

# BIG news for smaller firms

The Magazine of the Solo and Small Firm Section of the State Bar of California

## LAW FIRM *business development*

### Some Public Relations Firms Do Not Understand Lawyers

*And How to Choose the Right Representation for You*

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#### IS A PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRM WHAT YOU NEED?

The first step in selecting a PR firm is to determine what you really want. In this respect, it is helpful to understand more about the nature of PR. Public relations can be defined as communication or events that tend to be goodwill-building in nature. Typical services offered by a traditional PR firm might include:

- *Media relations (news releases, interviews and article placement)*
- *Seminar management*
- *Speeches*
- *Special events*
- *Sponsorships*
- *Community relations*

If you truly only need assistance in PR, then it is easier to figure out which PR firm will best meet your needs. But if you need a greater depth of marketing services, then contact a full-service marketing firm.

Because public relations is a subset of marketing, it is just a small part of what a full-service marketing firm can offer. PR is only a portion of what can be done to effectively market your firm's services.

#### HOW TO CHOOSE A PR FIRM

If you are interviewing PR firms, ask questions such as:

- What is your degree(s) in? If it is only in journalism, you will find that the person likely lacks an understanding of

how businesses (and professional services firms) are run.

- What do you know about our industry? What is your experience with serving similar firms? If they don't understand enough, you'll end up paying for it, one way or the other.
- What specific services do you offer? You may be surprised to find out that their services are very limited — or they offer services (such as Marketing Plans) that they are unqualified to effectively provide.
- How will your work mesh with our other marketing programs? Many PR people lack an understanding and education of the full breadth of marketing, so you'll find that your overall marketing efforts may lack cohesion.
- Who will we work with from your firm? Are you going to get a lower-end person when you were sold on the campaign by top management at the firm? This all goes into the value proposition. Some PR firms spend so much on their overhead that clients foot the bill vs. getting quality, high level professionals.
- How much do you charge for your services? What is your hourly rate? What is the length of the contract? Many PR firms ask for a long contract so that they can learn more about your industry and get up to speed. Don't pay for that — just pay for their actual efforts working on your firm's behalf.

Hire a PR firm that has worked in public relations campaigns for lawyers or other professionals. You'll save yourself lots of time, money and headaches.

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