

MARKETING

## How PR can help you salvage the second half of 2020

July 2, 2020



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Millions of small- and mid-sized business owners across the nation and beyond are looking at their financial statements and annual projections and scratching their head.

This week marks the mid-way point for the year, and it is usually a time to assess your business plan and consider how you can improve in the third and fourth quarters.

Let us just say this year is different.

Start afresh

Instead of a tweak or simple process improvement such as renegotiating the printer paper supply, business owners in all sectors are erasing their projections like an Etch A Sketch.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its wake of massive economic uncertainty are literally sending entrepreneurs, business development directors and chief marketing officers back to their respective drawing boards.

Making up for losses or delays can be a tough row to hoe, but with the help of a smart public relations plan, the path toward elevating your brand, controlling your message and reaching new customers can be made a bit smoother.

Consider these strategies:

Media outreach: Whether its industry trade magazines, podcasts or national television, people are still consuming media and they are doing so at the **highest numbers in recent memory**.

A lot of this has to do with the shutdown and people having more time on their hands to learn, self-improve and explore new interests. This is where your brand comes in.

An effective media outreach strategy within a comprehensive public relations plan is one that inserts your brand into the media outlets being consumed by your future customers and business partners.

It is an unusually captive audience made up of people who are thirsty for information. Good PR is all about striking

while the iron is hot, and it is just about molten at this point.

Thought leadership: Reaching a potential client is only half the battle. Once you get there, you have to make sure you are saying the right thing.

Consumer brands and professional services alike are facing challenges to get back into the black, but converting eyeballs into paying customers is the riddle that needs to be solved to restart that sales pipeline. The answer could very well be **thought leadership**.

In its simplistic form, thought leadership within a PR campaign is the act of getting a brand to own an issue and provide a helpful take on an industry.

Good thought leadership whether written, spoken or broadcast has the ability to inspire, connect and close deals.

Most importantly, a brand that is established as a thought leader is one that will stand out from its competition and cultivate a loyal following over an extended period of time.

Social media: Much has been made about social media lately, and **not all of it is positive**.

However, businesses of all sizes can be somewhat immune to controversy if they navigate the digital waters carefully.

Brand building can be done on a constantly growing variety of social media platforms, so there is not a need to throw advertising dollars at a particular one.

On the other hand, it is crucial to reach your target market wherever they may be. Therefore, you cannot simply sit the recovery out and wait for the election or civic unrest to subside before resurfacing online.

The best approach to this is to laser-focus on your core audience and engage with them as authentically and transparently as possible.

If your social media content is interesting and honest enough, you can grow that audience without having to pony up for an expensive ad campaign.

WE ARE ESSENTIALLY in halftime right now, and sometimes that means teams have to change their game plan.

If you did not consider PR to be a priority going into 2020, maybe it is now.

The world is taking a hit economically, but there is a lot of pent-up demand across all sectors which, fueled by federal stimulus, maybe unleashed in the third quarter.

Plus, some industries are booming under the focus on sanitization or other demands caused by stay-at-home orders.

Those who stand the best chance of acquiring this business are the flexible companies that adjust to the new post-pandemic economy and use new approaches, including aggressive PR and social media programs.

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