



Is It Time to Make Your Perfect (PR) Match?

Resch Strategies

Message. Planning. Experience. Results.

No matter what your organization does or who its competitors are, you are already engaged in public relations. Your work tells a story each and every day, as do your team members, partners, customers and friends.

Now ask yourself: is the story you're telling the right one? Is it loud enough that people will hear and act on it? Does your team have the capacity to do more? Are you ready to address any looming public disasters with ease?

If the answer to any of the above questions is "no," then it might be time to consider outside PR support. In this toolkit, we'll help you know for sure whether it's time to make that call, and how to find the partner—and structure—that makes most sense for you.

When It's Time for a PR Agency



Overwhelmed with outreach activities? Struggling to get that website built?

These are signs it might be time to get some outside help. An agency offers a cost-effective solution, since outside PR pros usually work on contract without the need to add staff. Below are some key indicators that can help you decide whether you're ready to move forward.

- You have thought about what your needs are and can imagine what a suitable scope of work and set of deliverables could look like.
- There's something coming—an event, a product/service launch, or even some bad news you can't avoid—and you know the help will be needed.
- You and your colleagues are open to talking about organizational strengths, opportunities, and challenges, and are committed to a process that may (or may not) require new approaches.
- You have a strong sense of your organization's mission and purpose, and feel proud of what you do and who you are. You're ready to share your work.
- You are ready to develop specific, actionable plans and hold yourself, your team and your PR agency accountable for achieving them.
- You have a dedicated team member who's eager to help facilitate your team's feedback and interface with a PR agency.

What PR Can't Do

- **Make your organization front-page news on Day One.** It takes time to cultivate media attention and build up your organizational identity. But with an effective plan, a well-connected PR agency partner, and the willingness to execute a thoughtful plan, you can build the kind of foundation that can make your organization successful over time.
- **Hide or “spin” bad news into something more positive.** Effective public relations shine lights into organizations, they don't mask or conceal. And, in today's era of constantly breaking news, the public is wise to the appearance of “spin.”
- **Offer instant guarantees.** While there are many ways public relations activities can generate strong returns on the investments organizations make in them, it is not possible to guarantee increased sales, legislative outcomes or grant funding. What most agencies can do is measure progress, adjust strategies, and steadily work toward client outcomes.
- **Transform your organization.** Public relations aren't a lever for internal change. Before you go public, it's best to ensure you have a clear sense of your mission, purpose and culture, so you can authentically begin to share these things with the world.





Still not sure? Call an agency.

Most firms will gladly provide a no-cost consultation to help you think through your PR needs and readiness.

Even if your contract ends up being small, it can be worth it to get the right brand, assets and messaging in place up front.

Vision
Relationship
Development
Management



What most PR agencies offer.

Below is a typical menu of services. When developing a request for proposals (which we highly recommend), you can use these as a starting point in developing your scope of work.

- Account management
- Project planning, mapping and organization
- Market research
- Issue management
- Branding and corporate identity development
- Public relations and earned media
- Strategy development and refinement
- Media planning and procurement
- Strategic counsel and advice
- Political consultation and advice
- Creative development
- Review and critique of existing materials and strategies
- Digital and social media expertise and execution
- Graphic design and publishing
- Audio/video project development
- Group facilitation and support
- Writing and editing services, including:
 - *In-depth studies and reports*
 - *Newsletters*
 - *Press releases*
 - *Talking points*
 - *Brochures and other marketing pieces*
 - *Correspondence and follow-up materials*
 - *Business plans and other strategy documents*
 - *Annual reports and other publications*
- Media training
- Writing instruction and staff mentoring
- Database design and construction
- Fundraising strategy development and refinement
- Sponsorship assessment
- Grant writing and fund development
- Event management

How to build an RFP.

After you've decided where help is needed, you'll want to put together a request for proposals. This will help you make sure you're getting a fair price, and allow you to get a sense for each firm's approach and personality. Along the way, you also may pick up some ideas and research that's helpful to your organization over the long term.

Here are some good items to include as you think about seeking PR agency proposals:

1. Describe your organization and the problem you are interested in solving. Include your goals and any target audience descriptions you already have.
2. If you have defined the scope of work required, include it. Be sure to drop in any timelines or dates that matter.
3. If you've got a budget in mind, provide some rough sense of what it will be (this is a HUGE help!).
4. Ask for a description of the responding agency, its personnel, its work, and how it usually approaches its new clients and projects.
5. Request information about what the agency already knows about your issues, organization, and competition. Be specific—there's a lot of existing data out there, and you'll likely be able to get some free market research through this process.
6. Ask for a rough work plan. This will help you make sure the agency can meet your deadlines and do the work in ways that are comfortable for your team.
7. Request samples of past work done by the agency, along with a couple of references you can call. A client list is also useful, so you can be sure the agency won't have any conflicts of interest when it comes to your work.
8. Ask responding agencies to tell you how they'll define success when it comes to your project (hint: the more specific they can be, the better!).
9. Request a detailed budget, so you can see how they'll allocate the dollars you give them.
10. Consider adding an interview component, so you can meet agency reps face to face (or screen-to-screen). This is going to be an important relationship—don't leave it to chance!



Pick a winner.

There are many ways to evaluate an PR agency proposal. Some organizations decide on price only. Others use a multi-faceted approach that takes into account things like timelines, tactics, or even agency style and “feel.”

Most organizations find it helpful to ask several people to be part of a trusted team charged with reviewing and commenting on the agency bids. If there are people in your organization who are skeptical about hiring an agency in the first place, it’s often very helpful to get them involved in this project. Their critical eyes can help reveal issues you might not otherwise consider.

While it’s best to have some kind of evaluation plan or rubric in place before you begin reading the proposals, it’s never too late to introduce one. You’ll want to be consistent and fair in assessing and choosing your PR agency partner.

Whatever evaluative approach your organization chooses, it’s important to ensure you can have a high degree of trust in your PR agency.

After all, these folks are going to help tell your story, and you want to be sure they use strategies and information that gets the job done right.



Questions?

The Resch Strategies team is ready to help.
Visit our website or call (517) 371-7843!

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