



PR JOB POINTERS



Pointers for Hiring PR Consultants

[By Aarti Nayudu]

Whether you are an entrepreneur trying to find his or her niche or the CEO of a company that is either new to the market or undergoing some sort of crisis, your best hope for success is a good PR consultant who knows his or her job well. Accordingly, you do an online search for “PR consultant” and inevitably find that there are thousands upon thousands of PR consultants out there eager to be in business with you. So, how can you possibly decide which ones to shortlist before eventually settling on that one PR consultant who seems to be the best? It isn’t easy, that’s for sure, and indeed, a seemingly simple thing like finding a good PR consultant can even begin to seem like a taxing chore!

But never fear, for I have taken it upon myself to make your search a great deal easier. What follows are some tips that I have collected from various sources that should help you in your search for a good PR consultant.

Big versus Small PR Consultancies: Which Size Fits You?

The first thing you need to do is decide whether you want a big PR consultancy, a small one, or even a freelancer. This will clearly depend on the nature of your particular problem or your company’s general requirements. If yours is a small-scale local business, then hiring someone from a small PR consultancy might prove more useful as they would be more aware of the local market and might have the right connections to ensure success. However, if you are a corporate giant, then you need a consultancy that has the resources to reach both local and national markets — i.e., no matter where you are based, they need to be able to provide you with service. To that end, the biggest PR consultancies frequently have offices or proxies in various locales and countries.

Client Testimonials and Portfolios

Most companies that advertise on the Internet or in print media make some mention of a few of their “happy clients,” and these testimonials can sometimes be the most useful information

upon which to base your decision. So read any client testimonials you can find, as these can often reveal a great deal about the capability of the given consultancy. You can also go a step further by having direct and honest conversations with previous clients. Such conversations should give you an opportunity to learn more about the consultancy’s work ethics, strengths, weaknesses, etc.

Furthermore, any PR consultant you meet with should be able to show you an up-to-date portfolio with recent press releases, newspaper clips, or other printed matter that has a resulted from their work for any current or past clients.

Were They Responsive to Your Concerns?

After meeting with a given PR consultancy, whether by phone or in person, ask yourself whether they seemed to be making an effort to fully understand your problem and your specific requirements? Did you manage to get them thinking about your concerns? And were they able to offer you some practical solutions or advice offhand?

Avoid Hierarchical Consultancies

Depending on its size, a given PR consultancy may be staffed by PR professionals with various levels of experience; a senior-level

consultant will often have assistants working under him. Look instead for a PR consultancy in which there are no clear demarcations between staff members. As pointed out in an article in the Boston Business Journal (see “On the Net,” below), many companies have senior PR consultants who only manage accounts and administrative issues, leaving their assistants to do the actual PR work like writing press releases and talking to reporters. It would generally be much better if you could expect to have a high-level consultant actually handling your project. Ideally, you want to go with a PR firm where a team works together on any press releases related to your efforts.

Personality

And, last but not the least, you want a PR professional who is down-to-earth and respects other people’s views. PR professionals are trained to be very good talkers, so you have to make sure that you find someone who *really* knows what they are talking about. In other words, don’t just be charmed into hiring someone who knows how to glad-hand but little else.

With all the options available, finding a good PR consultant is really not as easy as it might seem. With the above tips in hand, however, you should be able to make a potentially arduous task a whole lot easier.

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