generate sales in a specific sector, then you should tailor your approach to match the interests and behaviour of the decision makers within that industry – for example through the trade press.



However, if your focus is regional, you may need to employ a range of tactics such as events, awards, direct communication and local business partnerships. A consumer focus is different again – the key is to maintain a consistent message and style, whilst employing a variety of channels.

Your customers are more active than ever before – constantly researching and evaluating their buying decisions. This presents a fantastic opportunity to harness low cost high return strategies that will make your brand stand out and get people talking about you.

To find out how marketing and PR could benefit your business, contact Helen Tidswell, Director of PrettyGood PR: helen@prettygoodpr.com or call: 01376 564315